

Understanding Terror Networks

by

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This book gives a comprehensive account in a tight, succinct style that covers the same historical ground that both Lawrence Wright and John Miller cover in their excellent books on the global Salafist Islamic jihad. It goes a step farther, however, in understanding the social networks by which the movement has grown by leaps and bounds over the past three decades. His goal is to [1] “...combine fact with history to go beyond the headlines and journalistic accounts and stimulate a more sophisticated discourse on the subject. Based on the biographies of 172 terrorists gathered from open sources, [he] examines this social movement, which [he] calls the global Salafi jihad. [He] excavates the ideological roots of the movement and traces its evolution throughout the world. The data broken down in terms of social, personal, and situational variables challenge the conventional explanations of terrorism. They suggest instead that this form of terrorism is an emergent quality of the **social networks** formed by alienated young men who become transformed into fanatics yearning for martyrdom and eager to kill. The shape and dynamics of these networks affects their survivability, flexibility, and success.”

Sageman brings an unusual combination of experience and skills to undertake the study of terrorism. As a Foreign Service officer, he worked with Islamic fundamentalists on a daily basis during the Afghan-Soviet war, from 1987 to 1989. These interactions gave him some insight into the mujahedin’s beliefs and practices. He also claims to have “... developed an appreciation of them as human beings, which ran counter to media portrayals of them in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.” After leaving the Foreign Service in 1991, Sageman returned to medicine and completed a residency in psychiatry. He is now in private practice and keeps up with the literature of this rapidly changing field... During his medical training he also acquired a doctorate in political sociology.”

Sageman’s book purports to “...give us the first social explanation of the global wave of [terrorist] activity.” He traces its roots in Egypt, gestation in Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan war, exile in the Sudan, and growth of branches worldwide, including detailed accounts of life within the Hamburg and Montreal cells that planned attacks on the United States.” Sageman claims that “U.S. government strategies to combat the jihad are based on the traditional reasons an individual was thought to turn to terrorism: poverty, trauma, madness, and ignorance. [He] refutes all these notions, showing that, for the vast majority of the mujahedin, **social bonds** predated ideological commitment, and it was these **social networks** that inspired alienated young Muslims to join the jihad. These men, isolated from the rest of society, were transformed into fanatics yearning for martyrdom and eager to kill. The tight bonds of family and friendship, paradoxically enhanced by the tenuous links between the cell groups (making it difficult for authorities to trace connections), contributed to the jihad movement’s flexibility and longevity. And although Sageman’s systematic analysis highlights the crucial role the networks played in the terrorists’ success, he states unequivocally that the level of commitment and choice to embrace violence were entirely their own.”

Sageman’s first chapter, entitled *The Origins of the Jihad*, provides the most succinct, comprehensive summary of the modern Islamist movement’s core religious tenets and the men who constructed it that can be found. From the pillars of Islam to the concept of jihad and the corruption of a religion by condoning mass murder, suicide bombings, assassinations and mayhem – even perpetrated on other Muslims – are covered in enough detail to understand the movement’s evolution to the present. The names of the core group of leaders – the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, Sheikh Abdulla Azzam, Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden – are linked by their philosophical contribution to the global Salafist Islamic jihad. The goals of this movement are described in detail.

Although that material is not included in this essay – other sources are provided to cover that ground – Sageman’s concluding paragraph is useful [2]. “Al-Zawahiri described the basic objective of the Islamic jihad movement, regardless of the sacrifices and the time involved, as follows: ‘Liberating the Muslim nation (the worldwide Ummah [3][4],’ confronting the enemies of Islam, and launching jihad against them require a Muslim authority, established on a Muslim land, that raises the banner of jihad and rallies the Muslims around it. Without achieving this goal our actions will mean nothing more than mere and repeated disturbances that will not lead to the aspired goal, which is the restoration of the Caliphate and the dismissal of the invaders from the land of Islam.”

Sageman’s final observation in this chapter is that “The foregoing makes it clear that the present wave of terrorism directed at the far enemy is an intentional strategy of a Muslim *revivalist* social movement. Its ideology comes from Egypt, as its major contributors were Qutb, Mustafa, Faraj, and al-Zawahiri. It focuses on internal Islamic factors rather than non-Islamic characteristics. Unlike its portrayal in the West, it is not based on **hatred** of the West. It certainly preaches a message of **hate** for Western values, and the mention of Israel is a rallying point for the masses. But this **hatred** is derived from a particular Islamic version of love for God and true Muslims in general. Its appeal lies in its apparent simplicity and elegance that resonate with concerned Muslims not well schooled in traditional Muslim teaching, which it rejects.”

We could argue with this pedantic type of ‘hair splitting,’ since **hatred** is **hatred** no matter from whence it is derived. **Hatred** is what motivates both the core leadership of the global Salafist Islamic jihad as well as the individual jihadis who answer the call to jihad. The victims of the jihad couldn’t care less about the source of the jihadist’s motivational **hatred**, but those of us who are concerned about this aberration of a religion hijacked by modern day pretenders to a rising caliphate should understand the philosophical underpinnings of the movement. It is based on the concept of martyrdom in the name of God. For a Muslim this concept is glorious. For the victims of their martyrdom, the concept is not only deplorable, it is evil! This, of course, is why we are faced with a holy war – Islam against Christendom – whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not. The enemy has declared this war. We are still sitting on our hands, arguing over ‘Huckaburgers,’ ‘the place of women in our society,’ ‘*diversity*,’ and ‘political correctness’ in our domestic politics – tearing America apart – while the enemy continues to plot the widening of the terrorist onslaught on America.

Sageman’s second chapter, entitled *The Evolution of the Jihad*, describes the Egyptian origins of the global Salafist jihad. “Many of the founders of the global Salafi jihad came to Afghanistan in the 1980s [to fight the Soviet invaders] from different countries and without prior connection to each other. This was not true of the Egyptians, who had known each other from their antigovernment activities in Egypt before seeking refuge in Afghanistan. The network of Egyptians went on to constitute the leadership of the global jihad.” It was in Afghanistan where the Egyptian leaders of jihad met and joined with Osama bin Laden, a Saudi. At this point [5] “...the militant Islamist movement was not a coordinated global jihad but a collection of local jihads, receiving training and financial and logistic support from the **vanguard** of the movement, al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda now became a formal organization consisting of a cluster of terrorists, the central staff supporting the global Salafi jihad, the religious social movement...There were very few full-time paid staff members of al-Qaeda. Instead, the jihad fellow travelers were given training and seed money to go and carry out their own jihad. They then had to raise their own money or receive support from Muslim charity organizations.”

Sageman briefly addresses the Sudanese exile of the al-Qaeda organization, its return to the Afghan refuge, and Osama bin Laden’s success in consolidating his hold on the global jihad by incorporating Zawahiri’s al-Jihad into his own organization. From there the author describes the American response to the 9/11 attack on its home soil and bin Laden’s efforts to assure his survival in Pakistan. Sageman concludes this chapter with the observation that [6] “The global Salafi jihad evolved through a process of radicalization consisting of **gradual self-selection**, manipulation of re-

sources from above, and recognition of a single common target of the jihad [the United States of America]. At the end of the Afghan-Soviet war in 1989, the traditional mujahedin, who could go back, returned home. Those who remained in Afghanistan joined by default. The second milestone was the move to the Sudan in 1991 when the most militant actively pledged their commitment to the global jihad. During the Sudanese exile, there was intense discussion leading to a gradual shifting of target from the near to the far enemy...The move back to Afghanistan in 1996 was the third milestone. Only about 150 made the journey back. Many left the organization through disillusionment or rejection of the new mission against the United States. When the global jihad was formally announced in February 1998, the EIG [Abdel Rahman, the blind shiek's group] quickly rejected it and the EIJ [al-Zawahiri's group] split over it. All through this evolution the most militant component, as represented by Osama bin Laden, controlled the resources (Saudi wealth) and was able to guide the direction of jihad."

"The evolution of the global jihad was also characterized by a succession of sites, which attracted multiple militant networks of diverse perspectives. These **small networks** interacted with each other in intense debates and generated excitement and a sense of purpose. These sites were 'where the action was.' Progressive ideological extremism and a heightened sense of commitment emerged from these intense interactions...Egyptian **prisons** and **university campuses** in the 1970s were the places where the concept of the Salafi jihad was developed. In Peshawar [Pakistan] in the late 1980s, militant Muslims from all over the world debated the future of a worldwide jihad. They continued this dialogue in Khartoum [Sudan] in the 1990s and finalized the ideology of the global Salafi jihad."

Sageman's concluding paragraph in the chapter is illuminating [7]. "In summary, the United States indirectly supported the Afghan mujahedin, who did all the fighting, paid dearly for it, and deserved the full credit for their victory over the Soviets. The expatriate contribution to this victory was minimal at best, for they spread dissension among Muslim resistance ranks. Usually, the victors write the history. For the Soviet Afghan war, there is no Afghan account, perhaps due to the high illiteracy rate or the later developments in Afghanistan. Instead, the foreign bystanders got to write the history. These foreigners expropriated the native Afghan victory over the Soviet Union, created the **myth** that they had destroyed a superpower by faith alone, and argued that the same fate would lie ahead for the only remaining superpower. Thus the global Salafi jihad was able to hijack the Afghan mujahedin victory for its own ends." These ends -- to wage **holy war** with the United States and **destroy it** on its way to the **return of the worldwide Islamic caliphate**.

In a chapter entitled *The Mujahedin*, Sageman attempts to define the Islamic terrorists and their organizations [8]. "The global Salafi jihad is a new development in the annals of terrorism. It combines **fanaticism**, in its original sense of 'excessive enthusiasm in **religious** belief,' with terrorism against a 'far enemy,' a global target to bring about a **utopia**. This glorification of the notion of *shahada* (literally the testimony of faith, but now also meaning martyrdom) is an inherent aspect of this new form of global terrorism, and can be understood only in its **religious** context. I submit that the new global Salafi mujahedin are sufficiently distinct from other terrorists that an in-depth study of their specific characteristics, patterns of joining the jihad, and behavior is needed. So far, the statements about them are based on anecdotal evidence or speculations derived from popular prejudice and conventional wisdom about evil people in general and terrorists in particular." Sageman aims to provide a general empirical study of these individuals to add to what is known and to correct some widely disseminated misconceptions...In this effort Sageman includes only those Muslim terrorists who target foreign governments and their populations, the 'far enemy,' in pursuit of Salafi objectives, namely the establishment of an Islamic state.

In a section labeled, 'Profiles of the Mujahedin,' Sageman begins by asking the question, 'What sets global Salafi mujahedin apart?' The temptation is therefore strong to blame Islam, or its Salafi variant, for this type of terrorism. But this common feature is based on the definition guiding my selection and its explanatory value is therefore tautologi-

cal...The search for common features explaining why individuals become involved in global terrorism may be divided into three general approaches. The first is that the terrorists share a common social background. The second is that terrorists share a common psychological make-up. The third is that some people became terrorists because of their particular situation at the time of recruitment.” In the rest of this chapter, Sageman conducts an empirical analysis of each of these sets of variables as a potential explanation for why people join a movement of global terrorism.

Sageman divides the global Salafi jihadists into four groupings: the Central Staff comprised of four committees (the Shura) made up of 32 people; the Core Arabs, comprised of 66 people; the Maghreb Arabs, 53 people; and the Southeast Asians, 21 people. The terrorists in the **Central Staff** form the leadership of the movement. Most of them were involved in the Afghan-Soviet war and were the founding members of al-Qaeda. They are not usually directly involved in operations, but inspire and approve them from afar. They provide training, some financing, and sometimes logistical support for the global Salafi jihad in general. They are also responsible for propaganda in support of the jihad. The second large cluster includes terrorists coming from **Core Arab states** (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Kuwait). The third cluster represents jihad members coming from North Africa, also known as the **Maghreb** (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) but also people whose families were from the Maghreb but who were born and grew up in France. The fourth cluster is **Southeast Asian** and consists of the members belonging to the Jemaah Islamiyah centered in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Sageman explains that “Although [he] defines these clusters geographically, assignment to a cluster is not based solely on geographical origin. It is based on the **pattern of interaction** among the terrorists. For instance, four members of the Hamburg clique that was responsible for the 9/11 operation were Morocans...Because they interacted with other members of the Core Arab cluster and were supported by the Central Staff responsible for this cluster, [he] classified them with Core Arabs, despite the fact that three of them were born in the Maghreb. There was a lot of interaction among members of the same cluster, but almost none between them and members of different clusters.”

“Almost two-thirds of the terrorists forming the Central Staff come from Egypt (20, or 63 percent). The rest come from Saudi Arabia (3), Kuwait (3), Jordan (2), Iraq, the Sudan, Libya, and Lebanon (1 each). The Egyptian representation at the leadership level is notable because Egyptians constitute only 14 percent of the overall sample. The Egyptians at the leadership level joined al-Qaeda during its formation in the late 1980s and early 1990s. They were mostly Islamist militants, imprisoned after the assassination of President Sadat. When they were released from prison, they went to Afghanistan because of continued government persecution. They were already dedicated terrorists before coming to Afghanistan...The Egyptian militants brought their **Qutbian ideology** with them and expanded it into the global Salafi jihad. They also constitute the backbone of the leadership of the global jihad, dominating in numbers and ideas the rest of the cadres of this movement, who come almost exclusively from the Core Arab world. Contrary to popular belief, the roots of the global Salafi jihad are therefore not Saudi or Afghan, but **Egyptian**.”

Sageman examined the socioeconomic status, education, faith as youths, occupation, family status, and psychological health, personality, age, place of recruitment, faith, employment, and relative deprivation as possible contributors to the choice made by the jihadists to answer the Salafist call to martyrdom. He empirically tested some of the traditional theories of terrorist behavior, namely social, psychological, and situational. His findings seem to reject much of the conventional wisdom about terrorists [9]. “Members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious families, who grew up with strong positive values of religion, spirituality, and concern for their communities. There were four general patterns detected. The Central Staff consisted of Islamist militants who met and bonded together during the Soviet-Afghan war and went on to become full-time terrorists. The Southeast Asians who went on to become members of Jemaah Islamiyah, were mostly the disciples of the two leaders of this organization. The Maghreb Arabs, either first-or second-generation in France, grew up feeling excluded from French society and

were generally not religious as young people. They were still upwardly mobile compared to their parents, but in the process of moving up became isolated and sought friendships in local mosques.

“The Core Arabs, who grew up in core Arab lands, came from a communal society and belonged to one of the most communal of all religions. They were isolated when they moved away from their families and friends and became particularly lonely and emotionally alienated in this new individualistic environment. The lack of spiritualism in a utilitarian culture was keenly felt. Underemployed and discriminated against by the local society, they felt a personal sense of grievance and humiliation. They sought a cause that would give them emotional relief, social community, spiritual comfort, and cause for self-sacrifice. Although they did not start out particularly religious, there was a shift in their devotion before they joined the global jihad, which gave them both a cause and comrades.”

“Although nothing in the data challenges the rational actor theory...In terms of the social explanations, the members studied did not come from poor backgrounds leading to grievances against the West. Their education was modern (except for the Indonesians) and they were not ‘brainwashed’ into fanaticism through a madrassa education. [Note here: Sageman did not study the Taliban]. Most became more devout before joining the jihad. Contrary to most writing on terrorists, the large majority of the individuals examined were married and most had children. Yet they were willing to sacrifice themselves for the cause. Except for the Western converts and the Maghreb Arabs, who indulged in petty crime, there is no evidence that terrorists were hardened criminals.”

“In terms of psychological explanations for their participation, they did not seem to display any psychiatric pathology. There was no pattern of emotional trauma in their past nor was there any evidence of any pathological hatred or paranoia when the facts are analyzed. This ‘pathological hatred’ much talked about in the press cannot be found in the accounts studied. From all the evidence, many participants joined **in search of a larger cause worthy of sacrifice.**” That is, a holy war!

Sageman describes the characteristics which make the global Salafist Islamic jihad network unique. It is, indeed, a complex, non-linear iterative feedback system – one that is expected to be governed by the self-organizing principles of chaotic systems – dynamical systems which can exhibit fixed points, stable equilibrium points, and points of chaotic order and/or disorder. Such is both the strength and weakness of such a global network. Sageman describes this situation [10]. “In terms of generating a common profile of the global Salafi mujahed, there are as many profiles as they are clusters of mujahedin. The southeast Asians are different from the Core Arabs, who are distinct from the Maghreb Arabs. The leaders of the movement, organized in the Central Staff, are unlike their followers. Nevertheless, **there are patterns.**”

“Just before they joined the jihad, the prospective mujahedin were socially and spiritually alienated and probably in some form of distress. They would not have been the best candidates for a tightly cohesive group, whose members were willing to perform the ultimate sacrifice in the name of what the group stood for. Yet, this is exactly what happened.” This transformation from isolated individuals to a community of fanatics is the subject of Sageman’s next chapter.

In a chapter entitled ‘*Joining the Jihad*,’ Sageman attempts to discern common social factors or personality predisposition for terrorism in the individuals who join the jihad movement. He finds that [11] “...profiles based on such personal characteristics as age, sex, national origin, religion, education, and socioeconomic background are of very little value in identifying true terrorists.” [Note: Of course, all of the terrorists of interest here are Muslims, who by definition, are bound to Islam, the religion of the Prophet Mohammed]. Nevertheless, he observes that “In the case of global

salafi mujahedin, however, there is one common element that is specific to them and to no one else, and that is the fact that they have made a link to jihad [which, of course is an Islamic concept; i.e. a religious link]. These links are key to the dynamics of terror networks. To further our understanding of these networks, it is critical to understand how these links are formed. How does one go about joining the global Salafi jihad?"

Sageman undertakes this task by providing two detailed examples: Ahmed Ressay and his unsuccessful attempt to carry out the millennial bombing of Los Angeles airport and the Hamburg cell responsible for the 9/11 attacks. While the detailed accounts of the perpetrators of these attacks are fascinating, we are interested here in his generalizations and his conclusions. He discloses that [12] "The striking element in both of these accounts is the absence of both top-town recruitment and brainwashing of the plotters, concepts which have been the mainstay of conventional explanations of al-Qaeda terrorism. In the millennial plot, three of the main plotters had not attended training camps in Afghanistan and were not even formally affiliated with al-Qaeda. (Two were scheduled to go after the plot.) Nor were they particularly religious. Meskini drank beer, loved movies, and dated women he met in dance clubs. The Hamburg plotters were far more devout in their beliefs and practices. A theme in both accounts is the formation of a **network of friendships** that solidified and preceded formal induction into the terrorist organization. The size of the networks was similar, with eight members in each group: Ressay, Labsi, Atamani, Kamel, the Boumezbear and Ikhlef brothers in Canada; Atta, bin al-Shibh, al-Shehhi, Jarrah, Motassadeq, Mzoudi, Essabar, and Bahaji in Hamburg. Some, such as the Boumezbear and Ikhlef brothers (also Haouari and Meskini) in Canada and Mzoudi and Motassadeq in Hamburg, knew each other from the old country. They had grown up together and trusted each other."

"Formal affiliation with the jihad...seems to have been a group phenomenon. Friends decided to join the jihad as a group rather than as isolated individuals. The founders of al-Qaeda had of course met each other on the fields of Afghanistan and forged strong bonds in the fight against the Soviets. At the end of the war, they decided to create al-Qaeda. This group phenomenon may be a strong factor in the formation of the global Salafi mujahedin in general... **Friendship** is only one type of social bond that might foster affiliation to the global jihad. In my sample [of some 172 jihadis] **kinship** played a role in the affiliation of 14 percent to mujahedin...Kinship bonds also extend to in-laws... Marriage exposes people to new kinship and friendship networks...In-laws also provided links for prospective mujahedin to join the jihad...Combining the friendship and kinship statistics and eliminating the overlap, about **75 percent** of mujahedin had preexisting social bonds to members already involved in the global jihad or decided to join the jihad as a group with friends or relatives."

Sageman describes a third type of affiliation for the jihad – unique to the Southeast Asian cluster [13] – which accounts for about 8 percent of mujahedin who joined the jihad. [This] cluster centers around two Islamic boarding schools founded by Abu Bakar Baasyir and Abdullah Sungkar, who later founded and led the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group. At Pondok Ngruki, in Indonesia, **they taught** a brand of **militant Salafi Islam** that made them run afoul of the Indonesian authorities. Rather than face a second term of prison, they fled to Malaysia where they founded the second school, Pesentren Luqmanul Hakiem, and continued their work. It is unclear exactly when the Jemaah Islamiyah was founded and what its actual link with al-Qaeda may be. Jemaah Islamiyah is still shrouded in mystery; most arrested members are not cooperating with authorities and have recanted whatever confessions they have made. They are protecting their leader, as a manual discovered in the possession of one prescribes them to do. Some of those arrested in Singapore are fully cooperating with authorities, however, and they date the creation of the Jemaah Islamiyah to 1993."

In a paragraph that may be pertinent to the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama [14], [if he indeed was – as rumored on the internet and somewhat validated by his presidential campaign statements and his two books -- schooled in a Wahabbi school in his early years in Southeast Asia], Sageman writes "In Southeast Asia, teachers command strong

personal loyalty from their students. This **loyalty may be lifelong**, as illustrated by the three Jemaah Islamiyah convicts incarcerated in Singapore, who testified against their former teacher Abu Bakar Baasyir in June 2003. Despite their damning testimony, two spontaneously started to cry at the sight of their teacher. They repeated that they loved him but urged him to tell the truth about his activities.”

While Sageman discounts the belief that global Salafi mujahedin were recruited at mosques, he states that “... Places of worship [Mosques] do figure prominently in the affiliation to the global Salafi jihad, as they are [sic] part of a Muslim **revivalist movement**. Indeed, several mosques became prominent in the process of affiliation to the jihad: in London...in Milan...in Madrid...in Hamburg...in France...in Montreal...in Saudi Arabia... and in **Brooklyn, New York**. These mosques served many functions in the transformation of young alienated Muslims into global Salafi mujahedin. A mosque was an ideal place to meet familiar people, namely fellow Muslims – an important desire in upwardly and geographically mobile young men who missed the community of their friends and family. **Friendship groups** formed around the mosques, as we saw in the millennial plot and Hamburg cell accounts. Each new group became a ‘bunch of guys,’ transforming its members into potential mujahedin, actively seeking to join the global jihad. In the sample of **one hundred** mujahedin with adequate background information, [only] **thirteen** provide an account of affiliation to the jihad inspired only by their religious beliefs and without the intervention of friends.”

Sageman cautions us not to misunderstand the role of the mosque in bringing young potential jihadis to the global jihad. “So far I have focused on the process of association with the jihad, and I have argued that social bonds predating formal recruitment into the jihad had seem to be the crucial element in this process. However, the global Salafi jihad is not simply a political movement. It is also a **religious revivalist movement**, and the **mosques** are where the intensification of religious sentiment takes place, transforming potential mujahedin into **dedicated fanatics**. The ‘bunch of guys’ incubation goes only so far; it might be enough to make a dedicated political militant or a gang member. But it will not produce a religious fanatic, ready to **sacrifice himself for the glory of God**. This requires a religious dimension, acquired only in places of worship.”

“The Muslims most receptive to global Salafi **ideology** grew up with religion but either were no longer committed to it or already embraced Salafism. Most Core Arabs were committed to a Wahhabi or Salafi version of Islam as children, whereas the Maghreb Arabs in both clusters were familiar enough with Islam to seek people sharing this generic background. When shown pictures of Muslims suffering because of wars, they began to feel a common bond of victimhood based on Islam.”

Sageman enters a discourse which may partially explain the predominance of engineering, science, medicine, or computer science backgrounds in the sample of the global Salafist jihad leadership [15]. “Religion is about one’s relationship with God. Contrary to some popular beliefs about solitary faith, this relationship is strongly grounded in social processes. Islam is one of the most communal of all religions, with many orchestrated shared rituals. Besides the obvious conviviality of fellowship, religion also entails a commitment involving affective, behavioral, and cognitive components that mutually reinforce each other. Emotions are important in religion and are usually ordinary, natural and positive emotions directed to God and the community of worshippers. Islam prescribes regular behavioral practices such as praying, often in groups, five times daily. It also proscribes many practices, depending on the interpretations one accepts. Salafi Islam is very strict in its code of conduct and prescribes various codes of appearance, dress, diet, and conduct, especially vis-à-vis gender roles. Salafists believe in a **literal interpretation** of the Quran and the life of the Prophet, and the necessity of imposing **Sharia** in the state and protecting the faithful from corruption by Western values. The elegance and simplicity of its interpretations attract many who seek a single solution devoid of ambiguity. Very often these persons have already chosen such unambiguous technical fields as engineering, architecture, computer

science, or medicine. Students of the humanities and social sciences were few and far between in my sample.”

Sageman found that “The process of joining the jihad...is more of a bottom-up than a top-down process. A lot of Muslim young men want to join the jihad but do not know how. Joining the jihad is more akin to the process of applying to a highly selective college. Many try to get in but only a few succeed, and the colleges’ role is evaluation and selection rather than marketing. Candidates are enthusiastic rather than reluctant.”

“One of the surprising aspects of the global Salafi movement, given its notoriety and ubiquity, is the relative lack of resources invested in any recruitment drive. I did not detect any active top-down organizational push to increase al-Qaeda’s membership. The pressure came from the bottom up. Prospective mujahedin were eager to join the movement. The proselytizing arm of Salafi Islam is the peaceful Tablighi group, which actively seeks to convert young Muslims to its version of Islam. Tablighi students come to Pakistan to study. Perhaps some ‘recruiters’ came to the Tablighi schools to inspire some students to join the jihad and succeeded in convincing some students to take military training at al-Qaeda camps in neighboring Afghanistan. After assessment at the camp, the prospective candidate might have been formally invited to join the jihad. But generally, these activities took place only in Pakistan, Afghanistan, or perhaps Saudi Arabia. They were not part of a worldwide top-down campaign to increase membership. No aggressive ‘publicity’ campaigns targeted potential recruits; no dedicated recruitment committee had full-time staff at al-Qaeda headquarters (except a reception committee in Peshawar for people already on their way to the camps), and no powerful recruitment program drew on a budget dedicated to these activities.”

“This is surprising because Sheikh Abdullah Azzam had established such a successful campaign to recruit mujahedin against the Soviets in the 1980s. Indeed, the organization he created, the Mekhtab al-Khidmat (the Service Bureau), a forerunner of al-Qaeda, was in essence the institutionalization of a permanent recruitment campaign. Nothing comparable to Azzam’s work exists in the present global Salafi jihad.”

In a concluding paragraph in this chapter of the book, Sageman argues for [16], “...a three-prong process: social affiliation with the jihad accomplished through friendship, kinship, and discipleship; progressive intensification of beliefs and faith leading to acceptance of the global Salafi jihad ideology; and formal acceptance to the jihad through the encounter of a link to the jihad. Relative deprivation, religious predisposition, and ideological appeal are necessary but not sufficient to account for the decision to become a mujahed. **Social bonds** are the **critical element** in this process and precede ideological commitment. These bonds facilitate the process of joining the jihad through mutual emotional and social support, development of a common identity, and encouragement to adopt a new faith. All these factors are internal to the group. They are more important and relevant to the transformation of potential candidates into global mujahedin than postulated external factors, such as **common hatred** for an outside group. To an outsider, these invectives stand out. But for an insider, they are not what keeps the group together. As in all intimate relationships, this glue, in-group love, is found inside the group. It may be more accurate to blame global Salafi terrorist activity on **in-group love** than **out-group hate**.” This, of course, is simply psychobabble which re-states the age old knowledge – from the hoplite warriors of Greek antiquity to today’s ‘warrior ethos’ in the U.S. military – **unit cohesion**. It has absolutely no meaning in the context of why global Salafist Islamic jihadists want to kill us, the infidels, and destroy America in the process. That is purely a **religious** matter with roots in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abdullah Azzam, Abdel Rahman, and Osama bin Laden – fanatic zealots who have hijacked a religion (Islam) – and created an **ideology** in its name to bring back the past power and glory of the caliphate of old.

In a chapter entitled *Social Networks and the Jihad* Sageman begins a network theory explanation of the global Salafist jihad [17]. “[The global Salafi jihad] is not a specific organization, but a social movement consisting of a set of

more or less formal organizations, linked patterns of interaction ranging from the fairly centralized (the East Africa embassy bombings) to the more decentralized (the two millennial plots) and with various degrees of cooperation (the Egyptian Islamic Jihad versus the Egyptian Islamic Group), resulting in more or less connected terrorist operations.” Of course, it slips by without saying that the jihad has one huge centralized factor – **ALL of the participants are Muslims**, wherever they may be located.

Introducing us to the lexicon of network analysis, Sageman writes, “Participants in the global jihad are not atomized individuals but actors linked to each other through **complex webs** of direct or mediated exchanges.” This, of course, is the language of dynamical systems scholars who study complex, non-linear iterative feedback systems on which I have based all of the essays on this website, including the history of American civilization itself.

Sageman explains. “A group of people can be viewed as a network, a collection of **nodes** connected through **links**. Some nodes are more popular and are attached to more links, connecting them to other more isolated nodes. These more connected nodes, called **hubs**, are important components of a terrorist network. A few highly connected hubs dominate the architecture of the global Salafi jihad. The Central Staff, Core Arab, Maghreb Arab, and Southeast Asian are large clusters built around hubs: Osama bin Laden, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Zein al-Abidin Mohamed Hussein (a.k.a. abu Zubaydah), and Abu Bakar Baasyir (a.k.a. Ustaz abu Somad), respectively. After 1996, the Central Staff was no longer directly involved in terrorist operations, but the other three major clusters were connected to their Central Staff contacts by their lieutenants in the field: Ramzi bin al-Shibh, Waleed Mohamed Tawfiq bin Attash (a.k.a. Khallad) and Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri (a.k.a. Abul Bilal al-Makki) for the Core Arabs; Fateh Kamel then Amar Makhulif (a.k.a. abu Doha) for the Maghreb Arabs; and Riduan Isamuddin (a.k.a. Hambali) and later Ali Ghufron (a.k.a. Mukhlas) for the Southeast Asians.”

“Each of these field lieutenant hubs was then connected to the operational field commanders in charge of specific operations. For the Los Angeles airport millennial plot, Ressay assumed the command of his operation when the appointed field commander Fodail was unable to come to Canada. He reported to Makhulif, who facilitated logistic support and kept al-Qaeda aware of new developments. Atta, the operational commander for the 9/11 operations, reported to bin al-Sjhibh, who also facilitated logistic support in the field and kept the leadership apprised of new developments. For the Bali operation, Isamuddin was the link from the Central Staff that provided funding for the operation. Ali Ghufron was the field lieutenant; and Abdul Azia (a.k.a. Imam Samudra) was the operational commander.”

Sageman then proceeds to place all of this information in the language of ‘small-world networks [18]. “Terrorist networks are not static; they evolve over time. Fateh Kamel was the hub around which the network responsible for the millennial plot grew. He was originally from Algeria and immigrated to Canada in 1987. He obtained Canadian citizenship and frequented the Assuna Mosque in Montreal, where apparently everyone knew him. Under the cover of an international business, he traveled extensively on behalf of the jihad. He underwent training in an Afghan camp in the early 1990s and fought in **Bosnia** several times. In **Canada**, he set up a network of supporters for the **Bosnian jihad** with Jmohamed Omary. Ressay, Labsi, and Boumezbeur became part of this network. During his eight trips to Bosnia, Kamel met Said Atmani, Abdullah Ouzghar, Christophe Caze, Lionel Dumont, and Safé Bourada. In Milan, he helped set up a logistic support network around the Islamic Cultural Institute. After the Dayton Accords, the Mujahedin Brigade in **Bosnia** was disbanded. Kamel invited Atmani and Ouzghar to **Canada** and suggested to Caze and Dumont that they set up their own logistic cells in Roubaix [France]. In Canada, he sold his business to Haouari and resumed his worldwide organizing activities on behalf of the jihad. He sold stolen cars in Turkey and organized operations in Jordan, where he was arrested in 1999 and extradited to France for his role in the 1996 Roubaix violence. His phone number kept surfacing on captured mujahedin all over Europe.”

“Kamel was a typical hub, a charming and handsome man with a knack for making friends and acquaintances. Everyone in the Maghreb community of Montreal seems to have known him and his beautiful Canadian wife, who had converted to Islam. In network language, he was a **hub** with lots of **links**. The better known he became, the easier it was for newcomers to find him and the more people he met. Given his attractive personality, it became likely that new people sharing his beliefs connected with him. Through Kamel, the Maghreb Arab network grew.”

Sageman then probes deeper into the scientific language of network theory to describe the Montreal cell. “In more formal language, growth of this network was not a random process but one of **preferential attachment**, meaning that the probability that a new node will connect to any given node is proportional to the number of existing links. A network growing through this process of preferential attachment evolves into a ‘small-world’ network structure, similar to that of traffic on the Internet, in which gigantic hubs like Google, Yahoo, and CNN receive far more hits than most other web sites. This approximates the structure of the two Arab clusters of the global Salafi jihad.”

“The structure of the Southeast Asian network is more hierarchical than that of the other parts of the global jihad. From the evidence, it appears that Abdullah Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baasyir intentionally created the Jemaah Islamiyah from above and structured it along hierarchical lines. At the top were the amir and the consultative council. The Jemaah Islamiyah was divided into four mantiqis or regions: Singapore and Malaysia; Indonesia; Sabah, Sulawesi, and the Southern Philippines; and Australia. Below the mantiqi were several wakalah (branches). The head of the branch was supported by a branch consultative council to which reported several staff units. One of these units was the operations unit, which further subdivided into **operational cells of four to five people**. Initiatives for the operations, as well as plans for their organization and execution, came from the top...The Jemaah Islamiyah in this sense is a fairly traditional terrorist organization in contrast to the rest of the global Salafi jihad.”

Sageman then discusses an important characteristic of ‘small-world’ networks – their **robustness** [19]. “Small-world networks have interesting properties. Unlike a hierarchical network that can be eliminated through decapitation of its leadership, a small-world network resists fragmentation because of its dense interconnectivity. A significant fraction of nodes can be randomly removed without much impact on its integrity. Random attacks, such as stopping terrorists arbitrarily at our borders, will not affect the network’s structure. These actions may stop individual terrorists from coming and operating here, but they will leave the network largely undisturbed. Where a small-world network is vulnerable to targeted attack is at its **hubs**. If enough hubs are destroyed, the network breaks down into isolated, non-communicating islands of nodes. Were the jihad to sustain such damage, it would be incapable of mounting sophisticated large-scale operations like the 9/11 attacks and would be reduced to small attacks by singletons. It is possible for such nodes to try to spontaneously regenerate some semblance of a network around them to carry out operations. Ahmed Ressaym tried to recruit new untrained collaborators in the millennial plot after his original coconspirators were unable to travel to Canada. The evidence so far is that such short-term improvised operations have failed. But the survival of potential brokers to the jihad may in the longer term allow the rebuilding of a network on the site of an incompletely destroyed one.”

“Hubs in a social network are vulnerable because most communications go through them. By tracing messages through good police work, law enforcement authorities should be able to identify and arrest these human hubs. This strategy has already shown considerable success. The arrests of Baasyir, Isamuddin, and Ali Ghufroon have seriously disrupted the Southeast Asian cluster. The arrests of Zain al-Abidin Hussein (abu Zubaydah), Fateh Kamel, and Amar Makhulif (abu Doha) have broken up the Maghreb Arab cluster. Less well known is about the structure of the Central staff and Core Arab clusters. No doubt the arrests of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and his nephew Abdul Basit Karim

(Ramzi Yousef) and the death of Subhi Mohammed abu Sittah (Mohamed Atef [in Iraq]) have significantly weakened it. But the survival of many central staffers, such as Osama bin Laden and his son Saad, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and Mohammed Makkawi (Sayf al-Adl) still makes the global jihad a potent threat. Future terrorist operations are most likely to come from the Core Arab cluster (more or less sponsored by the Central Staff) or from spontaneous local Maghreb Arab clusters under less direct control by the Central Staff but still under its inspiration.”

“The [global] jihad is resilient to random arrests of its members but fragile in terms of targeted attacks on its hubs. Because of the network’s ability to spontaneously grow and **self-organize**, attacks against large hubs must be undertaken simultaneously to break up the network. Given that many hubs are linked to each other, degradation of the system into small unconnected islands of nodes often requires taking out as many as 5 to 15 percent of all hubs at once. Otherwise, with time, new hubs will take the role of the eliminated ones and restore the network’s ability to function. The price of its **robustness** is its extreme exposure to targeted attacks.”

“In contrast, the Jemaah Islamiyah is not so robust and is vulnerable to conventional decapitation of its leadership. As the local cells are not used to operating on their own without specific orders from the top, the elimination of the leadership or even the intermediary will have strong effects on the organization as a whole. The 2002-2003 arrests of much of the Jemaah Islamiyah leadership, including its emir Baasyir and most of the mantiqi leaders, have seriously degraded its ability to conduct large-scale terrorist operations. As of late 2003, only the central technical bomb experts are still at large and in hiding, and it is unclear whether they can rebuild the network by themselves in the future. The Jemaah Islamiyah, therefore, could be eradicated.”

In a section of the book entitled ‘*Geographical Distribution*,’ Sageman illustrates how easy it was for the global jihadists to penetrate the United States before 9/11 and how their tactics had to change thereafter to escape recognition [20]. “One significant aspect of a small-world topology is its suggestion of a spontaneous process of **self-organization** rather than intentional construction from above...[A lack of] a comprehensive recruitment drive left the global jihad at the mercy of self-recruits, establishing clusters of mujahedin who built upon preexisting linkages to the jihad. This ‘natural’ growth of the jihad took place within particular social niches that were susceptible to its message. These niches included the expatriate and excluded Muslim communities in Europe, bored middle-class Arab youths, and more recently, local disenfranchised youths in the Maghreb.”

“The exact structure of the jihad is not randomly distributed within this niche. For instance, Abdel Ghani Meskini’s efforts to join the jihad failed because he had no bridge to it. Living in **Brooklyn**, he asked his childhood friend Mokhtar Haouari, who lived in **Montreal** and had boasted about some connection to the jihad, to help him. Haouari was unable to do so until he met Ahmed Ressam, who promised to help. Potential mujahedin have a hard time joining the jihad if they do not know how to link up with the movement. The jihad must build on preexisting nodes. Locales where the jihad has already established a foothold thus disproportionately contribute to the jihad. [Note: Of course locales which have a **mosque** headed by an Iman who preaches the **Wahhabi** and/or **Salafist** version of Islam are prime promoters which provide the required linkages]. For example, Montreal, London, Milan, Madrid, Hamburg, and the Saudi province of Asir have contributed heavily to the global jihad because of the presence of mujahedin who might act as brokers for potential members of the jihad. In contrast similar prominent cities like Berlin, Rome, Barcelona, and Paris have not harbored many mujahedin owing to the absence of such brokers there. The **robustness** of the network and the fuzziness of the boundary condition [definition] of what is a node make it difficult to completely eradicate the jihad once it has set root in a place. People who have not actively participated in the jihad may still help potential candidates establish new links [called ‘weak bonds’] to the jihad through their acquaintances among the mujahedin...So, centers that have traditionally sent people to the jihad will continue to contribute new mujahedin unless they are severed from brokering con-

nections to the jihad.”

“Salafi mosques in **Brooklyn**, Milan, London, Montreal, Madrid, Hamburg, Roubaix, and KhamisMushayt in Saudi Arabia have produced large numbers of mujahedin in the past decade. Traditional institutional settings have been the locus of emergence of social movements, and the **prominence of these mosques** has to do with the fact that the global jihad is foremost a Muslim revivalist movement. Muslims engage in the jihad because they share certain norms, values, and worldviews. [Note: We need to know precisely what these are in order to fully understand what this author is trying to say. When glossed over, generalized, and softened with choice of words, we cannot comprehend what we are being fed]. The creation and shaping of these social identities occur through a process of socialization at the mosques, under the guidance of a Salafi imam preaching the benefits of the global jihad. Social interactions at these mosques build and reinforce **ideological commitment** to a particularly salient cause and in the process foster a common sectarian identity. [Note: The word ‘sectarian’ has been chosen by Barack Obama to describe his early childhood schooling in Jakarta, Indonesia]. The mosques offer opportunities for people to meet new friends, foster the development of an ideological commitment to the jihad (which these ever-closer new friends further encourage), and provide **links** to the jihad through already-connected members.”

“Although a few Salafi mosques are sites of emergent terrorism, most fundamentalist mosques are not. [Note: This is an assertion by the author absent any supporting data]. Mosques are as apt to constrain as to facilitate global jihad. Mosques are generally conservative institutions with a strong emphasis on the status quo, not on ‘propaganda by deed’ or ‘outrage for God, but on submission to God’s will and realization of rewards in the afterlife. Salafi mujahedin reject the interpretations of the traditional Muslim clergy, whom they accuse of being ‘pulpit parrots’ in the pay of the state. The Salafi jihad flourished in private mosques, unregulated by the state, where their brand of Islam was the only acceptable one. Mosques, even fundamentalist ones, are generally *not* supportive of the global jihad even if the imam and the congregation sympathize with some of the grievances motivating the jihad – presence of U.S. troops in the Arabian Peninsula, persecution of Palestinians, and former harsh sanctions against Iraqi children.” This may be much too tolerant an attitude for a nation that has been attacked on its own soil by global Salafist jihadis. But it is Sageman’s view – *tolerance and diversity* uber alles.

“The prominence of certain Salafi mosques comes from the retrospective analysis of mujahedin trajectories. Their paths to the jihad started at specific mosques...The key issue here is not to condemn Muslim fundamentalism in general but to try to understand how the very few mosques that facilitate the global jihad do so. They are the sites where a pro-jihad discourse takes place. Specifically, they provide a view of the world where Islam is in grave danger and the jihad is the only opportunity to fight this urgent threat. This grand narrative fosters the development of an Islamic collective identity. These mosques contain some brokers to the jihad, who may be the imam himself or another member of the congregation. Examples of such imams were Abu Bakar Baasyir, Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, Sheikh Anwar Shaban, and the notorious London preachers. There were quite a few in Saudi Arabia, as the Saudi government suspended one thousand individuals from preaching after the May 12, 2003 bombings in Riyadh.”

“The rise of London as the main center of the jihad in Europe was probably due to its tolerant laws allowing for sanctuary and its large pool of potential mujahedin [primarily Pakistani immigrants]. It is close enough to Algeria to have attracted a large number of Algerian mujahedin fleeing persecution in their country after protesting the cancellation of the 1992 election. France no longer provided a sanctuary when the violence spilled over to its territory. The arrival of the Salafi preachers Omar Mahmoud Othman (a.k.a. abu Qatada) and Mustafa Kamel (a.k.a. abu Hamza al-Masri) attracted French people of Maghreb origins who were searching for a more militant form of Islam. London is also a center for world media, through which the teaching of these preachers is easily propagated to the Muslim world. The shift of

the center of influence from Montreal to ‘Londonistan’ was formally recognized with the arrival of Makhlulif (a.k.a. abu Doha) [an agent of al-Qaeda] to take field command of that cluster. This shift shows the dynamic topology of the global jihad responding to a changing environment.”

“This distribution of the global jihad has implications for its ability to accomplish its mission. As its network depends on bottom-up self-selection in places where specific mosques and existing brokers are located, there are many areas where the global jihad has no presence. As long as its mission was to repel an invading infidel enemy or overthrow the ‘near enemy,’ a location adjacent to its target facilitated its mission. Having its headquarters in Peshawar was quite convenient during the Afghan-Soviet war. Likewise, being in the Sudan assisted its mission against Egypt. The move back to Afghanistan, however, seriously hampered Egyptian operations.”

Sageman then turns his attention to the United States [21]. “The distribution of the global Salafi jihad assets seriously affects its mission against the United States ‘far enemy.’ The self-organizing evolution of the jihad, contingent on random encounters with local hubs or availability of bridges to the jihad, leaves large gaps in its geographical coverage. The absence of proselytism and recruitment programs kept its profile low enough (despite its size) to avoid raising the alarm in the U.S. government. At this juncture, the global jihad’s main weakness is the inability of most of the mujahedin to get close to its preferred target, the United States. Specifically, it does not have a large pool of members able to operate clandestinely in the United States, and thus is limited in its ability to wage war on U.S. soil. Its only effort to remedy this weakness was to identify a few trainees already in Afghan training camps who could enter the United States with valid travel documents and operate there without raising suspicion. I found no evidence of any comprehensive recruitment drive in the United States.” The word ‘comprehensive’ used here is not a valid delimiter. Sageman did not look hard enough in the right places. They were and are here.

Sageman then completely overlooks the attention given to the Black Muslim community by the FBI in the early days (1970s-1980s) described by John Miller in his book, *The Cell: Inside the 9/11 plot, and why the FBI and CIA failed to stop it*. The evidence is there for those who care or are courageous enough to look for it. Nevertheless, Sageman continues, “The lack of a recruitment program prevented the global Salafi jihad from developing native U.S. assets upon which it could build its operation on American soil. This gap in coverage could be filled with temporary foreign visitors who were able to blend into American society and operate on American soil. As long as the U.S. authorities did not take this danger seriously, this was a viable strategy. After the success of the 9/11 operations, however, increased vigilance made it more difficult for global mujahedin to get a visa to the U.S. or, if already in place, to operate without raising suspicion. Most global mujahedin are from Muslim countries, physically distinguishable and requiring a visa to come to the U.S. I am surprised that the jihad has not used people from Indonesia or the Philippines to conduct operations in the United States. European converts to global jihad might also be a potential pool of global mujahedin operating here, but I suspect that most are known to European intelligence services that might have alerted the U.S. authorities. Muslims born in the United States who might be attracted to the global jihad against enemies of the umma in the periphery of the Muslim world, may hesitate to perpetrate large terrorist operations against their own country. The Lackawanna Six might have volunteered to drive the Russians out of Chechnya, but there is no indication that they were ready to strike at their own country. On the contrary, they may have been surprised and repelled by the anti-American messages at the training camps in Afghanistan.” Then again, they may not have been so repelled. Many have been receptive to the call to jihad.

Sageman addresses the strength of the bonds of individual Muslims to the global jihad in terms of their ‘embeddedness’ in the society in which they lived. His examples come from the two Egyptian groups, one headed by the blind sheikh Abdel Rahman and the other by Ayman al-Zawahiri. The infighting between these two groups – both

derivatives and/or members of the Muslim Brotherhood -- resulted in discord and venom. Both groups were fighting against the Egyptian government and wanted to overthrow it. This resulted in the imprisonment of their leaders and loss of contact and loyalty to the Egyptian people. This dis-embeddedness resulted in the migration of these leaders via alienation from their real society to a closed society based on the writings and oral pronouncements of the radical salafists. According to Sageman “the progressive loss of bonds to society transformed the jihad into a truly global movement, base on **virtual bonds** to abstractions such as God and the umma. Although the network as a whole was dis-embedded from an earthly constituency, its **members**, or **nodes**, were more tightly linked with each other as they abandoned their bonds to the outside world. They became members of an ‘imagined community,’ not on the basis of a nation but on a ‘virtual,’ **sectarian** basis. [Note: Barack Obama claims to have attended a **sectarian** school in his 6-10 years of age period]. Their operations did not have to be responsive to any earthly constituency and were unrestrained by social bonds found in embedded networks.” More simply put, these individual Muslims were susceptible to the Salafist writings and pronouncements of Sayyid Qutb, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Abdel Rahman, Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden, and others who created the global Salafist jihad ideology.

“This ideal virtual community has strong appeal to alienated youths expatriated in the West, bored youths without any economic or social prospects in Core Arab countries [Saudi Arabia, Egypt, etc.], and disenfranchised youths without much hope in Maghreb Arab countries [Algeria, France, etc.]. Many responded to the mass appeal of the call of ‘Islam in danger’ during the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. This was a **spontaneous mass mobilization of youths to defend Islam**, as opposed to a more organized and formal joining of the global jihad. But the virtual character of their motivation became quite apparent once these individuals were in place. Their insularity from the local population and their naïve attraction to the ideal of a virtual jihad blinded them to the reality of the situation. The local population in both instances rejected their self-sacrifice and at times turned on them. Afghan forces from the Northern Alliance and even the Taliban murdered these expatriates or held them for ransom. Iraqi forces left the virtual recruits on the front line to confront U.S. troops (while they melted away into their own societies), and the local population betrayed them. Their travails make for somber and sober reading. Because of their inability to connect with the formal jihad movement, they simply became cannon fodder in the cynical posturing of the leaders of the Taliban, Iraqi government, and global jihad to discourage U.S. intervention. Their experience illustrates the fact that being part of a pool of potential mujahedin does not automatically translate into formal participation in the global jihad.”

In a section of the book describing the nature of the nodes, *Fuzzy Boundaries*, Sageman argues pedantically about the **definitions** of the nature of the links among the nodes of the network. He discusses [22] “...what represents a node, a link, or a network. The [global Salafist] jihad is a **dynamical social movement** that forms and breaks bonds to various Salafi terrorist groups. The nature of this bond may be financial support, logistical support, or common planning operations. Some of the links have been permanent, such as al-Qaeda’s relationship with the EIJ [al-Zawahiri’s Egyptian al-Jihad] and the Jemaah Islamiyah [the Indonesian Islamist movement]. Others have waxed and waned. For instance, after an initial period of enthusiasm, al-Qaeda seems to have disavowed its links to the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines when it degenerated into banditry. Likewise, al-Qaeda strongly supported the Algerian Groupe islamique Armé, but let this link fade when the group started to commit widespread atrocities against the civilian population [in Algeria]. Al-Qaeda switched its support to the breakaway Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédiction et le Combat instead. Al-Tawhid, headed by Ahmed al-Kalaylah (abu Musab al-Zarqawi), may not [have been] formally connected to al-Qaeda, probably because of personality rivalries. Because it [conducted] terrorist operations against Western targets in Europe and the Middle East, it [was] nonetheless solidly part of the global jihad.”

In a section labeled *Cliques*, Sageman notes the importance of such entities in the global jihad movement. After mentioning that he has shown that people joined the jihad in small groups, he states that [23] “...Several individuals

lived together for a while and had intense discussions about the jihad. When one of the friends was able to find a bridge to the jihad, they often went as a group to train in Afghanistan. Examples abound in my sample [172 cases]: The Montreal group, the Hamburg group, the Khamis Mushayt group, the Lackawanna group. These are **dense, small networks of friends** who **can vouch for each other**. In network terminology, they form **cliques**. In a clique, every node is connected to every other one.

“Cliques are often built on human similarities. Friendships reflect common background, education and beliefs, but the dense networks that members of a clique form are local and based on face-to-face encounters, attraction, and development of long-term bonds. They are not global. Although a common profile can be drawn within a certain clique, it does not generalize to a **social movement** as a whole. For a movement like the global Salafi jihad, there are as many valid profiles as there are cliques of similar friends. Even a relatively small network carrying out common operations may be composed of a number of cliques, each with its own distinctive profile. For instance, the French Maghreb Arabs who conducted four simultaneous operations in Morocco in August 1994 included at least three cliques. The close **friends** and **relatives** who grew up together in adjacent blocks in Orleans, France, were from middle-class, well integrated backgrounds and were university educated. The close friends from La Courneuve were also raised together, but in poverty with little education and were excluded from the formal integrated French economy. The nascent group in Besançon all came from the Faculty of Pharmacy of that city. Despite their different profiles, members of separate cliques were mixed into commandos executing the 1994 attempts. This shows the difficulty of generating a common profile of a global Salafi jujahed.”

“Social or religious activism is born in cliques and changes the value of friendship. Participation in causes transforms the activists’ sense of themselves and their relationship with others. The horrors of its terrorist operations mask a general fact about the global Salafi jihad, namely that it demands a sacrifice, and often **the ultimate sacrifice** for the cause. Although outsiders [read non-Muslims] focus on the terrorists’ **willingness to kill**, the insiders [read Salafist Muslims] focus on their **willingness to die**. Becoming martyrs, shahidi or witnesses for God, not killers, is what they strive for. Their awareness of their own readiness to transcend their self-interest fosters a special view of themselves and others like them. [Note: This is precisely the same as the concept of the ‘warrior ethos’ among the ‘fighters’ in the U.S. military]...Friendships cultivated in the jihad, just as those forged in combat in general, seem more intense and are endowed with special significance. Their actions taken on behalf of God and the umma are experienced as **sacred**. This added element increases the value of friendships within the clique and the jihad in general and diminishes the value of outside friendships.”

“To friends hovering on the brink of joining an increasingly activist clique, this promised shift in value may be difficult to resist, especially if one is temporarily alienated from society. This happens progressively and imperceptibly over a period of time. People may not be aware that they are being drawn into the clique. But once they become members, strong bonds of loyalty and emotional intimacy discourage their departure. This process is rarely a fully conscious one, as cliques do not start out as terrorist groups. They evolve in that direction as their mutual relationships deepen, in a spiral of greater loyalty, mutual devotion, self-sacrifice, and intimacy.” This is, of course, the definition of the concept of **unit cohesion** – so necessary to any military fighting unit.

“Dense networks like cliques commonly produce social cohesion and a collective identity and foster solidarity, trust, community, political inclusion, identity-formation, and other valuable social outcomes. Dense social networks foster intense face-to-face interactions in which collective identities are formed. The ‘bunch of guys’ phenomenon noted in the wiretaps of the Hamburg, Milan, and Montreal apartments illustrated the conversations that shaped the social life of clique members by altering individual and collective perspectives, transforming social ties, collectively processing

events and generating specific meanings and interpretations, and forging commitments to the clique and the jihad. This process of transformation from an alienated individual to a committed activist is commonly seen in religious sects and terrorist groups and requires investment in intense lengthy face-to-face interactions. This implies that the fear that vulnerable young Muslims may be recruited to the jihad through Internet messages is overblown. Reading and sending messages about the jihad on the Internet may make these individuals receptive to its appeal, but direct involvement requires face-to-face interaction.”

“Small-world networks are composed of nodes linked to well-connected hubs. Hubs receive most communications from the more isolated nodes. Because of their larger numbers, **innovations** are more likely in nodes. The nodes link to hubs who, in turn, send the information along their numerous other links. If the appropriate hub likes the innovation, he will likely encourage it by communicating to the appropriate nodes. The genesis of the plan behind 9/11 operations is a case in point.”

“Abdul Basit Karim’s [a.k.a. Ramzi Yousef’s] childhood friend Abdul Hakim Murad became a pilot in the United States in the late 1980s. He dreamed of using airplanes as weapons, filling them up with explosives and dive-bombing into the Pentagon or the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters. After Murad became a member of Karim’s terrorist cell around 1993, Karim introduced Murad to his uncle Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, who became fascinated with Murad’s idea. In late 1994, they all went to Manila to plot operations against the visiting Pope and President Clinton and devised the Bojinka plot of blowing up eleven airliners over the Pacific in a day’s time. Karim’s computer, captured in Manila in January 1995, contained the outlines of the Bojinka plot. One alternative to this plan was **crashing the airliners into the World Trade Center**, the White House, the **Pentagon**, the John Hancock Tower in Boston, the Sears Tower in Chicago, and the Transamerica Tower in San Francisco.”

“In 1996, Mohammed proposed Murad’s plan to Osama bin Laden, who allegedly replied: ‘Why do you use an axe when you can use a bulldozer?’ Instead of a single chartered plane filled with explosives targeting CIA headquarters, bin Laden suggested the ‘bulldozer’ approach of hijacking several passenger jets and flying them into their targets as airborne bombs. Mohammed expanded his plan to hijacking a dozen aircraft simultaneously on both coasts and even targeting nuclear power plants. By 1999, the difficulty of coordinating such an ambitious attack forced Mohammed to settle on the simultaneous hijacking of four passenger aircraft to be used as flying bombs. When he passed the baton for the execution of the operation to Atta and bin al-Shibh, the general outline of the plan was already sanctioned by bin Laden himself. Mohammed functioned as hubs classically do in the diffusion of the information. With their numerous links, hubs are among the first to notice and use the experience of innovators, Murad in this case. Their conversion to the new idea is the key to launching it throughout the network. If they resist it, they prevent it from reaching others, and the innovation will fail. If they accept it, they influence a large number of people.”

Sage man then takes on the topic of ‘flexibility.’ “In addition to rapidly diffusing innovations, the topology of a small-world network is also able to adapt to changing circumstances and solve unforeseen obstacles in the execution of general plans. This **flexibility** is especially useful in terrorist operations. When a terrorist network embarks on a major new operation, the people involved do not know exactly how they are going to do it. No role is specified in advance. Each mujahed starts with a general notion of what is required of him and improvises with other mujahedin as he goes along. Terrorist operations are not so frequent that they become routine, for law enforcement forces would then catch on and be able to prevent them. [i.e., there is **no pattern**, just like the independent planning of reconnaissance routes by individual pilots flying the Vigilante aircraft over North Vietnam]. These operations involve much uncertainty and many unanticipated obstacles. This state of affairs requires communication among mutually dependent mujahedin, in the sense that each possesses information and resources relevant to the other and none has enough to act in isolation. At

this local level, the mujahedin form a network of information processors, where the network handles large volumes of information efficiently without overloading any individual processor. [In computer science parlance, this describes the function of parallel processors in a computer network which has great robustness]. The **self-organizing hubs and nodes** topology of a **small-world network** or the **dense topology** of a **clique** performs this function very well. Communications are possible horizontally among multiple nodes [parallel processing], allowing them to solve their problems locally without having to refer them upward to Central Staff and overwhelming the vertical links of communication [Note: In intelligence gathering parlance, this relates to the ‘chatter’ overheard by NSA’s satellite monitoring of communication networks among the terrorists].” This is the genius of al-Qaeda’s network structure. This is the stuff of the very latest computer science technology in the world. And we claim that the Salafists are rising up **against MODERNITY**. How naïve! How foolish we are! They will compete with us ‘modern’ technology-savvy Westerners in their quest for the return of the Muslim caliphate of the past – using modern methods and modern technologies.

Sageman continues to compare the two competing organizations – ours and theirs [24]. “The **flexibility and local initiative of small-world networks and cliques** contrast with the rigidity of hierarchies, which do not adapt well to ambiguity but are excellent at exerting control. In an operating terrorist [or any other, including ours] hierarchy, the uneven burden of information processing jams the chain of command. Central staffers who try to micromanage will become overburdened and ineffective in dealing with unanticipated obstacles [witness the bungling among the FBI, CIA, JTTF, and other U.S. agencies in the path to 9/11 described by both John Miller in *The Cell* and Lawrence Wright in *The Looming Tower*]. Terrorist organizations advocate strict compartmentalization to maintain security in a hostile environment. This implies a hierarchy with slow communications because of the vulnerability to interception of faster ones. Slow communications prevent the network from responding to new developments in a timely fashion and will further degrade its effectiveness.”

“According to Gunaratna, who had an opportunity to examine several versions of the al-Qaeda training manuals and the Encyclopedia of the Afghan Jihad, al-Qaeda prescribed the traditional strict hierarchical cell structure according to a need-to-know principle with compartmentalization and secure communication. This model was ‘composed of many cells whose members do not know [members in another cell], so that if a cell member is caught the other cells would not be affected and work would proceed normally.’ Likewise, operations followed three phases. First, target intelligence is obtained by one team and relayed to an attack team in Afghanistan for planning and rehearsing. Next, a third team comes to the area of operations and organizes the logistical support: safe houses, vehicles, weapons, and explosives. Last, the attack team arrives, puts everything together, and conducts the attack. If it is not a martyrdom mission, it withdraws after completion of the operation. Although this strategy ensures secrecy and security, it also encourages failure.”

“To overcome the inevitable obstacles inherent in any large-scale terrorist organization, the operational network needs good communication at the local level. The 1998 East Africa embassy bombings, the 2000 USS *Cole* bombing, the 9/11 operations, and the 2002 Bali bombings succeeded owing to the fact that unanticipated local problems were resolved. The East African operation was very unusual in that it was five years in the making and the only one that involved the direct on-the-ground participation of the Central Staff, including Ubaydah al-Banshri, the head of al-Qaeda’s military committee. Although it did follow the pattern outlined in the manual, it had enough time to anticipate and resolve most obstacles. The USS *Cole* operations came on the heels of the failed attack on USS *The Sullivans* nine months earlier. The local team’s success in escaping detection allowed it to adjust to the circumstances and blow a large hole in the USS *Cole* on the second try. Despite the dramatic success of the 9/11 plan, carried out by the Hamburg clique, the operation itself was characterized by poor tradecraft, allowing investigators to quickly identify the perpetrators. There was little compartmentalization, and each cell mixed freely with the others. Atta had the authority to choose the date of the operation and the targets. The operators met frequently in Las Vegas and Florida and traveled together.

Indeed, the operation succeeded because they did not follow their own rules. Because most of the planners, including the field coordinator and principal executors, were from the same clique and informally benefited from the free flow of information, they were able to overcome the myriad obstacles they encountered. Likewise, four of the major participants in the 2002 Bali bombing belonged to the same family and another was their next-door neighbor from childhood. Although the field commander was not part of this tightly knit group, he no doubt benefited from the informal flow of information in the family. The success of these operations may be due to their violations of their own operational guidelines.” Local initiative was the key to success. Heretofore we in America have attributed success in military unit operations to ‘Yankee ingenuity’ when low-level troops improvised and crafted victory from the jaws of defeat. The trait described here for the jihadis is one and the same!

“Other global jihad operations were failures: the December 1999 Amman and Los Angeles millennial plots, the December 2000 Strasbourg plot, Christmas Eve 2000 Indonesian church and Manila bombings (even though it caused a few deaths, this must be considered a failure due to poor execution), the January 2000 USS *The Sullivans* plot; the fall 2001 Paris U.S. embassy plot; the December 2001 shoe bomber and Singapore bombing plots; and summer 2002 Straits of Gibraltar plot. The perpetrators tried to follow the guidelines in the manual but ran into unanticipated problems. The lack of effective communications led to failures of execution or to discovery of the plot.”

“A real danger of the global Salafi jihad is its **informal, decentralized** structure. Osama bin Laden seems to provide some upfront money for various operations and leaves it to the mujahedin to find the rest. Sometimes these activities to raise money through petty crime alert law enforcement officials, who later detect the major operation. This forces the mujahedin to **improvise**. These last minute strategies often fail, as the Los Angeles millennial and Straits of Gibraltar plot showed. But given a dedicated and methodical field commander who leaves no details to chance and is fully funded from Central Staff so as to avoid detection in raising money, the results of such local improvisation supported by good local communications among the plotters **can be devastating**.”

In a section entitled ‘*The Strength of Weak Bonds*, Sageman writes [25], “...weak ties to a clique can be a bridge to jihad. In many social processes such as getting a job, learning about new information and spreading fads or rumors, **weak ties are more important than strong friends**. In a social world of cliques, strong friends lump together into separate groups. So far, there is no connection between them and they are in danger of social implosion, totally disconnected from the rest of the world. What keeps these cliques connected to each other are **weak ties**, linking certain members of one clique to another. These ties are not strong enough to include the outside individuals in the clique. But they play a crucial role in bridging the clique to the rest of the world...weak ties play this crucial role in bringing enthusiastic new candidates to the jihad. This is a **self-generating process** from below rather than a recruitment drive from above.”

In the conclusion section of the chapter Sageman states that [26] “...the final shape of the global Salafi jihad consists of four major clusters surrounded by innumerable islands consisting of **cliques** and **singletons** of potential candidates. At the top is the Central Staff cluster, which connects to the rest of the clusters. The structure of this cluster is difficult to describe. It is both an **informal self-organizing group of friends and acquaintances** forged during the Soviet-Afghan war and a hierarchical organization with Osama bin Laden as its **emir**, supported by a **shura** [council] composed of about a dozen members and dominated by Egyptians [Note: Why does an Egyptian Muslim, Hesham Islam, serve as Deputy Secretary of Defense England’s right-hand-man on Middle Eastern and domestic Islamic issues in the Pentagon?]. The [Core Jihad] staff is divided into four committees, consisting of finances, military affairs, religious affairs, and public relations. There is no mention of personnel, recruitment, intelligence, or logistics. I presume that the first function probably falls under finances, whereas the last two come under the military committee. Recruitment is still a mystery.”

“The two Arab clusters approximate **small-world networks**. The Southeast Asian cluster consists of the Jemaah Islamiyah, which is more hierarchically organized. There are multiple alliances among separate organizations in the jihad. Close to the maghreb Arab cluster are the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat and former Groupe Islamique Armé, the Moroccan Salafia Jihadia, and various smaller violent jihad organizations. The Core Arab cluster is close to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (in fact, al-Qaeda is now officially merged with this organization), the Egyptian Islamic Group [formerly led by the blind Sheikh, Abdel Rahman], al-Tawhid, and various smaller Yemeni organizations. The Indonesian Jemaah Islamiyah is closely allied with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. These organizations are the **tip of the iceberg** of those who sympathize and may want to participate in the jihad. This much larger disconnected and unorganized network consists of **small cliques** and **singletons** [Hesham Islam, etc. ?] who want to join the jihad but have not been able to do so. This pool of potential candidates may increase or decrease according to **sociopolitical events** in the world. But in order to formally join the jihad, these individuals still **need to find a bridge**.”

“This network is the picture emerging from my data. Valdis Krebs published an early map of the network of the 9/11 terrorists based on preliminary data. The resulting mapping shows inaccurate links and neglects other much more important ones. He was on the right track, but rushed to publish too early. This present picture fits better what we have now learned about the structure and dynamics of the networks.”

“This **informal social network** analysis allows us to make statements that no other perspective in the field of terrorism ventures to state. These can be empirically tested. In this chapter, I made statements about the **self-organizing evolution** of some of the clusters and how they affected structure, robustness to random attacks, vulnerability to targeted attack, distribution and ability to carry on the fight in the United States, and the impact on its operational limits of the lack of social embeddedness of the network. I also made statements about the nature of the participants in the jihad, their frequent organizations in cliques, which have a transformational effect on their members, and the lack of a common profile of the mujahedin. I analyzed the impact of the new communication technology and the Internet on the jihad; argued that the topology of the network affects its flexibility and performance; and concluded with the crucial role played by weak acquaintances that provided the **critical bridges** to the jihad.”

“Osama bin Laden’s most brilliant stroke may well have been to allow the global Salafi jihad network to **evolve spontaneously and naturally**, and not interfere too much with its evolution, except to guide it through incentives because of his control of resources. The system developed into a **small-world network** with robustness and flexibility and became more militant and global for both internal and external reasons. Bin Laden’s relatively hands-off policy and repeated pleas for Islamist unity before the ‘far enemy’ is unusual. The common wisdom in the field of terrorism is that terrorist leaders suffer from ‘malignant narcissism’. As a practicing psychiatrist, I do not know of any reliable, agreed upon definition of this vague term. But it seems that terrorist leaders thrive on power and control of their organizations. Osama bin Laden seems to be the opposite. He is publicly self-effacing and seems content to relinquish control of an organization (which would have implied a more hierarchical structure) for the sake of efficacy. He shows his disapproval not by killing his potential rivals but simply by withdrawing funds from them until they come back to his fold. This type of leadership is rare and may well account for the robustness of the global Salafi jihad, its ability to respond to changing conditions, and its widespread appeal to Muslim youths.”

“A more common pattern of leadership is that exercised by Abu Bakar Baasyir. Although the more hierarchical Jemaah Islamiyah escaped detection far longer than al-Qaeda, it is now in danger of disappearing. In 2000, the Indonesian government had not reacted against the ambitious Christmas Eve church bombings. The 2002 Bali bombings galvanized them to action. Now most of the Jemaah Islamiyah leadership is in jail. The imprisoned members will be difficult to re-

place, although some other leaders are still at large and may be capable of rebuilding the network. Likewise, the government of Singapore was able to eliminate the Jemaah Islamiyah threat because its well-ordered structure was created from the top instead evolving from the bottom. In contrast, the topology of the rest of the global Salafi jihad allowed it to survive a far more devastating blow from a U.S. government mobilized by the horrors of the 9/11 operations.”

Footnotes:

Sageman, Marc, “Understanding Terror Networks,” pp. vii, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

² Ibid, pp. 24.

³ “*The sacred text of Islam, the Qur’an, uses the term, ummah, to refer to the community of believers. The term is used to describe both individual communities, both great and small, of faithful Muslims and to refer to the world-wide community of believers – in the latter sense of the term it is synonymous with **dar al-Islam**, or ‘The House of Islam’, which refers to the world Islamic community.*” <http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/UMMAH.htm>.

⁴ “*Ummah is an Arabic word which, in the context of Islam, is used to mean the diaspora or ‘Community of Believers’, and thus the whole Muslim world...Some modern Islamists use the term ‘Islamic Ummah’ or ‘Muslim Ummah’ to refer to all the people in the lands and countries where Muslims predominantly reside, and which were once under the control of the Islamic Caliphate. They thus include non-Muslim minorities as members of the ummah. Sharia (Islamic law) would apply to the citizens of the state. In such a unified ‘Islamic Ummah,’ the non-Muslim citizens would be subject to Dhimmi limitations and conditions.*” <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ummah>.

⁵ Ibid, Sageman, Marc, pp. 38.

⁶ Ibid, pp. 54.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 59.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 61.

⁹ Ibid, pp. 96.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 98.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 99.

¹² Ibid, pp. 107.

¹³ Ibid, pp. 113.

¹⁴ Ibid, pp. 114.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 116.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 135.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 137.

¹⁸ Ibid, pp. 139.

¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 140-141.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 142.

²¹ Ibid, pp. 145.

²² Ibid, pp. 151.

²³ Ibid, pp. 152-157.

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 165.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 169.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 171.