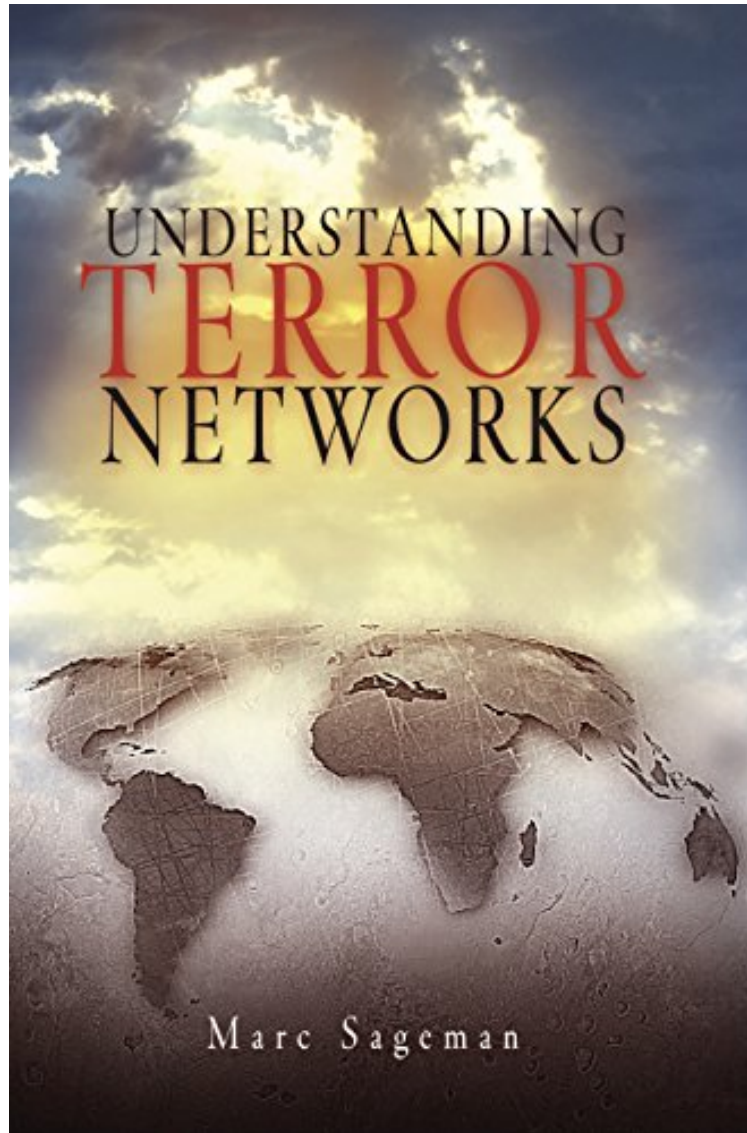


[Download ebook] Understanding Terror Networks

Understanding Terror Networks

Marc Sageman

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Marc Sageman : Understanding Terror Networks before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Understanding Terror Networks:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good analysis of terrorist networksBy Steven PetersonA most useful work on terrorism, with a focus on the origins of the Salafi jihad. His method? He examines the biographical data on 172 terrorists to study this "network." He, in essence, debunks a number of theories of terrorists, e.g., psychological theories. His thesis is clearly and simply stated thus (page vii): "[The data] suggest. . .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." His study of the linkages among four networks, the Maghreb Arabs, Core Arabs, Southeast Asians, and Central Staff (Osama bin Laden and his core supporters), leads him to describe the actual linkages in a nice diagram on page 138. He begins the volume with an historical analysis, tracing the roots of what has evolved into, as he puts it, the Salafi jihad. He looks at early figures, such as Mohamed ibn Abd al-Wahhab. He describes the emergence of a particular view of jihad. He notes the emergence of groups across a number of countries and how some of these, over time, developed into his putative Salafi jihad network. Then, to the heart of the matter. Why do some people become jihadists within this movement and others not? He ends up dismissing many standard theories and asserts, instead, that social networks are the key. The basis for this conclusion, again, is the perusal of the biographical data set that he developed (see the appendix listing those about whom he has gathered data on pages 185-189). In the final chapter, he speaks of how his analysis might assist in attacking the movement and reducing the odds of future terrorist actions from them. Whether or not readers will be convinced will be a matter for each person to judge. Nonetheless, he does make an effort to use his analysis to address strategy and tactics in the campaign against terrorism. This is a useful book to read, in juxtaposition with others by Bloom, Pape, and so on. As a package, these works help to illuminate the reality of terrorism--not the often simplistic views depicted in the media.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

al-Qaeda ideology By ArmyGreg11B

Some experts claim they do not forecast jihadism as becoming a mass movement. However, if the al-Qaeda ideology sways a few hundred followers in countries with many Muslim immigrants, that is enough to wreak havoc. Conscripted in Europe and other areas are fueled by the sense of isolation and dissatisfaction in Western culture. Though, not a lot is understood on the recruitment and retention of terrorist organizations outside of predisposed profiles. Sageman's work puts together an insightful and thorough analysis on how individuals are driven to join terrorist organizations, with particular regard to the global Salafi jihad movement. Sageman, a professor of psychiatry and ethno-political conflict, applies his mixed experience to construct an empirical argument for the socio-psychological reasons why people join diabolical organizations such as al-Qaeda. The title *Understanding Terror Networks* may generate a misconception with information seekers, as it does not review the broad spectrum of terrorist organizations. For instance, nationalist groups such as the PLO and IRA are neglected within this working, and since the author mostly focuses on the rise and practices of al-Qaeda and global Salafi jihad, most of the material only goes back to the 1980's. This limitation, though possibly misleading to students and scholars of the topic, provides strength in the overall presentation of the revealing information. It allows the reader to hone in on the carefully constructed argument of what drives individuals to enter such an illicit lifestyle and not become preoccupied with other unserviceable information. Sageman introduces the reader to the phenomenon of the modern, global jihad movement and presents where the ideas of such a wide scale, passionate operation have originated as he outlines Salafi jihad. The author briefly divulges on important contributors such as ibn Taymiyyah and Sayyid Qutb, and discussing the Muslim Brotherhood. Through these providers, Sageman offers an excellent outlining of the movement in its historical framework. The author relies on the notion that the entire movement itself can be dated back to the Soviet war in Afghanistan. As Muslims joined together for one central cause, fighting the communist invaders, they developed a cohesive bond. After the Russians pulled out, these foreign freedom fighters, or mujahedeen, sought to volunteer for further contributions to the Muslim cause. These volunteers were motivated by piggybacking on the ideology that previous Islamist theorist proposed and modern leadership exploited. This philosophy is centered on the opinion that the once strong Muslim world was overtime weakened by corrupting influences of the west. Sageman goes further to put claim on that most of these Muslims drawn toward a global jihad are essentially poorly schooled in traditional Muslim schooling. Prior to the global Salafi jihad movement, Egypt faced its own internal Islamist movement as organizations such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) began to arise, allowing future al-Qaeda leadership, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, to gain further useful organizational training. Groups such as the EIJ had the original goal to overthrow the Egyptian government and replace it with an Islamic state. Sageman points to this hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism as the precursor to what is seen today with the global jihad movement. The Gulf War of 1990-91, U.S. presence in Somalia (Muslim state), and international pressure on countries to expunge dangerous Islamic movement brought forth further aims to also include attacking the United States and Israel interests in Egypt and abroad. Sageman indulges more into the "blowback" theory of how the CIA covert operations during the Russian-Afghanistan War led to the global Salafi jihad movement. Although he pins the blame indirectly on U.S. operations, he puts forth a rarely seen perspective claiming that the global jihad was a course of evolution; the gradual process in which something changes. He implies that the traditional Afghan Arabs of 1988 were not the same people of the global Salafi mujahedeen in 1998. This understanding alone undercuts the theory. Non-Afghan mujahedeen went to Sudan after the war, only to be exiled many years later. Their return brought forth the global Salafi jihad. In chapter three, Sageman presents an analytical portion which he is most suited for. Using quantitative data of 172 members of four specific terrorist networks, including the Central Staff (head leadership), the Core Arabs, the Maghreb Arabs (North Africa), and the Southeast Asians, he presents a comprehensive analysis to test popular social explanations of terrorism. Through this process he is able to accurately refute most preconceived concepts of what makes up a terrorist, including faith as an adolescent, family structure, and geographical origin. The

most interesting result of the social background analysis is a look at education. Sageman says that the common belief is that terrorists come from strong religious-based school system which has enabled them to take up the path of God. However, after analyzing 137 terrorists, more than 83 percent (114) came from secular educational backgrounds. There is also a belief that terrorists are reasonably ignorant and vulnerable to brainwashing. Through the data of 132 terrorists, more than 71 percent (94) had at least some college experience. Sageman goes deeper into his analysis by putting forth individual factors leading to joining a jihad, especially psychological explanations. He asserts that a lack of empirical data is the plague of open psychological research on terrorists and leaves the field exposed to wild speculations. Mental illness and personality traits are explored and concluded with Sageman stating that as concepts are stretched to be all-inclusive, they lose their practicality. Beyond refuting certain aspects that specialists and the general populous take for granted, Sageman takes a different approach to understanding what drives the individual into joining the global jihad and allows him to reason out his actions. He attempts to present the recruitment process but even admits that this perspective of enticement has him bewildered. Sageman has narrowed down three terrorist tactics to drive up recruits, which are kinship, friendship, and worship. Relative deprivation, religious predisposition, and ideological appeal have commonly become seen as the necessities for the decision to becoming a freedom fighter. However, Sageman's theory and main argument to undertaking such a destructive role can be attributed solely to social bonds. He states these connections are the critical element and even herald ideological obligations. Moving past what may be deemed as the author's strongest empirical evidence for joining the jihad, Sageman covers the social communication between networks of terrorist cells. He draws upon the idea that stemming from the four main networks there has evolved numerable islands, or cliques, which make up the main body of the overall organization. He determines that these separate small groupings as both strong and weak. Strengths include robustness and flexibility. The main weakness of these cliques is remoteness and an inability to connect with the top. However, new methods in communication, such as the internet, allows for easier streamlining and dissemination. Sageman sporadically acknowledges the threat from this movement and occasionally displays his thoughts on combating such an all-encompassing undertaking. One argument he puts forth on battling back is to continuously attack and remove hubs, or communication linkages, to the point where a group would be incapable of mounting sophisticated large-scale attacks. He also recommends vigilance, for individuals and governments. He recommends governments to investigate previous graduates from jihad training facilities. The strongest recommendation is Sageman's request to shrink the potential recruitment pool through nonaggressive tactics. He describes fundamental Muslims as dissimilar and a singular policy that attempts to dissuade all jihadists could be counterproductive. These peaceful fundamentalist could be the key to disabling the network which threatens society. Understanding Terror Networks is a unique perspective on global Salafi jihad movement. Marc Sageman displays his prowess in the field of psychiatry and ethno-political conflict by presenting a painstaking viewpoint of the layout of what motivates recruitment. By using data of previously detained and analyzed terrorists, Sageman is able to quantitatively disprove previous notions of terrorist profiles. This more accurate description now allows policymakers to aim resources in more valued and effective directions. Although misleading in its title, this book clearly demonstrates the threat imposed on western society by a diabolic network of clear headed, conscious extremists. 42 of 43 people found the following review helpful. A Book Challenging the Dominant Perceptions of Al Qaeda By David Southworth Marc Sageman, holding degrees in doctors of psychiatry and sociology, as well as experience working with the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s as a case officer with the CIA, has provided original insight into the nature of the global Islamist (he labels it Salafist) jihad that perpetrated 9/11 and still challenges free people of the world today. Through empirical research, including studying the biographies 175 known terrorists, Sageman has come to the conclusion that the Al Qaeda threat resembles a network of self-selected individuals who, with their fellow conspirators, are carrying out terror attacks against their targets. This social network resembles an airline, with main hubs where more information passes through and connects the various cliques that make up the small teams of terrorists. The hubs pass information from the leadership down to the cliques, and vice-versa. These teams are held together more by friendship, kinship, and discipleship than any traditional recruitment methods. The keys to understanding Al Qaeda are in its flexibility, its close-knit ties within each individual clique, and the shared sense of purpose in executing terror attacks. Furthermore, if the cliques could not somehow form a "bridge" with one of the terror "hubs" it is unlikely to go through with any major terror attacks. This understanding of Al Qaeda as a series of "hubs" and "nodes" is a valuable insight. I believe this book would be enjoyed by anyone who read it. I highly recommend Sageman's work.

For decades, a new type of terrorism has been quietly gathering ranks in the world. America's ability to remain oblivious to these new movements ended on September 11, 2001. The Islamist fanatics in the global Salafi jihad (the violent, revivalist social movement of which al Qaeda is a part) target the West, but their operations mercilessly slaughter thousands of people of all races and religions throughout the world. Marc Sageman challenges conventional wisdom about terrorism, observing that the key to mounting an effective defense against future attacks is a thorough understanding of the networks that allow these new terrorists to proliferate. Based on intensive study of biographical data on 172 participants in the jihad, Understanding Terror Networks gives us the first social explanation of the global

wave of activity. Sageman 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. 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. Sageman 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. *Understanding Terror Networks* combines Sageman's scrutiny of sources, personal acquaintance with Islamic fundamentalists, deep appreciation of history, and effective application of network theory, modeling, and forensic psychology. Sageman's unique research allows him to go beyond available academic studies, which are light on facts, and journalistic narratives, which are devoid of theory. The result is a profound contribution to our understanding of the perpetrators of 9/11 that has practical implications for the war on terror.

From Publishers Weekly: Sageman, a University of Pennsylvania professor of psychiatry and ethnopolitical conflict, applies his varied experience and skills to build an empirical argument for the socio-psychological reasons why someone would join an organization such as al-Qaeda. As an officer in the Foreign Service in the late '80s, Sageman worked closely with Islamic fundamentalists during the Afghan-Soviet war and gained an intimate understanding of the development, form and function of their networks. Sageman wrote this book in order to dispel incorrect assertions about terrorist networks made by so-called experts. Using public documents, Sageman tells us that the motivation to join a militant organization does not necessarily stem from extreme poverty or extreme religious devotion but mostly from the need to escape a sense of alienation. He also disproves conventional wisdom that terrorist groups employ a "top-down" approach to recruiting, showing instead that many cells evolve from friendships and kinships and that the seeds of sedition grow as certain members of a cell influence the thinking of the others. Unfortunately, Sageman's academic and dry prose will lose readers who would be interested in his insightful argument. The growing field of counterterrorism includes many more readers than just academics, and a book like this one could have easily covered a greater portion of this market if more care had been taken to enhance the writing. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "Pathbreaking. Combining his skills as a political scientist and a psychiatrist, Sageman dissects the lives of nearly two hundred al Qaeda members and provides unprecedented insight into terrorist ideology, motivation, and action. More than anyone else, Sageman understands the staying power of robust terrorist networks, and he proposes a multipronged response to target al Qaeda. *Understanding Terror Networks* is timely, very readable, and original. It is a must read for the informed reader and specialist." Rohan Gunaratna, author of *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* "In the late '80s, Sageman worked closely with Islamic fundamentalists during the Afghan-Soviet war and gained an intimate understanding of the development, form, and function of their networks. Sageman wrote this book in order to dispel incorrect assertions about terrorist networks made by so-called experts." Publishers Weekly "Understanding Terror Networks is a new and different view of a new and different form of terrorism. The insights and conclusions of Sageman befit his name and will benefit seasoned observers of terrorism, practitioners, and newcomers to the field." Security Management "The most sophisticated analysis of global jihadis yet published. . . . His conclusions have demolished much of the conventional wisdom about who joins jihadi groups." William Dalrymple, *New York Times Book Review* "One of the most original and innovative social science studies ever conducted on how individuals are driven to join terrorist organizations." *Foreign Affairs Magazine* "The best source of information about modern Islamic terrorists." Freeman Dyson, *New York Times Book Review* "The author effectively refutes the traditional explanation that factors such as poverty, trauma, madness, or ignorance drive people to terrorism. Instead he highlights the crucial role of social networks in the transformation of socially isolated individuals into fanatical mujahideen. . . . This thoughtful book combines theories with empirical data to provide valuable insights. . . . Highly recommended." *Choice* "Marc Sageman advances our understanding of al Qaeda as only the best-known part of the global Salafi jihad. A major contribution to network analysis in its own right, this is a very powerful book." Randall Collins, author of *Interaction Ritual Chains* "Terrorism analysts should read the book to correct some of their profession's assumptions. The concerned citizen will gain a sobering sense of the pervasiveness and stealth of potential jihadist networks around the globe." *Military Times* "Marc Sageman is a former CIA case officer who worked undercover on the Afghan frontier during the 1980s. . . . In *Understanding Terror Networks* he spreads out a feast of stimulating insights." *Washington Post* "Marc Sageman breaks new ground in *Understanding Terror Networks*. He deftly dismantles the pet and dangerously mistaken theories of both the terrorism 'experts' and those in our government charged with defending against terrorists: that al Qaeda is an organic replica of a Mafia crime family, and that the tactics used against organized crime will somehow work against our new adversaries. Sageman tells us not

only who these people are who seem unafraid to die as they seek to harm us, but why they do what they do. A must read for all concerned with the phenomenon of terrorism."Milt Bearden, author of *The Black Tulip* and coauthor of *The Main Enemy*"*Understanding Terror Networks* is one of the most insightful studies published so far on the global Salafi jihad. . . . A major contribution to the academic literature on terrorism. It is required reading for anyone seeking to understand how widespread the terrorist threat has become and the measures that are required to counteract it."Washington Times

About the Author Marc Sageman, M.D., Ph.D., is a former foreign service officer who was based in Islamabad from 1987 to 1989, where he worked closely with Afghanistan's mujahedin. He has advised various branches of the U.S. government in the war on terror and is a forensic psychiatrist in private practice in Washington, D.C. His second book, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, is also available from the University of Pennsylvania Press.