

## **Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century**

*Marc Sageman*

*Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2008. 197 pages.*

Acts of terrorism are committed the world over, driven by religious, political, social, and personal motives. But what causes someone to become a terrorist? Are there profiles that fit them? What can be done to counter terrorism? These and other questions are addressed by Marc Sageman in his book, although it focuses only on what he calls “Global Islamic terrorism.”

In his “Preface,” Sageman presents the problem of global terrorism and lays out the topics that each chapter will analyze. In the “Introduction,” he profiles the terrorist Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the son of Muslim Pakistani parents who had emigrated to England. We learn of his childhood and how he grew up, his personality traits, education, and activities. His story is told through his parents, his childhood friends, fellow prisoners, and people whom he had kidnapped. These stories portray an ambivalent figure, one who is highly intelligent, polite, and popular on the one hand, yet violent, cold-blooded, and cruel on the other.

Chapter 1 begins by listing the different approaches to studying twenty-first century terrorism: (a) the micro-level biographical approach, which focuses on the individual; (b) the macro-level social approach, which analyzes social conditions; and (c) the mixed approach, which combines observation of individual interactions with analysis of the environment and organizations outside the group. The author believes that the latter approach is the best suited for understanding the radicalization process.

Chapter 2 describes the evolution of terror movements based on Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda Central movement. The author informs us of their leaders, the struggles among them, and how one joins the movement, as well as its bases, areas of operation, objectives, aims, and *modus operandi*. Sageman also explains the difference between internal terrorism, which tries to change the regime inside the country (a topic with which his book does not deal) and global terror (aimed at Europe and the United States).

In chapter 3, Sageman analyzes the types and characteristics of youths who decide to join the global terror network. He rejects poverty, ignorance, naivety, brainwashing, prohibitions, and insanity on the grounds that his own research and the terrorists whom he has studied demonstrate that many of them grew up no differently than any other youths. Thus, he adduces other causes for their behavior – causes having to do with their origins, the regions

in which they grew up, events that happened to Muslims around the world, and more. He divides global terrorists into three chronological waves: (a) the first wave, that of Bin Laden's companions, many of whom come from well-to-do upper-class families; (b) the second wave, that of middle-class youths motivated by the suffering of Muslims and inspired by the members of the first wave's heroism; and (c) the third wave, that of the generation following the invasion of Iraq, usually comprising second-generation Muslim immigrants from the middle and lower classes.

Chapter 4 deals with the triggers of radicalization among Muslims living in non-Muslim countries, including television and radio broadcasts about the situation of Muslims elsewhere. Any perceived injustice to a Muslim Arab can turn into a trigger for joining global terror. Terrorists see themselves as helping fellow Muslims, as defenders of the moral faith of Islam, and as fighters for a better world even at the cost of their own life. The author describes ties of trust among people who join terror groups, such as childhood friends, relatives, and fellow students at a university.

In chapter 5, Sageman discusses the differences between Europe and the United States and explains why no further terror attacks have taken place there since 9/11, whereas several attacks have been carried out in Europe. He lists Among the reasons given are that the United States has fewer home-grown terrorists than Europe and is protected by two oceans; that anyone who wants to enter the United States has to undergo a personal investigation and obtain a visa, while in Europe one can move freely among the countries; that European countries contain ethnic groups that try to preserve their separate identities, whereas the national American ethos encourages foreigners and immigrants to assimilate; and that religious toleration is the norm in the United States and religious people are respected, while in Europe the pious are viewed with contempt, especially when they are Muslim.

Chapter 6 shows how the World Wide Web has affected the operation of terrorist organizations: face-to-face meetings have been replaced by communication via the Internet and chat forums; the age and gender of new recruits have changed; bombs can be made in accordance with instructions available on the Internet; less hierarchy and more equality; the Internet has made global terror accessible, and its forums have become centers of attraction; and Internet networks, which know no borders or time-zones, enable all individuals to communicate with each other.

In chapter 7, the author presents the post-9/11 attempts to eradicate global terror: the harsh American response that destroyed al-Qaeda's bases and training camps in Afghanistan, the emergence of a coalition to fight global terror, the pressure put on countries that support terror, and the emer-

gence of greater cooperation and preparedness. As a result of these activities, al-Qaeda's power as a global terror organization has been greatly reduced. In addition, autonomous third-wave terror groups now finance themselves and train alone, thereby creating a situation of leaderless jihad and a deterioration in the quality of operations.

Chapter 8, the book's last chapter, consists of the author's proposals on how to defeat the global terror threat by defining objectives and formulating strategy. Among his proposals are the following: keep the war against terror within its present parameters and do not expand it into a war against Islam; if military operations are undertaken as a last resort, one should refrain from killing civilians; terrorists should be treated like criminals (and not martyrs who sacrifice their lives for their coreligionists, as they represent only themselves); foreign forces should leave Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be resolved; terrorists should be arrested and put on trial; suspects should be arrested only if there is evidence; discrimination against Muslims, especially in Europe, should be ended and condemned; and the Muslim community should be treated with restraint and respect.

The notes (mainly references), which are located at the end of the book, are followed by a bibliography, an index, and, finally, an acknowledgment. The book is full of details, explanations, and proofs taken from a selection of interrogated terrorists and terror attacks that have occurred over the last few decades. These contribute greatly to understanding the processes, situations, and experiences undergone by people who become terrorists.

The book teaches us that eradicating terrorism is neither easy nor simple. Moreover, this goal cannot be realized unless the world unites and cooperates to annihilate or neutralize terrorism before it does even greater harm.

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