Theoretical Frames on Pathways to Violent Radicalization

Understanding the Evolution of Ideas and Behaviors, How They Interact and How They Describe Pathways to Violence in Marginalized Diaspora

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ARTIS RESEARCH & RISK MODELING

ARTIS is a scientific research group institute dedicated to improving understanding of collective political and cultural violence and risk assessment and modeling through field-based research. At ARTIS, we believe that multidisciplinary field research is an essential ingredient to scientific research on human cognition and behavior. Consequently, we join together top scientists, universities and research institutions with policy makers and experts so that multidisciplinary field research can better enhance scientific understanding of political and cultural violence.
PROJECT TEAM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Theoretical Summary (Concluding Hypothesis):

As the result of our case studies, we hypothesize that the development of terrorist networks, plots and attacks resembles more the development of a complex system, with inherently chaotic and unpredictable characteristics, which can nevertheless be evaluated for probabilistic and path-dependent developments. Much like water that becomes heated to boiling, or even more like a soup with locally different densities and viscosities, it may be impossible in principle to precisely predict where the rising cones and bubbles will first appear; however, likely “neighborhoods” and path-dependent developments can be projected. Understanding the dynamic interaction of interpersonal behaviors, social emotions (e.g., moral outrage) and collectively distributed cognitions (including causal and moral construals of the world) is critical to projecting path-dependent developments.

The growth and development of terrorist networks is largely a decentralized and evolutionary process, based on contingent adaptations to unpredictable events and improbable opportunities, more the result of localized tinkering (of fragmentary connections between semi-autonomous parts) than intelligent design (hierarchical command and control). As in any natural evolutionary process, individual variation and environmental context are the creative and critical determinants of future directions and paths. To ignore or essentiaistically abstract away from variation and context is to entirely miss the character of natural group formation and development along with better chances for intervention and prevention of enemy attacks from the bottom up rather than the top down.

Empirical Summary (Case Studies Content):

Distinguishing networks of violent extremists from mere supporters. Many millions of people express sympathy with Al Qaeda or other forms of violent political expression that support terrorism, but relatively few willingly use violence. From a 2001—2007 survey of over 35 predominantly Moslem nations (with 50,000 interviews randomly chosen to represent about 90 percent of the Muslim world), a Gallup study projected that 7 percent of the worlds 1.3 billion Muslims (some 90 million people) felt that the 9/11 attacks were “completely justified.” If one includes Muslims who considered the attacks “largely justified,” their ranks almost double. And adding those who deemed the attacks “somewhat justified” boosts the number to 37 percent (which implies hundreds of millions of Muslims).1

But of the many millions who express support for violence against the out-group there only some thousands who show willingness to actually commit violence. Among Palestinians, although surveys conducted during the Second Intifāda show that upwards of 80 percent of the population has supported suicide bombing,2 only a small percentage have been willing to follow through

2 See polls by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research at http://www.pcpsr.org/.
with such extreme action (for example, prior experiments and surveys by our research team indicate that most Palestinians who feel humiliation would not directly engage in violence, whereas those who feel moral outrage at the humiliation of others might).³

Our case studies indicate that those who do move on to violence, usually emerge in small groups of action-oriented friends. They often come from the same neighborhood and interact during activities such as soccer or extracurricular study groups. These young people self-mobilize to the tune of a simple, superficial, but broadly appealing “takfiri” message of withdrawal from impure mainstream society and of a need for violent action to cleanse it. It is a surprisingly flat, but fluid message pre-adapted to any new event in the world, which is readily shared by young people. Most of these young people are “born again” in their late teens and early twenties and have little knowledge of religion beyond the fact that they consider themselves “true Muslims” who must fight enemies near and far to defend their friends and the faith that makes their friendship meaningful and enduring.

One telltale sign of radicalization in the move is when members of a neighborhood mosque or cultural center (or just an informal discussion group that meets at a bookstore or at picnics) gel into a militant faction that leaves, voluntarily or involuntarily. This is what happened, for example, when Ali al-Timimi and his group of paintball buddies were ejected from the Dar al-Arqam Cultural Center in Falls Church, Virginia after praising the 9/11 attack (12 members of the group were later convicted for aiding Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistani group sympathetic to Al Qaeda), or when the soccer-playing Salafi Imam at the M-30 mosque in Madrid expelled Serhane Fakhet, “El Tunecino,” and friends (who continued to self-radicalize, playing soccer and picnicking together, in the lead up to the Madrid train bombings, see “The Madrid Case”). Marc Sageman has generalized this move from low-level community activism to high-stakes militancy in a counter-cultural cause within the framework of a “Blob to BoG theory” of radicalization (see “The Hofstad Case”).

Soccer, paintball, camping, hiking, rafting, body building, martial arts training and other forms of physically stimulating and intimate group action create a bunch of buddies, which becomes a “band of brothers” in a glorious cause. It usually suffices that a few (usually at least two) of these action buddies come to believe in the cause, truly and uncompromisingly, for the rest to follow even unto death. Humans, like all primates, need to socially organize, lead and be led; however, notions of “charismatic leaders” going out or sending recruiters to “brainwash” unwitting minds into joining well-structured organizations with command and control is exaggerated.


* Takfiris would “excommunicate” (takfir) fellow Muslims as lackeys of the infidel (kafir) and de facto apostates, and so justify killing them along with the infidels to save the Muslim community from conquest and corruption. Takfiri doctrine represents an extreme form of Salafism, and modern Salafism is historically related to Wahabism. But it is important to understand that Wahabis are not Takfiris, and neither are most Salafis. Just as Calvinism rejects opposition to the (Protestant) state, so a central tenet of Wahabism is loyalty to the (Saudi) State and rejection of violence against fellow (Sunnni) Muslims. Nearly all Saudis are also Salafis, as are many if not most Egyptians. But for the most part, they reject Takfiri doctrine and often deeply oppose it (much as most Christian fundamentalists reject Christian supremacist doctrine). Unlike Hofstad, Madrid and other Al Qaeda wannabes, few Hamas militants express support Takfiri doctrine.
For the most part, the “new wave” of terrorism that expresses allegiance to Al Qaeda tends to be poorer, less educated and more marginal than the old Qaeda or its remnants. It relies to a greater extent for financing and personnel on pre-existing petty criminal networks because large-scale financing is easily tracked. In his book Leaderless Jihad, Sageman finds that more recent formations of terrorist networks resemble previous “waves” insofar as they are built up around friendship and kinship; however, violent extremists today are more marginal relative to surrounding society.

This “new wave” pattern of increasingly marginality and “born-again” religion is reflected in European and North African groups that express allegiance to Al Qaeda, as well as foreign fighters in Iraq (41 percent from Saudi Arabia and 39 percent from North Africa between summer 2006 and fall 2007, many of whom come in bunches from the same town, for example, more than 50 young volunteers from Darnah, Libya, according to West Point’s Sinjar Report on Foreign Fighters in Iraq). Although more nationally-oriented militant groups, such as Hamas and Lebanese Hizbollah, tended to resemble the earlier Al Qaeda wave in being generally more educated, skilled and well-off economically than the surrounding population, they, too, are beginning to show signs of regression to a more meager state.

The Relevance of Ideology and Values in Terror Networks. European governments, especially, have multiple high priority programs to isolate Islamic preachers, or Imams, who are radical and to encourage moderate Imams to tell kids what’s right. But when adults lecture bunches of young people who have bonded about how they should think and behave it often backfires. Think of the current anti-cigarette campaigns sweeping the world: they have brought down cigarette use everywhere except among young people, who in many places are now smoking more. Only when their friends convince them to stop smoking do they generally stop.

The strategy of cultivating moderate Imams, though, carries an even greater handicap of being irrelevant. In fact, very few people ever become terrorists in mosques. They may gather and plan outside some mosques, as did the 9/11 plotters from Hamburg, the Hofstad group and the Madrid train bombers, but even they did most of their plotting hanging out together in neighborhood restaurants, barbershops, playing sports, and in their friends’ homes.

Ideology isn’t the only cause of willingness to die in a terrorist act, but it may be a critical ingredient (see the “Sacred Values” section of “The Hebron Case”). As we see in our case studies, though, the ideology that motivates people will not be found fixed in texts, like the Bible or Koran, but framed and interpreted by the issues of the day. Unembodied ideologies and doctrines, such as canonical texts or pronouncements, appear to have little relevance to understanding the formation and development of terrorist networks. It is only by tracking the ways ideas and values are distributed and embedded in networks, where detailed content is often quite variable and fluid but where a common superficial frame is easily grasped, that they acquire sense and force.

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One interesting aspect of recent developments is increasing association of terror networks with petty criminal elements (owing in large part to success in stopping more legal and lucrative sources of terrorist financing). A striking feature of this development is that at least some of the marginal criminal elements who join violent extremist groups become willing to die for the cause. This fact undermines the common claim that their behavior is driven exclusively by a rational calculation of “opportunity costs” (or instrumental and consequentialist versions of “rational actor” models). [A competing claim that terrorists in general, and suicide bombers in particular, have irrational “criminal minds” has been debunked by numerous studies].

Although weighing of costs and benefits no doubt enter into tactical decisions made by terrorists (e.g., in prior studies, most jihadis we interviewed would give up a suicide bombing if they could accomplish the same ends with a roadside bombing) the strategic decision to sacrifice one’s life for a cause may ultimately be determined by a moral logic of “sacred values” that drives behavior independently, or all out of proportion, from prospects of success (e.g., prospective suicide bombers decline to consider postponing a suicide bombing to save their families or communities from almost certain death or devastation in retaliation for their actions). Recent studies in a variety of contexts (environmental activism, patriotism, cultural conflict, etc.) indicate that “sacred values” have privileged ties to emotions, are insensitive to tradeoffs and material costs, and are bound up with core sentiments of personal and collective identity.  

Top-down networks – including hierarchies as in most government, military and law enforcement organizations – are more efficient in targeted planning and execution of particular tasks. They are also more amenable to legal and moral control in terms of accountability and responsibility. In contrast, bottom-up networks are more efficient at rapid adaptation to ever changing conditions. They are more able to innovate, but also more susceptible to infiltration and disruption. Criminal networks (like Mafia or some drug “cartels”) overcome this limitation by establishing reliable relations of trust mostly through kinship, friendship, apprenticeship. However, cause-inspired terror networks have the added incentive of commitment to a moral cause, which allows for greater sacrifice than is usually possible with typical reward structures based on material incentives (regular police, army).

Devotion to a moral cause is not a network property, but in terrorist networks, as with revolutionary movements generally, this may allow resource-deficient movements to survive, and eventually triumph, against much stronger material forces. (Indeed, research indicates that, since 1950, “weak actors” have won a majority of their “asymmetric” conflicts against “strong actors” who have at least ten times the destructive force). This suggests that once militants become moral absolutists who are “locked in” to a cause that they consider to be sacred and non-negotiable, then their further development towards terrorism — or attempts to lure them away from terrorism — can no longer be managed through a strictly “carrots or sticks” approach. Elaborating and offering alternative models and ways to heroism, adventure, and a transcendental sense of one’s purpose and meaning in life may prove more effective in diverting quixotic but heartfelt youthful commitment to less violent paths.

Recommended Theoretical Approaches:

Our recommendation is to generate dynamic patterns of behavioral, social structural and cognitive interactions that can help to guide overall strategy in dealing with the evolution of adversarial groups in the field, rather than purely tactical information for military destruction or police arrests. The overall goal is to provide information of value to policymakers and war fighters that will make it less likely that our people and armed forces will be put in harm’s way, or will have to resort to or suffer violence in difficult situations.

Until now, a major problem facing a rigorous and comprehensive study of national and transnational terrorism, as well as an understanding of how natural groups evolve in adversarial situations generally, has been a lack of strong relational data that is culturally-informed. Lack of such data has resulted in theorizing and theoretical modeling often divorced from important policy questions that the U.S. and allies face in dealing with adversarial groups under natural field conditions. There is any number of stock models and software programs designed to organize and analyze data, but few meaningful relational data to be analyzed that could generate insight into the social, ethnic, historical and ideational ties that link actors to one another and to actions against adversaries.

For example, a key issue for radicalization unto action is how to get from a group's ideological commitment to the actual individuals that act (as opposed to supporters who share militant values but don’t act, or actors who join for kinship or friendship rather than for values). Political events (e.g., the Iranian revolution, 9/11, invasion of Iraq, incursion into Gaza) and general conditions that foment radical discontent (denial of civil liberties, dashed expectations, perceived humiliation) are undoubtedly part of the landscape that canalizes (radicalizes) people towards terrorism. But, at the operational level, far more important may be the contingent relationships between individual actors themselves, and the evolving nature of social groups and networks these individuals form.

Specifically, we recommend the use of two behavioral modeling approaches in conjunction with the elaboration of a social-cognitive theory of radicalization:

1. **Social Network Analysis of Terrorist Relations and Their Natural Histories.**

Our case studies strongly suggest that there is empirical leverage to modeling terrorist attack groups as social networks with ever fluid and changing structural relationships, and that otherwise benign social relations (such as friendship, family, and marriage linkages) are key to understanding the dynamic pathways that lead individuals to participate in acts of collective violence. Our case studies also reveal that measures of interconnectedness and centrality, as well as information related to “reputation” (e.g., frequency and role of participation in prior actions) are also critical.

Information about individuals in the network should first consist of a detailed categorization of basic biographical and socio-economic data that includes date of birth, place of birth, nationality,
ethnicity, education, links to relevant social or educational organizations (political parties, religious institutions, etc.) as well as detailed information on current organizational affiliation and previous organizational affiliation (both militant and non-militant). Also to be included are about details incarceration, release, and death information. The foundation for the entry of information addresses the vast network of connections that form the glue that holds the diverse array of violent extremists together. This work includes a comprehensive examination of ties of acquaintance, friendship, family, educational and social organization, and possible terrorist training (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan). These ties are rigorously documented based on a methodology created by our research team to discern differences in the strength of ties over time and in the reliability of the ties based on the available open-source information.

Comprehensive does not mean complete. Information on currently active clandestine groups will probably never be complete, though we can endeavor be as complete as possible. Since the most reliable data is found in trial proceedings (where cross-examination most closely approximates peer review in science), a concerted effort must be made to collect terrorist trial transcripts and evidence that have taken place around the world. Since terrorism research is not about capturing terrorists, but about understanding the phenomenon, lack of completeness is not a fundamental problem because what counts are patterns and trends rather than an exhaustive set of individual evidence. Thus, by increasing the number of subjects we can approach comprehensiveness. Time-series connection data will allow us to examine how counter-terrorist activities affect terrorist network structures (including information on post-operation devolution of networks).

2. Evolutionary Modeling of Terror Networks as Emerging Products of Socially Dynamic Systems

Instead of viewing culture as a “top-down” structure that imposes itself on individual beliefs and behaviors, we recommend focusing on modeling micro-processes at the level of individual beliefs and behaviors. This allows us to trace how macro-structural norms and other social regularities emerge from decentralized local interactions between people. Thus, we avoid essentializing culture, treating it as an independent variable, or using it as a circular source of explanation for differences between groups. This also contrasts markedly with “influence models” that are common to economics and political science. For these models seek to “explain” socio-cultural macro-phenomena (e.g., political conditions, religious ideology) in terms of the “influences” of other socio-cultural macro-phenomena (e.g., economic conditions, material mode of production), where the causal nature of these influences remains materially unanalyzed and inscrutable.

In the norms and rules approach to cultural modeling there is a basic assumption that memory and transmission mechanisms are reliable enough for standard Darwinian selection to operate over cultural traits (i.e., mutation rate is significantly lower than selection bias). On this view, inheritable variants (of ideas, artifacts, and behaviors) are copied (imitated, reproduced) with high enough fidelity so that they resemble one another more than they do unrelated forms. Only then can they be repeatedly chosen as favorable for cultural survival or eliminated as unfavorable by selection. Instead, we describe terrorist cultures in terms of networks of beliefs and behaviors that may be reliably (in a statistical sense) but diversely distributed across individuals in a population (the population itself being circumscribed by the intersection of these various distributions). This is what we mean by “cultural epidemiology.”
As background to this approach, with nearly two decades of funding by NSF we have been collecting data on mental models of the environment, and behaviors related to environmental management, among three generations from each of several populations in Mesoamerica and North America (Itza’ Maya, Q’eqchi’ Maya, Yukatek Maya, Spanish-speaking Ladinos, Native American Menominee from northern Wisconsin, majority-culture hunters and fisherman from northern Wisconsin, Amish farmers from northern Wisconsin, etc.). This has allowed us to trace changes in knowledge and behaviors across generations and groups (including groups competing for the same resources in the same place. Note also that a distributional view of cultural is compatible with agent-based modeling of macro-regularities from the decentralized local interactions of heterogeneous autonomous agents (when the model is divorced from simplifying assumptions that reify norms (e.g., if agent X manifests behavior A in a spatially proximate neighborhood of agent Y at time T, then X and Y will both manifest A at time T1; trade with a neighbor only if that neighbor is red, etc.).

There is a great hunger for “predictability” and “parameterization,” and the mathematics to back it up in studies of terrorist groups in particular, and natural human groups in general. These are fine for trying to figure out precise sets of conditions when an airplane engine or even a company of soldiers might break up. But such notions may be meaningless when applied to the evolutionary development of most natural phenomena, including the formation and development of terrorist groups.

For example, one fashionable set of models that seems to work for the growth of mobile phone networks across the world is called “scale-free.” The general idea is that larger networks are structured in the same way as their embedded smaller networks, like Russian dolls. Such models are practically worthless for understanding the “bumpy” opportunistic and evolutionary processes involved in the spontaneous formation of self-organizing human groups. At best, we may be able to model a set of path-dependent futures for development, possible ways that things might turn out. But the real-world triggers that move things along one path rather than another are often thoroughly unpredictable. As we see from our case studies, contingent and even random events, involving seemingly marginal and peripheral connection, can become key to how a terrorist group or plot develops.

3. Elaboration of a Social-Cognitive Theory of Radicalization

We hypothesize that: (a) radicalization can be described on the cognitive level as shifting of moral priorities where the duty to violent political action proceeds up a ladder of perceived virtues such that this duty must override other obligations; (b) cognitive dissonance can explain the graduated nature of an individual’s radicalization; and (c) that vicarious cognitive dissonance may explain how radicalization occurs across networks. These propositions are both consistent

with patterns observed in our case studies, and with preliminary experimental evidence in other research our team has carried out (see section “Toward a Social-Cognitive Theory of Radicalization”).

On the level of observed patterns in the Madrid, Hofstad and Hebron cases, this hypothesis captures, first, the graduated pattern of radicalization. Each difficult or confronting behavior alters moral priorities, leading to a greater level of radicalization. Second, it accounts for the importance of group bonding activities. Creation of strong bonds similar to kinship bonds may have multiple importances. For example, strong bonds may facilitate a desire to sacrifice self for collective. These tight group bonds may also lead to the spreading of radicalization across a network as a function of vicarious cognitive dissonance. The greater one identifies with a network, the more likely their own moral priorities will be influenced by the observed behavior of others. Identification with a collective may be measured by the strength of common bonds and the frequency of collective behaviors such as eating, team sports or collective prayer.

Both the theory of classic cognitive dissonance and of vicarious cognitive dissonance have important consequences for understanding the radicalization process. The finding that one’s beliefs and preferences can change, whether consciously or not, in response to simply articulating an opposing statement or argument, or making a difficult choice elegantly explains the pattern of individual radicalization observed in case studies. When this is extended to attitude change in response to another’s actions, it is offers important insight to network radicalization. Simply witnessing a member of one’s ingroup either not behaving in accordance with stated beliefs (for example, expressing violent beliefs without acting on them) or making a difficult moral choice (for example, choosing to take part in radical action in defiance of a parent’s wishes) can change the observers own moral priorities leading to spreading radicalization.

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HOFSTAD CASE
& THE BLOB THEORY

AUTHORED BY
Marc Sageman
The Hofstad Case

For about two years, from October 2003 to October 2005, the Netherlands witnessed a series of arrests on terrorism charges by young Muslims loosely connected to each other. On October 17, 2003, five young Muslims (Samir Azzouz, Ismail Akhnikh, Jason Walters, Rdouan al Issar and Mohammed Fahmi Bouhabe) were arrested on suspicion of planning an attack on Dutch soil, but they were released about ten days later because of lack of evidence. Eight months later, on June 30, 2004, one of the previous young men, Samir Azzouz was arrested for possible complicity in an armed robbery of a supermarket. While searching his house, the police discovered maps of Schiphol Airport and a nuclear power plant in Borssele as well as chemical precursors for homemade bombs. Azzouz was tried but acquitted on April 6, 2005 as the judge found that his homemade bomb would never have exploded because the ingredients were too weak. However, on appeal two years later, the Appellate Court vacated the original verdict based, and convicted Azzouz and sentenced him to 4 years in prison.

On September 27, 2004, Yayha Kadouri, an active member of one of the Internet forums that the Hofstad group used to promote their views, was arrested for threatening some Dutch politicians. On searching his house, the police discovered components of a homemade bomb. Later, Kadouri confessed that he had tested the detonator in his backyard with success but a previous bomb had malfunctioned and failed to detonate. He was convicted but sentenced to only six months in detention because he was under the age of 18 years.

In the meantime, on November, 2, 2004, one of his friends, Mohammed Bouyeri murdered Theo van Gogh, who had made a film that the group had found very insulting to Islam. Bouyeri was later found guilty of murder and sentence to life in prison without the possibility of parole. A week later, on November 10, 2004, the police moved in to arrest two other members of this network, Jason Walters and Ismail Akhnikh at their apartment. The pair refused to surrender and threw a grenade at the police, which severely injured one of the policemen. They were convicted and sentenced to 15 and 13 years in prison respectively. However, on appeal, Akhnikh’s sentence was reduced to 15 months.

Six months after the arrest, on June 22, 2005, the police arrested three more people in the network for suspected attempts to murder Dutch policemen. When Nourredine el Fatmi, his wife Soumaya Sahla and her friend Martine van den Oever were arrested, they were found in possession of a loaded assault rifle. The two women were released, but Sahla was arrested again on September 5, 2005 for illegal possession of a hand gun in possible preparation of a terrorist attack. Both el Fatmi and Sahla were found guilty of charges of possession of an illegal firearm for the first arrest, and Sahla was again found guilty of possession of an illegal weapon in terms of her second arrest.

On October 14, 2005, Azzouz and a few accomplices (several were already in prison on previous prosecutions) were again arrested on suspicion of attempting to procure heavy firearms and planning terrorist attacks against national politicians and the headquarters of the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service (AIVD). On October 2, 2008, they were convicted and Azzouz was sentenced to 9 years in prison; Nourredine el Fatmi to 8 years; Mohammed Chentouf to 6
years; and Sahla to 4 years.

How can we explain this time limited phenomenon of terrorist activities in the Netherlands? How did the young people involved become violent in the name of their religious beliefs? How do they compare with other similar cases of terrorism in the West?

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT: THE SOCIAL BLOB

Much has been written about the term radicalization in the recent past. The term has become a buzz word for a lot of loosely related studies trying to understand how young people in the West have turned against their society and resorted to violence. Many analysts have a very passive view of human beings and claim they have been brainwashed by outsiders who put ideas into their heads and then these young people act like robots to fulfill these ideas. All of the cases studied (Hofstad, Madrid, Hebron, Paris, Hamburg) clearly refute this simplistic notion of how people turn to violence. We have not identified outsiders who have come to brainwash young people in any of the cases. Instead, we see a lot of young people looking for answers to political questions. Instead of acting like mindless robots, they actively search for answers. But even this view may be too cognitive. Many young people became involved in violence without having a strong ideological basis for their actions. To assume that young people carefully think about what they do and then do it seems to run counter to our experience with people in general and young people in particular. This type of analysis of action, purely dependent on active thinking processes, decontextualizes the action. The relationship between thoughts and action cannot be assumed a priori to be ideas leading automatically to action. Instead, we suggest that this relationship between ideas and behavior needs to be unpacked, as the present study attempts to do.

The first task is to define radicalization in a consistent way with the data. Although we have focused on young people turning to violence, they are part of a larger network of young people who share the same ideas. Indeed, when listening to these young people, we wonder why not more have turned to violence as their very belligerent words suggest. Indeed, when talking to law enforcement officials, we are told that so many young people boast and pretend to be jihadis that it is difficult for them to identify the real actors who might become violent. Indeed, this is probably the most difficult question in the field of terrorism: with so many young people sharing all the characteristics of potential terrorists, including their words, how can we truly identify the real terrorists from the pretenders? Even if we were to describe terrorists perfectly (in other words, we would have 100% sensitivity in capturing all the terrorists in our description), the true terrorists would be drowned in a sea of people fitting the description but having no intention of turning violent. In other words, they would be drowned in a sea of ‘false positives’, and given the fact that terrorist acts are so rare and perpetrated by so few people, the ratio of true terrorist to false positive would be of the order of one hundred to one. This fundamental question of specificity is the most critical question about terrorism.

A cognitive analysis of their thoughts would not be able to help us differentiate who might turn to violence and who would not. As just argued, the terrorists swim in a sea of people who share their ideas. This has led to the mistaken belief that we are fighting violent extremism (a cognitive notion). No, we are fighting people who kill other people, a behavioral attribute of these killers.
We are fighting extremist violence, and not violent extremism. This confusion has led to the arrest of many young people who share the terrorists’ ideas but are not violent. This in turn has outraged them and their friends and perhaps created far more terrorists than was the case prior to the arrest. We must be clear that our focus should be on behavior. Therefore, our definition of radicalization should be a behavioral one: the path to political violence.

How is terrorist behavior related to extremist ideas? This is what we hope to clarify in this study. The turn to political violence does not take place in a vacuum, but in a specific social context, which provides the significance of the political activity. In the case of the Hofstad network, this context was part of a Muslim revivalist movement in the Netherlands, which rejects the values and practices of secular Dutch society. The fertile infrastructure of this movement was the rapid growth of the Muslim population (mostly from Morocco and Turkey) in the Netherlands, which now comprises about 8% of the total population but seems concentrated in large cities in Holland. Starting in the 1980s, Saudi funded NGOs established fundamentalist mosques such as the Al-Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam, the Al-Fourkaan mosque in Eindhoven, the As-Soennah mosque in The Hague and the Islamic Foundation for Education and Propagation of Knowledge in Tilburg. Although the imams were from Egypt, Syria or Sudan, they had been educated in Saudi Arabia and promoted a Salafi version of Islam. At the same time, active proselytism from the Muslim Brotherhood, the Tablighi Jamaat or Hizb ut-Tahrir reached the Netherlands from adjacent countries. Although these Salafi preachers and proselytizing organizations were not able to attract first generation migrants, who had their own Islamic traditions, they did resonate with a minority of young Muslim beset by social problems like unemployment, school dropouts, lack of opportunities, discrimination, and feelings of not belonging anywhere. These young people, who were either born in the Netherlands from immigrant parents from the Rif region of Morocco and had themselves immigrated in their early teenage years, formed a pool, ready to reject society because of felt social discrimination. Most knew very little about religion and were even dissociated with the religious traditions of their parents’ country of origin.

The social context to domestic terrorism in Madrid was a similar importation of ideas from abroad, especially from the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, which took refuge in Madrid in the wake of the massacre of Hama, when the Syrian government cracked down on them in 1982. This group of refuges socialized with each other during the 1980s and consolidated to support militant Muslim causes in Europe, such as the Bosnian War. From this support, they encouraged young expatriate Muslims in Spain to become more active in defense of Muslim causes around the world, like the struggles in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Indonesia. They formed their own community, which rejected their ambient context, to become politically active in support of militant Muslim causes.

The same process is visible in Paris, where young Algerians (either of the first or second generations immigrants) became mobilized by the injustice and unfairness of the cancellation of the electoral process in Algeria in January 1992. Their rapid radicalization went through a process of peaceful protest, then material support to militants in Algeria and finally to domestic terrorism against France, which was viewed as supportive of the regime in Algeria. Likewise, Hamburg followed the same path. Expatriate university students from the Middle East became radicalized in response to the Bosnian War (1992-1995), the war in Chechnya (1994-1996) and the crisis in Kosovo (1999).
The Hebron case is different. Here, the majority of Palestinians rejected Israeli occupation/control over much of their lives. The various Palestinians cultures all rejected Israeli polity. The terrorists, who formed the second Intifada and its progeny, were actually part of the mainstream Palestinian culture that rejected Israel’s politics toward them.

In all these cases, political events and specific local factors helped create a utopian counter-cultural community, rejecting the surrounding society and assuming a distinctive political activism to redress what they saw as unfair or unjust. This new counter-culture was built on disappointment with more traditional forms of activism because of their lack of efficacy or discredited ideas. A generation before the creation of these new counter-cultural communities, similar political activism took place all over the West, but not in the name of Islam, but in the name of Leftist Marxist Leninist ideas. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rebellion at Tiananmen Square in China discredited these old ideologies, providing the space to propagation and diffusion of new ideas and frames to redress injustice.

The leading frame of all of these rejectionist counter-cultures is that the West is at war with Islam. This frame constitutes the infrastructure of their interpretation of everyday local and outside events as well as large events such as foreign wars and atrocities. For the members of the Hofstad group, this understanding of world events was not very deep. In a sense, what we are witnessing with these mostly teenagers is a sound bite version of Islam, obtained not from a traditional study of the religion, but from an autodidactic and peculiar way of viewing their religion. In this sense, they are self-taught, taking some ideas from people who knew a little more than they, but were not educated in the tradition of religion.

The reason that these ideas “stick” to some young people is that they resonate with their everyday experience. Here there is great local variation within each case, on how these ideas resonate with their particular situation. In a sense, each counter-cultural community has its own parochial accent, reflecting local social conditions.

As we have argued above, the Hebron case stands out because the social conditions of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza gave rise to a culture rejecting their subjugation at the hands of Israel. Their terrorism is directed against the state of Israel, and now encompasses targeting civilians, not just the military or representatives of the Israeli state. In Hamburg, the Muslim students who had come to Germany to finish their university education felt doubly excluded. In general, in Germany, Muslims felt excluded from the Germans, whose concept of citizenship is based on blood rather than location of birth. But most German Muslims are of Turkish origin and speak Turkish, not Arabic. The Arabic speaking students felt excluded from the Turkish community and went on to socialize with themselves. The hung around a Moroccan Mosque – since the majority of the students stemmed from Morocco – in the vicinity of their university. However, the students from the Levant (Yemenis, Egyptians, Palestinians Lebanese, Gulf states residents) felt different from the Moroccans and gravitated to themselves. Their grievances were not so much with their ambient society (Germany) but with the West in general, viewed as being prejudiced and indirectly conducting a war against Islam. Their target was Russia (at war with the Chechens) or the U.S., which was viewed as the leader of the West trying to subjugate Muslim countries, by propping up corrupt local regimes. Stemming from different background, this universal enemy united them.
In France, the prejudices and discrimination that second generation Algerians fueled resentment against the French government. The FIS, which had been winning the interrupted elections in 1992, had first traction with second generation university students in France, who formed the student organization FAF, in support of the FIS in Algeria. However, the French government quickly banned this organization, which then deprived university students from a voice and formal organization to mobilize them. Violent splinters of the FAF then concentrated on “sensitive” neighborhoods, especially around the city of Lyon to find support for their civil war in Algeria. When the French authorities cracked down on them in late 1993 and again in 1994, some members of these splinter groups escalated their political activities to turn to violence against the French population at large.

The Moroccans in Spain were organized to support international jihadi causes in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Chechnya and Indonesia. Only after a series of governmental crackdowns against them, in the fall of 2001 after the tragedy of 9/11/01 in the United States, and in late spring of 2003 after the bombings in Casablanca, did they escalate their activism against Spain itself. This was compounded by the fact that the government was involved in the invasion of Iraq in the spring of 2003. This essentially turned them locally to view Spain as an enemy: why should they go abroad to fight jihad when they could do it at home? A brief analysis of the terrorist cases in Britain seems to confirm this path of domestic turn to violence.

Socio-economic conditions seem to be a necessary but not sufficient condition of this turn to violence. In the West, the politics of immigration are tied to these conditions, which discriminate against non-native or non-native looking people (which explains why Muslims from North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia were singled out, but not the large influx of Eastern Europeans, who look similar to Western nativists). In a sense, these utopian rejectionist counter-cultures emerge out of the interstices of society. Grievances have a lot to do with the social conditions linked with the bottom tier of a dual labor market (mostly agriculture, construction and manufacturing) populated by Muslim immigrants in Europe, ease of means of transportation increasing migration from the Muslim South to the Western North, and the shift from a manufacture to a service economy in the West, which puts immigrants at a disadvantage. This is compounded by discrimination on the labor market, even for skilled laborers. The rise of immigration in the West generated a backlash of nativist anti-immigrant and racist political activism, which aggravated the local situation. Politicians were not above pandering to the masses for electoral gains.

However, within these broad strokes, there is strong local variation within the social and economic conditions of immigrant populations in the West. In France, these grievances resulted more into constant low level violence (car burning and petty crime) and gangs. In the Netherlands, multiculturalism limited the spread of violence in immigrant communities. In Hamburg, the counter-culture that gave rise to the 9/11 plot was limited to expatriate students, who felt neither part of their home country, part of the host country, and therefore directed their anger against an abstract and distant target, the United States. In Madrid, the violence resulted from an escalation between local law enforcement agencies and a small number of Moroccan immigrants.

Although social conditions are the necessary conditions for the creation of such a community, its emergence does not come by itself as if by magic. It comes from the intense efforts of some
individuals. In France, in the early 1990s, Algerian students and political refugees proselytized in the name of their cause. At first, they develop traction among university students, but after the ban of their association by the French government, they focuses on young Algerian gangs both to raise money and run guns to Algeria. In the Netherlands, at first the Tablighi Jamaat proselytizers and then the Saudi trained imams of Salafi mosques created a utopian rejectionist counter-culture. Within this informal community, some self-appointed individuals took to the Internet to propagate these ideas (such as Bouyeri and Jason Walters, as well as anonymous women) and solidified their community through informal meetings at the homes of older members. Most of the members of the Dutch rejectionist community were teenagers, who still lived at home. In Madrid, the formation of this rejectionist counter-culture was the result of proselytism of mostly Syrian political refugees, such as Barakat Yarkas (Abu Dahdah). When he was imprisoned in the fall of 2001, his proselytism was carried on in private apartments by budding ideologues, such as Maymouni, Serhane Abdelmajid Fakhet and Osman Rabe’i. In Hamburg, the first ideologue was Mohammed Belfas, an older Indonesian immigrant, but he was quickly superseded by Mohammed Atta and especially Marwan al Shehhi.

Overall, calling this loose network of people inspired by a utopia, rejecting host societal values and politically active a ‘community’ is probably giving it far too much formal shape than might be warranted. Instead of a formal structure, this association (again too strong a word to describe this group) might be better conceptualized as a social blob, with vague, diffuse and porous boundaries. Many people flirt with the blob, and only a very few remain in it for a definite period of time. Internally, fluidity characterizes the activities of ‘members’ of the social blob, as many individuals experiment with various activities and personae linked with this blob. When viewing these activities over time, this ill defined blob is filled with people resembling some sort of Brownian motion, going to meeting of some blob organizations, leaving them to join others. In this sense, the blob is polyccephalous, consisting of several formal organizations, such as the Tablighi Jamaat, the Muslim Brothers, the Hizb ut Tahrir, al Muhajiroun (and its progenies), Salafi organizations, Palestinian support organizations, and independent bunches of guys, who hang out in the vicinity of these more formal organizations, but are not formally part of it. These independent members (if we can call them that) are by far the most numerous members of the blob. This blob is not a harmonious place, as all these formal organizations compete with each other for the unattached members of the blob. There are strong internal rivalries.

People join the blob as a low risk/low cost form of political activism. For instance, the first steps are often participation in a political demonstration against some local or more commonly international insult to Muslims (as for instance the Israeli invasion of Gaza on Christmas 2008) or going to a lecture about some tragedy that struck the Muslim community, as in the case of the situation in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir or Palestine. Most people come to a demonstration or a lecture is often because friends and relatives come to such events. For many people, this might be the end of their political activism. But for some, they like it and renew the experience. Most again drop out after half a dozen events, but a very few find meaning in it (probably because of the people they meet at these events). Those who like this sort of activity start to spend more and more time with other people in the blob. They adopt their fashion in terms of dress and discourse. Some who join formal organizations within the blob adopt a new sartorial look and conduct some proselytism with their former friends and relatives, trying to expand the blob. They get involved in political activism and support for other members of the blob, who are being prosecuted by the state for their blob activities. They go to their friends’ trial to show their solidarity with them.
During this phase, some try joining formal blob organizations. If they stay with these high demand organizations (which often require a 24/7 commitment from their members) for more than six months, they will probably stay with these organizations. We suspect that the majority of people experimenting with such high demand organizations leave because of other personal commitments (marriage, jobs) or frustration with the life (proselytizing trips required by the Tablighis…) or the lack of more effective political activity (“it’s just talk, talk, talk…”). The activities of the blob (which most security analysts would call “violent extremism”) are still legal and legitimate because they involve protest within the bounds of the law. However, depending on specific laws of different countries, some of these activities might be viewed as illegal, such as raising money for dual purpose (that is both social welfare and terrorism) organizations (such as Hamas, Hizbollah, or NGOs linked with terrorist organizations such as Al Haramain) or propaganda. But within a liberal political society, such activities are not viewed as crossing the legal line of local violence.

In the Hofstad group, the joining of the blob was rather typical. The 9/11/01 attacks against the United States, the Palestinian Intifada and the War in Chechnya activated a collective Muslim identity in several small clusters of friends from various neighborhoods in Amsterdam and The Hague. They gravitated to the fundamentalist mosques in these respective cities. Some who had grown up together in Al Hoceima, Morocco, reconnected during these meetings, where they listened to fundamentalist preachers. They continued their meetings at local Internet cafés and in the apartments of some of the older members, such as Mohammed Bouyeri, who lived by himself in 27 Marianne Philipsstraat, West Amsterdam. They also discussed their views on Dutch Internet forums. All these interactivities radicalized some of them further in the rejection of the mainstream Dutch society. They invited some itinerant autodidactic preachers, like the Moroccan Abdel Samad or the Syrian Redouan al-Issa, to come to some of their meetings.

The men started growing their beard, dressing in more traditional Muslim clothes, shied away from alcohol. Young women were prominent both on the Internet forums and in the various group meetings. They too started dressing in more modest clothing to the point where they wore not only a hijab but a niqab and gloves in public, totally covering their body and leaving a slit for their eyes. Marriages among this loose network were not uncommon.

These young people made efforts to learn more about the “pure” Islam. They were self-taught, mostly through reading available sources on the Internet. The young men seemed more focused on political action, with the exception of Mohammed Bouyeri, who introduced takfiri ideology to his audience through a translation of English texts available on the Internet. The young women were very active on the Internet, and became enthusiastic translators of these fundamentalist texts. In effect, some of the women taught themselves Arabic, and through their translations became some of the more prominent ideologues of this network.

The Internet played a prominent role in this group. Some of the men boasted of their trips abroad for jihadi training and encouraged other young men to follow suit. Some of the women were very active on the forums as well, trying to recruit new boys to their cause, and inviting them to come to some of their face to face meetings.

Around 2002, many of these young people participated in demonstrations in support for the Palestinian Intifada. Samir Azzouz and Abida Kabbaj first met face to face at one of these
demonstrations. They continued their romance over the Internet and decided to get married according to Islamic Law on December 6, 2002. In fact, several members of this network married within one or two years with other members, cementing through sexual and marital bonds loose political ties. The network’s fairly prominent political activities were detected by the AIVD, the Dutch intelligence agency in the summer 2002.

It is beyond this section to describe the evolution of the Hamburg, French and Spanish blobs in similar details. But all shared this political activism that did not satisfy those who went on to turn to violence.

Within the blob, people (Hofstad 1) run into everybody else during large blob centered events, such as demonstrations or lectures.

Hofstad 1

Because of these connections, graphs that depict their connections are not very useful (Hofstad 2).

15 Hofstad 1 Graph was prepared by Dominick Wright.
These connections due to the fact that members of the blob participate in these larger events, tempt some analysts to prematurely connect the dots between them and lead them to construct formal conspiracies where there are none. The same impulse to connect the dots triggers some large scale waves of arrest of blob members, who have not broken the law except for sympathizing with fighters abroad. In effect, law enforcement agencies mistake violent extremism (which is still legal in most Western liberal societies) with extremist violence (which is of course illegal). This confusion is at the root of many perceived miscarriage of justice, which leads some members of the blob to conclude that the host government is conducting a war against them personally and may precipitate their turn to violence.

**Emergence of a Violent Bunch of Guys (BoG)**

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16 Hofstado 2 Graph was prepared by Dominick Wright.
So far, we have dealt with political violent extremism. But this is not terrorism, which is political extremist violence. In our terms, how does this violence emerge out of the blob?

It must be noted that there are different intensity of involvement in violence. We tend to differentiate between three levels of involvement. The one that is the more involved is what we would call the active core. They are a group of two, three or four people, who have met randomly in blob activities and immediately take a liking to one another. Their disillusionment with the effectiveness of blob activity leads them to go further than the activities of the blob and provide them with a sense of mutual support that give them the courage to escalate the seriousness of their activities, which finally break the law and turn to violence. They are the leaders and driving force of the conspiracy, and without them there would be no conspiracy. In the French wave of bombings of the summer of 1995, this active core consisted of four Algerians (Touchent, Belkacem, Bensaïd and Ramda), who recruited several petty criminals in the suburbs of Lyon, Lille and Paris to conduct a bombing campaign against France. In the Madrid case, this active core consisted of Jamal Ahmidan and Serhane Abdelmajid Fakhet, who were the driving force behind the train bombings of 11 March 2004. Ahmidan was all action and Fakhet provided the legitimation of the plot. In Hamburg, the active core consisted of Ramzi bin al Shibh, Mohammed Atta and Marwan al Shehhi. Bin al Shibh and Atta knew each other for a few years before turning violent. Bin al Shibh had the outgoing personality, which attracted people to do things for him, but he was too disorganized to organize anything. Atta had the ability to organize things, but lacked to personality to attract anyone to follow him. But neither knew much about Islam to provide a justifying set of ideas for personal involvement with violence. This changed when Marwan al Shehhi joined the group. He was the son of a Muezzin, and knew all the stories of glory of Muslim Warriors of the Golden Age of Islam. These stories anchored their views that they should personally join this glorious tradition. All three members of the Hamburg active core brought something to the plot. Take one of them away, and the plot would have never gotten off the ground.

The second category of involvement is the followers, or people who tag along, but would not, by themselves, have driven the plot. They can be as responsible or even more for atrocities, as they willingly and often enthusiastically carry out bombings. But they would not have done so by themselves. In a sense, they were not specifically necessary to the plot, as they could have be replaced by others, who would gladly participated had they been asked to do so by the active core members. Examples from Madrid are at least the five terrorists who died with Ahmidan and Fakhet in the explosion that destroyed them in Leganes on April 2, 2004. In the French bombings, they were the young petty criminals from the suburbs of Lyon and Lille. In Hamburg, they were Jarrah, Essabar and Bahaji.

The third category is members of the blob, who know the members of the active core, but are not directly involved in the plot. These peripheral members may help the plotters in terms of procuring material for them, provide information about potential targets or even put them up in terms of shelter. However, they usually are not privy to the details of the plot and are not involved in its execution. In Hamburg, this may be the case for Mzoudi and Motassadeq; in Madrid, Aglif, Beckali, Rabe’i, Pardo et al… must be considered in this category.

Graphically, this level of criminal involvement is best captured by Hofstad 3.
Just as the blob is fluid, so is the conspiracy and level of involvement, which depends on the demands of the plot. For instance, in the Madrid case, Rafa Zouheir was not a member of the active core or even the followers. Indeed, he knew nothing about the plot (but he could have guessed that something was going on). However, since he was the only one on the periphery of the plot which had the social capital of knowing people with access to explosives, he must be considered in the second tier of this plot because he was the critical link that spanned the structural hole between the Ahmidan-Fakhet active core and the Spaniard with access to dynamite.

But still what turns members of the blob into a violent Bunch of Guys? This transformation seems to be triggered by moral outrage. At the sight of a major moral violation, some members of the blob feel that “enough is enough” and it is their personal duty to do something about this outrage. In jihadi terminology, it is their Fard `Ayn (personal as opposed to collective duty, which therefore cannot be delegated to some larger entity such as the government’s army). The lack of effectiveness of the political activism of the blob leads some members to reject the blob as ineffective. They leave more mainstream blob activities, such as going to even “radical” mosques, and even get into fights with extreme imams whom they accuse as not doing enough for

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17 Hofstad 3 Graph was prepared by Dominick Wright.
the cause. Their outrage is usually directed at the perpetrator of the outrage. So, if the outrage is committed abroad by Western forces, they travel abroad to fight in the defense of their cause, which they allege is Islam. They gladly travel to Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Pakistan and now Somalia to fight against the infidel (Serbs, Russians, Indians, Coalition Forces, Pakistani government forces, and Ethiopians respectively). However, if the moral violation is perpetrated by their host government either abroad (invasion of Iraq, as in the Madrid case or the 7/7 case in London) or locally (as in the Paris and Madrid case), then they may turn to domestic terrorism.

In their taking up the fight against what they see as the enemies of Islam or the abstract Muslim community (the *Ummah*), they start thinking about themselves as soldiers, defending Islam. This martial self concept (which may be thought as a cognitive marker of those who turn to violence) leads them to practice martial activities (martial arts in a gym; paintball games; paramilitary exercises on weekends). While pretending to be soldiers may be part of martial games, their martial self concept persists beyond the games, and they talk to their friends as if they are soldiers defending Islam (*'mujahedin'*), a cognitive marker of their self acquired status. Of course, being a soldier legitimizes violence. As potential soldiers, they seek training and go to some length in joining jihadi training camps. As such, they try to travel to zones of conflict for training or fighting: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Yemen; and travel through Turkey, Syria, Egypt and Iran to get there. It is not so much the indoctrination at the “camps” (often just a rented compound for two or three weeks in Waziristan), but the fact that they participate in the camp that solidifies their self concept as a mujahed. Many of them drop out at this stage because their fantasy of jihad does not live up to the reality of jihad (poor conditions at the camp, waiting, dislike of the trainers...), but those that continue are self selected to be very motivated. They come back pumped up from their experience and “hit the ground running” in terms of pursuing violent activities in their homelands.

The turn to violence requires that people are available for it. This means that this turn to violence happens in times of transition: when one leaves his family of origin to study away or abroad; one has no full time commitment to a job career; one is not already married to someone outside the blob (being married to someone inside the blob accelerate the pace of radicalizations as shown in the Hofstad blob); and migration. This availability means that one is not already involved full time and for a long time in high demand blob organizations such as Hizb ut Tahrir, which demand complete commitment of their members, who live together, pray together and proselytize together. That does not leave them anytime to join violent friends, who instead of being full time members of these more formal organizations hang out with them, but have enough leisure time to become involved in more violent pursuits than the core members of these more formal organizations.

Those who turn to violence follow an insidious and gradual path. Sometimes the conspiracy hatches at a random meeting, but the members who happen to be there immediately develop a bond based on a micro-conspiracy, which excludes even their more intimate friends or relatives who were not present during the triggering meeting. This conspiracy makes them feel different, and superior to other members in the blob (“who just talk and don’t act”), giving them the feeling that they are special, the vanguard of something bigger than themselves. This mutual solidarity with other conspirators gives them a sense of cohesion, and separates them from the blob. In essence, this is a double rejections: the blob rejects society as unfair; the conspirators reject the blob as ineffective. Gradually, they drift into a high cost, high risk involvement with violence.
The Hofstad case illustrates this process well.

Samir Azzouz and Abida Kabbaj, who had met through their activism on behalf of the Palestinians, were not satisfied with their level of involvement and wanted to go to Chechnya and fight. Their original involvement was triggered by their moral outrage directed at the Israelis during the second Intifada. When the Russians reinvaded Chechnya, their outrage grew and they wanted to get more involved. Azzouz convinced his wife that Chechnya was not a place for a woman. She reluctantly agreed and Azzouz left for Chechnya with his close childhood friend and school buddy in January 2003. They were both 16 at the time (Kabbaj is seven years older than her husband). The two boys got arrested in Ukraine on February 1, and were repatriated to the Netherlands. Azzouz became an overnight celebrity because of his feat, while his friend decided that this was not for him and dropped out of the group (probably under very strong pressure from his family).

In August 2003, two friends, Jason Walters and Ismail Akhnikh within the blob formed in the Netherlands traveled to Pakistan to go to a training camp. Akhnikh, who is a relative of other Moroccan Islamist militants in Belgium (linked to the GICM), stayed for about three weeks, while Walters stayed for a month. A mutual friend, Zakaria Taybi joined them there for about a week. This action alerted the Dutch intelligence service, the AIVD, which labeled the network Hofstadgroep for internal use. Its scrutiny of the network intensified and more resources were allocated to the monitoring it.

In October 2003, Azzouz and Akhnikh traveled to Barcelona to meet with Abdelhamid Akoudad, a friend of Akhnikh’s militant relative. They probably offered their services to Akoudad, who was reputed to have connection to international jihadi groups. However, it appears that Akoudad discouraged them because of their young age. The two Dutch friends return to Holland empty handed. However, Spanish authorities arrested Akoudad shortly thereafter on a Moroccan warrant because of alleged involvement in the May 16 2003 Casablanca bombings. Akoudad’s arrest forced the hand of Dutch authorities, who arrested Azzouz, Akhnikh, Walters, Redouan al Issar and Mohammed Fahmi Boughabe on October 17, 2003 for potential planning of an attack somewhere in the Netherlands. The group was released eleven days later when no evidence of such an attack was discovered.

On December 22, 2003, Jason Walters and Zakaria Taybi returned to Pakistan to go to a training camp. On a tipoff from the Dutch authorities, the Pakistani authorities kept an eye on them and the pair returned home early after only nine days in country. Around that time, Mohammed Bouyeri, the host of many of the network’s meeting, started publishing many short political pieces and translations, exhorting his friends to more political activity.

On April 8, 2004, an Edah supermarket in Rotterdam, where Azzouz worked, was robbed. Azzouz was suspected of participating in this crime.

Nourredine el Fatmi, Mohammed el Morabit and Mohammed el Bousklaoui traveled to Portugal by car. The Dutch authorities feared that this was part of an attempt to attack the EURO 2004 soccer tournament and alerted the Portuguese authorities, who arrested the three on June 11, 2004 and repatriated them back to Amsterdam. The Dutch authorities questioned the voyageurs and released them ten days later for lack of evidence. Another possibility for the trip is that the three
went to visit one of their mentors, Abdel Samad, who had preached to the youngsters in Holland before fleeing to Portugal, a step ahead of the Dutch immigration authorities.

On June 30, 2004, Azzouz was arrested for the Edah supermarket robbery. During a search of his house, the police found bomb chemical precursors, such as fertilizer and ammunition, along with maps of potential targets, such as Schiphol Airport and the nuclear power plant in Borssele. When Azzouz appeared in court, many members of the network came to the courthouse to show their support. Indeed, two journalists met several of the female supporters, and wrote a book about the female members of the blob that under lied the Hofstad terrorist network.

During the summer, politician Ayan Hirsi Ali and film director Theo van Gogh released a film about Islam and the Prophet that was meant to provoke and shock Muslims in its depiction of the Prophet and the Quran. Members of the blob were outraged, especially Bouyeri and Yehya Kadouri, who threatened Ali, van Gogh, and other politicians such as Aboutaleb, Wilders in their discussions on their forums for being overtly anti-Muslim.

On September 27, 2004, the police arrested Yehya Kadouri after identifying him from his Internet threats. At his house, it found a homemade bomb. On November 2, 2004 morning, Bouyeri ambushed and shot Theo van Gogh, assassinating him. After his death, Bouyeri attempted to cut his victim’s throat and planted a manifesto against Ali in his victim’s chest. He calmly waited for the police to show up, determined to die by ‘suicide by cop.’ During the ensuing shootout, he was wounded and captured. The police cracked down on the other members of the network. However, some key members such as al Issa and el Fatmi had already left the country as a result of previous police harassment.

A week later, on November 10, 2004, the police raided Walters’ and Akhnich’s apartment. The two members resisted, and Walters threw a grenade at the police, severely injuring one of the policemen. The two were finally arrested after a ten hour standoff. Many other members of the network were also arrested without incident.

On April 6, 2005, Azzouz who was in prison undergoing trial for his previous activities when the fall events were going on, was acquitted on the terrorist charge because judge deemed that the mixture of chemicals would not have been sufficient to generate an explosion. He reasoned that since there was no danger to the public, there was no crime.

On June 22, 2005, Nourredine el Fatmi, his wife Soumaya Sahla and her friend Martine van den Oever were arrested in Amsterdam for carrying a loaded assault rifle and threatening the lives of Dutch politicians. The two women were released a few weeks later. On July 26, 2005, Bouyeri was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. The next day, he and Azzouz (who remained on free on bail) were added to the defendants charged of belonging to a terrorist organization, namely the Hofstad network.

On September 5, 2005, Soumaya Sahla was arrested again, accused of illegal possession of a firearm and preparing a terrorist attack. She was later convicted and sentenced to 9 months in prison for this charge.

On October 14, 2005, the police arrested Azzouz, Ismail Akhnich, Jason Walters, Mohammed
Chentouf, Abdullah Bakaja, Brahim Harhour (some of whom were already in detention during their trial) for attempting to attack the AIVD headquarters. This case is called the Piranha Trial, and husband and wife Nourredine el-Fatmi and Soumaya Sahla also joined the newly arrested as defendants in the trial. Hanan Sarrokh and her husband Lahbib Bachar were also arrested for the Piranha case, but are tried separately because they agreed to testify for the defense.

On March 10, 2006, the verdicts of the Hofstad Trial was announced. Walters, Akhnikh and el Fatmi were convicted of various violent charges and sentenced to 15, 13 and 5 years in prison respectively. Zine Labidine Aouragha, Youssef Ettoumi, Mohammed Fahmi Boughabe, Mohammed Hamdi and Mohammed el Morabit were convicted on minor charges and receive short prison sentences. Bouyeri was also convicted but since he was already condemned to life, he did not receive any additional sentence. Nadir Adarraf, Jermaine Walters, Rachid Belkacem, Mohammed Bousklaoui, Rachid Bousana and Zakaria Taybi were completely exonerated and freed. The exonerated members would be later compensated Euros 88,000 each for false imprisonment.

On July 15, 2006, Rachid Belkacem was found dead in his house, with foam on his mouth. His family and friends suspected he had been been poisoned and the police started an investigation, which did not find any evidence of foul play.

On December 1, 2006, the verdicts of the Piranha trial were announced: Azzouz was sentenced to 8 years; el-Fatmi and Chentouf to 4 years; Sahla to 3 years; Harhour to 3 months. Mohammed Hamdi was acquitted. On September 17, 2007, the Dutch Supreme Court vacated Azzouz’s previous acquittal in his original case of attempting to bomb Schiphol Airport, convicted him and sentenced him to 4 years in prison. On January 23, 2008, the Appeals Court vacated the verdicts of the Hofstad case by opining that the Hofstadgroep was not a terrorist organization according to the definition of the law. Only Jason Walters’ sentence (for throwing the grenade) remained the same. Akhnikh’s sentence was reduced to 15 months and he was immediately released. All the other defendants in the Hofstad case were acquitted and those in prison are released.

On March 25, 2008, Hanan Sarrokh and Lahbib Bachar were convicted of forming a terrorist group and sentenced to three years in prison each. On September 2, 2008, the Appeals Court reviewed the verdicts of the Piranha trial and revised upwards some of the sentences: Azzouz received 9 years (instead of 8); el-Fatmi 8 years (instead of 4); Chentouf 6 years (instead of 4); Sahla 4 years (instead of 3); Hamdi 3 months (instead of acquittal)

The path to political violence in the Hofstad case was similar to the path found in the French, the Hamburg and the Madrid cases. It each case, the process of radicalization was a two step process: first a low cost/low risk involvement into the blob (defined as politically active utopian rejectionist counter-culture) and then a high cost/high risk turn to violence. In other words, it is a two step process first into violent extremism (which is still legal) and then extremist violence. The relationship between the two is that the first (violent extremism) facilitates the turn to violence (extremist violence), for young people do not turn to violence before involvement into the blob or after they leave the blob. In this sense, violent extremism facilitates extremist violence. The two should not be confused for fear of turning more people, who demonstrate their rejection of society in a peaceful but very vocal manner, into violence through local moral outrage. The blob gives rise to many small groups of people who turn to violence, but compare to
the blob, these BoGs are quite rare.

This account provides a perspective which may help the generation of multiple hypotheses about the relationship between ideas and behavior. They would need further dataset to test them empirically.
MADRID CASE

AUTHORED BY
Scott Atran with Marc Sageman
The Madrid Case

Through a series of unplanned events, two young North African immigrants bonded to plot an attack in Spain. One, “The Tunisian,” a would-be intellectual and dreamer who spun into increasingly radical circles; the other, “The Chinaman,” a violent Moroccan drug dealer and doer in search of a cause. They lived in separate worlds — religious extremism and the criminal underworld — until their paths crossed six months before the bombing. A detailed plot only began to coalesce in late December 2003, shortly after the internet tract "Iraqi Jihad, Hopes and Risks" circulated on a Zarqawi-affiliated website. The tract called for “two or three attacks... to exploit the coming general elections in Spain in March 2004.” The plot, which brought together a bunch of radical students and hangers on, drug traffickers, small-time dealers in stolen goods and other sorts of petty criminals, improbably succeeded precisely because it was so improbable. There was no ingenious cell structure, no hierarchy, no recruitment, no brainwashing, no coherent organization, no Al Qaeda. Yet this half-baked conspiracy, concocted in a few months, with a target likely suggested over the internet, was the immediate cause of regime change in a major democratic society.
Three Main Circles of Friends that will become involved in the Madrid Plot (summer 2003)

**El Chino’s Mezuak Friends**
- M.O. Akcha
- R.O. Akcha
- Koujja

**Prelude to the Plot**

A small number of Muslim migrants in the early 1980’s came from Syria, fleeing from Syrian President Hafez al-Assad’s assault against Muslim Brotherhood in his country. This violent repression culminated in the massacre of Homs in 1982, which razed the city and killed at least 38,000 people, according to President Assad’s own brother. Some of these Syrian immigrants were Salafi militants seeking refuge, mostly in Madrid. They married each others’ sisters or Spanish women who converted to Islam. Among those who arrived during that period were: Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas (aka Abu Dahdah), who married a Spanish actress and convert to Islam; Tayssir Alouni, who later became a journalist for *Al Jazeerah* and interviewed Bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks; and Mustafa Setmarian Nasar (aka Abu Musa al Siri), who would become the jihadi movement’s internet guru before his capture in Pakistan in the fall of 2005.

In the early 1990’s, these militant Islamists formed a support network for jihadi fighters in Bosnia and provided them with finance, shelter, sanctuary and medical care. In 1994, they formally organized themselves as a group, taking the name “Soldiers of Allah,” under the leadership of Setmarian, Yarkas, and Palestinian preacher Anwar Adnan Ahmed Saleh (Sheikh Saleh). A year later, Setmarian went to London to edit *Al Ansar*, the newsletter of the Algerian...
Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) under the leadership of Abu Qatada, a Palestinian known as al-Qaeda’s spiritual leader in Europe. (Abu Qatada was described in 2001 by a Qaeda operative testifying in a New York City courtroom as a member of al-Qaeda’s "Fatwa Committee." After 9/11, police in Hamburg found 18 tapes of Abu Qatada’s preachings in Mohamed Atta’s apartment there.)

Sheikh Saleh went to Jalalabad, Afghanistan to establish links with Al Qaeda, particularly with Abu Zubaydah, the senior facilitator for Qaeda’s operations. (Abu Zubaydah was captured in Pakistan after 9/11, waterboarded and broken with blaring music from The Red Hot Chili Peppers, and was sent to Guantanamo). Saleh greeted and processed volunteers coming to Afghanistan for training. In 1997, Setmarian also came to Afghanistan, and took charge of various Al Qaeda training camps, often quarreling over how others handled things.

Meanwhile, in Spain, Yarkas made contact with Al Qaeda affiliates in other parts of Europe, especially in Milan, Brussels and London. His group welcomed young jihadis returning from Bosnia, Chechnya or Afghanistan. The militant radicalism of Yarkas’s group clashed with the religious authorities in their mosques. Sheikh Moneir Mahmoud Aly al-Messery, an Egyptian Salafi who was (and still is) Imam of the Saudi-funded Islamic Cultural Center, a monumental white marble building that overlooks Madrid’s M-30 freeway, expelled the Yarkas group in 1995. The “M-30” mosque, as it’s commonly known, is the center of Muslim cultural life in the Spanish capital, and the group’s expulsion amounted to a de facto “excommunication” from the mainstream Muslim community. Later, the group would “excommunicate” Moneir in turn.

The overt proselytism of the group around Yarkas also attracted the attention of the Spanish authorities. As early as 1995, National High Court Judge Balthasar Garzón ordered surveillance and telephone wiretapping of its leaders. The police also succeeded in penetrating it with the help of one of its staff officers, Maussili Kalaji. Kalaji, a Syrian, had joined the Palestinian Fateh, trained in one of its camps, then went on to spy school in the Soviet Union. For some unknown reason, he immigrated to Spain in 1981 at the age of 24 and given political asylum. He became an undercover Spanish policeman and was able to foil a Hezbollah terrorist operation in Europe.
in November 1989, for which he was decorated. Garzón dispatched him to infiltrate Yarkas’s group. Kalaji opened up a telephone shop, Ayman Telephone Systems Technology, in the Muslim neighborhood of Madrid and became part of the militant network. (An irony of sorts: on March 4, 2007 a half dozen hot cellphones were brought into Ayman Telephone Systems to be unlocked, and duly reported to the police. A week later they were among those used to detonate the Madrid train bombs.)

This Syrian-led militant group was by no means a “sleeper cell.” On the contrary, it was highly visible in order to attract young Muslims, radicalize them to the cause of international jihad and send them to fight in Bosnia, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Indonesia. It became a lightning rod for young alienated Muslims seeking a cause. Several types of people became attracted to its message. Some were immigrants who had come from Morocco as teenagers and had shown personal initiative by opening up their businesses in the immigrant neighborhood of Lavapies, like Jamal Zougam with his telephone shop on Tribulete Street, and his half brother Mohammed Chaoui whose grocery store on the same street sold exotic fruits imported by Yarkas from Damascus. Another new adherent to the group was a Tunisian, Serhane Abdelmajid Fakhet, “El Tunecino,” as he became known. An honors economics student who had come to Spain in 1994 for graduate study on scholarship, he would later become one of the two main instigators of the Madrid plot, and its spiritual guide.  

The Dreamer

THE DREAMER
Serhane Fakhet, El Tunecino (“The Tunisian”)

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18 The information, quotes and storyline in the following sections come from a variety of sources: pretrial testimony, trial testimony, interviews with investigative reporters, police and intelligence. Several of the quoted reminiscences are taken from Justin Webster’s outstanding documentary, The Madrid Connection (2007) The film independently takes pretty much the same line that Marc Sageman and I independently developed, namely, that the Madrid plot was mostly a self-organized affair driven by the converging ambitions of two main players: Serhane Fakhet, “El Tunecino,” and Jamal Ahmidan, “El Chino.” We differ mainly on the operational role of al-Qaeda and other outside agents, which The Madrid Connection suggests is quite possible and plausible but which we see as insignificant or nonexistent.
Serhane came from a fairly well-to-do family in Tunis. His father worked for the Ministry of Foreign Relations; his mother, well-educated and elegant. In the Department of Economic Analysis at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, he specialized in European accounting procedures. The Tunisian’s teachers remember him as sweet, studious and shy. Young women who were his classmates describe him as not unattractive, but very incomodo (uncomfortable) around girls. He had been engaged to be married in Tunisia, but things fell through at the last minute. His friends say he never really wanted to get into night life in Madrid, preferring to stay home and read. The Tunisian would argue passionately over ideas, especially religion, and seemed to be hypersensitive to any perceived slights against Muslims. One professor recalled him saying on a number of occasions: “I’m a good man, an economist, a good student. So, why am I not as good as the others. Why are they better than us?” His friends would often try to loosen him up: “Why don’t you smile? Relax, relax.” To little avail.

**The Tunisian’s Timeline to Radicalization**

At first, The Tunisian wanted to promote Muslim-European relations. He formed a student association, but the other Arab students weren’t all that interested. He tried setting up a radio station, which also fell through. Then he tried selling imported clothes from Tunisia, which didn’t work out. Then he imported candies, and that failed too.

So The Tunisian began spending more and more time at the Islamic Cultural Center, known as the M-30 mosque, reading and discussing the Koran with a dozen or so others who remember him with fondness. He became the accountant for the mosque’s lucrative halal restaurant — halal is the Muslim equivalent of “kosher” — and also worked translating Imam Moneir’s preachings. Everyday, The Tunisian and the others played soccer near the mosque; Sheikh Moneir, the Imam, refereed. “He loved soccer, loved to run,” recalls a friend,” he wasn’t a very good player, but he tried hard and sweat a lot.”

In 1998, The Tunisian’s academic scholarship ended and his request for a renewal was refused. Not for lack of smarts, but because he had basically stopped taking school studies seriously. Like many of the young, marginal North Africans in Madrid, The Tunisian started selling stolen goods on the Black Market in the Lavapies neighborhood of central Madrid, the old Jewish quarter. The police notice, but do nothing. There are too many like him, they have to live, and they don’t really harm anyone.

The Tunisian moved to Virgen del Coro Street near the M-30 mosque, settling in an apartment owned by Mohannides Almallah Dabas. (Almallah is the charmer who would wear a tie to his trial, and who kicked his pregnant wife in the stomach). His wife would testify that when she was pregnant by him with twins, he kicked her in the stomach, saying he hoped the result would be the same as the collapse of the twin towers). The Tunisian took in “guests” for weeks and months at a time, extolling the virtues of “Takfir wal Hijra.” (The name, to remind the reader, was first used by a movement founded in Egypt in the 1970s that preached “Excommunication and Withdrawal” from society, in imitation of the withdrawal (hijra) of The Prophet and his companions from Mecca to Medina to gather faith and force for a renewed assault on Mecca and
the world. But it was only after the annulment of elections in Algeria in 1992 that the Takfiri ideology of excommunication (takfir) and killing of fellow Muslims was first practiced by Algerian mujahedin who had returned from Afghanistan.)

There were usually around 5 in the apartment at any given time, recall some of The Tunisian’s guests, but sometimes there were as many as 10 sleeping in a room. The Tunisian would hold court in a small room with the writings of Bin Laden and with videos of Muslims being killed in Bosnia, Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir. Some of the videos are from Abu Qutada, a friend of Almallah’s brother and also of Bin Laden. One friend remembers The Tunisian booting out someone from his apartment who refused to wear gloves when handling pork and alcohol in the restaurant where the guy worked: “But he was very generous, always lending others money. He wasn’t so friendly towards Europeans, only his own people.”

At the M-30 mosque, The Tunisian got to know Amer Azizi, a Moroccan student who attends Imam Moneir’s Koran classes. After class, discussion usually turned to politics. But apart from discussions of Palestine, when mostly everyone became agitated, nothing radical or violent was proposed. This soon changed.

The Tunisian went on the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca and returned illuminated, interested only in religious matters and righting the wrongs done to Muslims around the world. In October 2000, Sheikh Saleh, one of the original members of the Yarkas group, arranged for Azizi to train in an Al Qaeda camp in Afghanistan. Turkish authorities arrested Azizi on the way. He was carrying a false passport, a compass and religious books. Azizi said he was just a religious student on his way to study, and the police let him go. He returned from Afghanistan in the summer of 2001, high as a kite on Jihad. He exhorted everyone to join the mujahedin and fight in Palestine and other places. Young people at the mosque looked up to him as an action hero and listen.

That summer, Azizi, who had become the point man for Yarkas in proselytizing young Moroccans for Jihad with war stories from Afghanistan, promoted a series of family picnics at the Parque del Soto by the banks of the Navalcarnero River outside Madrid. The regulars at these “river meetings” include Said Chedadi, Basel Ghalyoun, Dris Chebli, Mouhanned Almallah Dabas and his brother Moutaz, Mustapha Maymouni, The Tunisian and his close friend Khalid Zeimi Pardo. The children run around, the women prepare the food, and the friends play soccer and discuss Jihad. In August 2001, Jamal Zougam, another picknicker, went to Tangiers to visit Mohamed al-Fazizi, the fiery Moroccan who had preached at the al-Quds mosque in Hamburg where Mohammed Atta and two of the other 9/11 suicide bomber pilots had been enraptured by Fazizi’s call “to smite the head of the infidels.” Zougam, too, returns with righteous fire. Pardo, though, considers that they were all still merely “Salafist and not adherents of Jihad.”

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19 The habit of taking in “fellow travelers” is a commonplace on the road to radicalization and jihad. Recall that three of main 9/11 plotters — Mohammed Atta, Marwan Shehi and Ramzi Bin Al-Shibh— rented an apartment near the Technological University where they took in fellow travelers and created a parallel universe devoted to dreams of jihad.

20 Conversations with El Pais investigative reporters Jose Yoldi and Jorge Rodriguez.

Azizi, The Tunisian and some of the others in Sheikh Moneir’s discussion group stepped up their verbal assault on those who don’t follow the Takfiri way as kuffar (infidels), including Muslims, subject to takfir (excommunication) and execution. They consider Europe Dar al-Harb (“The House of War” in opposition to Dar al-Islam, “The House of Islam”). Imam Moneir pushed back: “Just because someone has a beard he thinks he’s a Sheikh who is knowledgeable and can issue fatwas.” Azizi declared that Moneir, a self-professed Salafi, “is no Moslem,” and angrily stormed out of the mosque with some followers. The Tunisian, who was among them, piled on: “no one should pray here, it’s a sin.”

On 9/11, Azizi and The Tunisian are very pleased. Meanwhile, Judge Garzón is convinced — wrongly it turns out — that the 9/11 operation was planned in Spain when he discovers that the last tune-up meeting between Mohamed Atta and Ramzi bin al Shibh had taken place in Spain in July 2001. He strongly suspects Yarkas and his group of being involved in this planning session, and takes it as an excuse to arrest the major members of this group. With the information gathered from the extensive wiretapping and Kalaïji’s network of informants, Garzón arrests all the core members of Yarkas’s group in November 2001 in Operation Datil. (The Spanish Supreme Court would later overturn Yarkas’s conviction for involvement in 9/11).

Peripheral members who are relative newcomers to the group around Yarkas escape detection and arrest, including The Tunisian, Zougam, Maymouni and Mouhannad Almallah Dabas.
Others go into hiding. Spanish Judge Juan Del Olmo considers it a given that Dabas helped Amer Azizi flee Spain by boat dressed in a woman’s garb. But for the time being, these lesser known friends of Yarkas fall under the police radar screen. Free but on their own, they maintain a low profile, and they are very upset at the arrest of their friends.

Amer Azizi, Mohanndes Almallah and Jamal Zougam

A Mission without Means

The incubation of the Madrid plot by the lesser known members of Yarkas’s circle begins in 2002. The evidence from pre-trial testimony, the trial itself, and numerous interviews with friends of the perpetrators as well as various police and intelligence agents strongly indicates that al-Qaeda had nothing directly to do with the plot at any time. No evidence that has come to light links Yarkas or Azizi to the plot, despite frequent speculation about their supposed involvement. The Tunisian did visit Yarkas in prison and promised to look out for his family. None of the discussions leading up to the plot mention Yarkas as a player, or even as an idea man. And if Azizi, who eventually made his way to the tribal region along the Afghan-Pakistan border, were in the loop, then Al Qaeda would have praised him to the hilt and promoted him. Ayman al-Zawahiri and others in Al Qaeda repeatedly lauded the attack, and all those involved or accused, but never mentioned Azizi. There have been other attempts to link the Madrid plot to al-Qaeda through the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GMIC), and the Spanish state prosecutor, Olga Sanchez, is convinced of it. There is nothing substantial in what she offers. More tellingly, there is nothing in the internal dynamics of the plot that requires, or implies, an outside driver.

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Members of the group meet, pray and discuss at several neighborhood mosques in Madrid, including the Takouma mosque in Villaverde mosque on the outskirts of Madrid. The substitute imam, Abdelkader Farssaoui, curries favor with the group. His role is duplicitous. He harbors jihadi sympathies but he is also a police informant, operating under the codename “Cartagena.” There is some dispute as to the voluntary nature of the Cartagena reports. At one session of the trial that we attended, Cartagena recanted many of the specific allegations he made against his friend in pre-trial testimony, particularly in regard to non-jiahdi criminal activities. Arguing that police threatened to deport him and his family if he refused to cooperate and say what they
wanted, especially in regard to drug matters. But there is no controversy surrounding some of his
general observations about their sympathy for Jihad.

Beginning in October 2002, Cartagena begins informing the police’s Central Unit of External
Information (UCIE) about the informal group of young North Africans that now calls itself *Al
Harakat Salafiyah* (“The Salafi Movement”), which he describes as “Takfiri.” The group
includes Zougam, Maymouni, The Tunisian and newcomer Faisal Allouch. Cartagena will testify
that the group met “clandestinely, with no regularity or fixed place, by oral agreement and
without any schedule, though usually on Fridays” at the apartment of Faisal Allouch to chant
jihadi songs and watch videos of jihadi preachings and of atrocities committed against Muslims.

Maymouni initiates the meetings with the chanting of Jihadi verses, incantations, and the reciting
of prayer. He advises who in the group needs to commit which verses to memory. His role is
similar to that of a deacon in American Protestant churches, who warms the floor for the pastor
by leading the congregation in gospel and traditional prayers. Stepping into the role of mind-
shaping pastor is The Tunisian, who transports the mobilized gathering through a series of
reflections on the tragedies of Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya, and elsewhere, conveyed in ways
that regularly bring the group near to tears. He has found his passion.

Maymouni proposes the hand of his 15-year-old sister to The Tunisian. She works as a
seamstress in the M-30 mosque. The Tunisian accepts without having seen her, and they marry
in November 2002. Soon, by force of personality, intellect, fervor and knowledge of the Koran,
The Tunisian emerges as the group’s *de facto* leader. After eliciting moral outrage at the
barbarous actions of the enemies of Islam, he demands actions from the group to carry out
violent justice and to right perceived wrongs against Muslims. He also takes aside individuals to
personally discuss what each in particular might do for the cause. According to Cartagena,
although they now had “reached the conclusion that they had to undertake jihad,” they really
have no idea of where or how do to it.

Rabei Ousmane Sayed Ahmed, nicknamed “The Egyptian,” now comes into the picture. He’s a
self-aggrandizing jihadi wannabe who blusters up a storm (he would later boast responsibility for
the Madrid bombing, but would be acquitted of the charge, as he was in Italy at the time showing
videos of the beheading of American Nick Berg in Iraq to motivate young Muslims to become
suicide bombers). The Egyptian helps to convince the group that they should concentrate their
desire to wage Jihad closer to home, in Morocco or Spain, where they have the material
resources to do something, rather than in Afghanistan or Chechnya, which they haven’t the
means to get to. But after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003, The Tunisian asks his friends
if they’ll do Jihad with him in Iraq. The group can’t come to a consensus over where and how to
act, and so do nothing.

Again, from Cartagena’s testimony on March 7, 2007:

Prosecution: In the written statement that you presented to the Tribunal last December 1,
it talks of what you called the last supper or least meeting with Serhane ben
Abdelmajid.... In this last meeting, did Serhane manifest any intention of committing
attacks?
Cartagena: No, committing attacks, no, but the meeting was very extraordinary, very strange, because we had met many times with him and he hadn’t done anything like he did this time. First, he asked us to disconnect our mobile phones, including taking the batteries out. We all did that, but he even went to check telephone by telephone: “give me yours, let’s see if took it out right, give me yours, give me yours.” When the setting was more or less ready, he recited a bit from the Koran and said: “What we want are martyrs, we don’t want troops, we don’t want to prepare people to go to Afghanistan, or Chechnya, or other places of conflict. We need martyrs who are ready where they are. If one lives in France then he’s prepared for France; if one lives in Spain, then he’s prepared for Spain. “Who’s prepared?” Everybody raised their hand, including me.

P: Do you know if this group, El Tunecino’s group, had the economic means to prepare an attack, on their own, without outside aid from anyone else?

C: Economic means, none, because some of them didn’t even have enough money for gasoline for their cars [he mentions later that they didn’t even have money to keep their cell phones going]; no, no, they had very few means.

P: And military or technical training, without anyone else’s help, to commit attacks of this type?

C: Well, to tell you the truth, those kind of preparations, I don’t know how much they cost. If there are two cables or three, a vibrator and a telephone, I believe anyone can make it. Now, for something very big, I don’t know if they counted on someone’s help or if someone among them really knows how to make those things.

Although The Tunisian and a few friends may have the motivation to carry out an attack, they have neither the means nor know-how. The Tunisian continues to traffic in stolen electronic goods in Lavapies, justifying his actions with the concept of fa’i, which allows otherwise unlawful actions like theft against infidels for the good of Muslims.

In June 2003, The Tunisian became an agent for the ARCONS real estate company, and in two months sold four apartments in Tetuan, Morocco. The Tunisian’s boss was happy but Pardo sees that his friend is unhappy. "We have to do something for our brothers in Iraq who are being killed," The Tunisian says to Pardo, “we have to do something here, break into jewelry shop, steal money for Jihad, kill a policeman." Pardo declines, saying he has a family to care of, and their friendship becomes strained. Another friend remembers The Tunisian saying to him in the butcher shop in Lavapies: “These kuffar, we have to kill them.”

At the Alhambra restaurant on Tribulete Street in Lavapies, across the street from Jamal Zougam’s Locturio (telephone and internet shop), The Tunisian refuses to allow Zougam to sit at his table. He accuses Zougam of being “too soft” on the enemies of Islam (Zougam will later be identified by eye witnesses as having left his knapsack on one of the trains just before it exploded, and will be sentenced to 42,992 years in prison for 191 murders). The Tunisian similarly berates Basel Ghalyoun, another friend from the picnic outings at the Rio
Navalcarnero, for being a coward (Ghalyoun will get 12 years for “belonging to a terrorist organization,” as the prosecution cannot prove he had an operational role in the plot). But at the time, after all was said and done, a lot was said and nothing done — until The Chinaman returned from prison and teamed up with The Tunisian in the early fall of 2003.

The Doer

THE DOER
Jamal Ahmidan, El Chino (“The Chinaman”)

Enter the doer. Jamal Ahmidan was a short young man (a bit over 160 cm, or 5 ft 4) with buck teeth and intense almond eyes that earned him the name El Chino (“The Chinaman”). He made sure everyone knew that bigger men would never get the better of him. Chino’s friends say that above all he wanted “respect” and believed having money and being tough would gain him that. One acquaintance recalled: “He would insult people in front of their girlfriends and you might flatten him, but then you had better be prepared for a crusade.” An investigator told us: “He was a little guy, but no matter how big you were, if Chino said he would kill you, you’d believe him and shit in your pants.”

He acted quickly, surprisingly and without hesitation, with a knife, a gun, or a bomb. When he decided on something, he wouldn’t let go until the deed was done — like a bulldog — whatever it was. Eventually, he would identify his own struggle for respect with that of oppressed Muslims everywhere, and he raved that he was chosen by God to be their champion and kill Jews. But he was a pretty much a lone and loose cannon until he met the guiding vision of The Tunisian in the early fall of 2003. Together, The Chinaman and The Tunisian, the doer and the dreamer, would plan and execute the most spectacular terrorist attack since 9/11.
The Chinamen’s Timeline to Radicalization

The Chinaman grew up as the fourth of 14 children in a cement-block house on the Rue Boujmaa’, just off Shaari’a Mamoun, the main market street in Jamaa Mezuak, a backdoor barrio of Tetuan, Morocco. He dropped out of high school to work with his father, but they quarreled. Chino didn’t like to be woken up early and was fed up with his father always telling him to “live honestly by the sweat of your brow.” Chino had bigger plans. He followed in the footsteps of an older brother, who was already a successful drug trafficker and junkie in Spain. But he had to stay in Spain because he was wanted for murder in Morocco.

As Chino’s family tells the tale, he was on his way back from a wedding in a taxi, drunk, asleep. He woke up to find one of his companions robbing him of a gold ring belonging to his father. They got into a fight; the other man drew a knife. In the tussle, Chino stabbed him, and ran away. The man went to hospital; the police started looking for Chino. The man skipped out of the hospital, and went to rob a garage. The garage owner caught the guy and hit him over the head with a pole, and he died. The garage owner was arrested, but as Chino was already on the run, the judge believed the defendant's story that the man died from the knife wound, not the head wound. So Chino was still wanted for murder — unjustly he claimed at the time — and he fled to Ceuta, the Spanish enclave in Morocco just north of Tetuan.

Chino told the Spanish authorities that he was an Algerian by the name of Ahmed Ajun. There was a bloody civil war going on in Algeria at the time and Chino knew he wouldn’t be deported to Algeria. He made his way to Spanish mainland and the capital, Madrid. Meanwhile in Morocco, he’s sentenced to 20 years in absentia. His mother Rahma warns him: “Don’t come back.”
Because Chino is now a wanted criminal, he can never use his real name in Spain, and that has a significant effect on him and his activities: he’s confined to the underworld and always on the watch. At first, he seems just to want to make a place for himself, to glow among the denizens of the deep. He zips around on a motorcycle and sports fancy clothes. Then, in 1992, he meets a 15-year-old Christian girl named Rosa who has been on crack since she was 12. They fall in love; he becomes a junkie too. In interviews for the documentary film, *The Madrid Connection*, and with the newspaper *El País*, Rosa says that one day she was crying on a park bench, when Chino came over to ask what was wrong:

“He sat next to me, and I thought, ‘what an ugly guy’. I told him to go to hell.”

But Chino was persistent and kind.

“Come on; tell me, everything has a solution,” he said.22

He had come over to Rosa at 7 in the afternoon, and it was 11 at night when he was still asking why she was crying.

“And when I gave him my hand to hold, from then on I was Chino’s woman.”23

During Chino’s junkie phase, his friends say he was capable of anything and really didn’t care whether he was killed or not: “He wasn’t afraid of that at all,” opined one. Rosa says the big problem was tranquilizers. He’d get high on cocaine and keep open a night club for his friends until the morning hours, then take downers and say “If I die, I deserve it.” Once, while he and Rosa were walking to the Plaza 2 de Mayo, Chino downed a few pills and someone he knew came up to him. He was a pest, so Chino took out a knife and stabbed the guy in the stomach. The wounded man survived and dropped charges for a dose of smack.

The police described Chino at the time as the “head of a small criminal gang dealing in heroin.” Many of the small time Moroccan dealers, junkies and ex-cons worked for him, dealing in 5, 10, 20 gram doses. He was caught and sentenced to 18 months. In jail, Chino became hooked on heroin himself. But in the spring of 1995, with Rosa 5, maybe 6 months pregnant, Chino decided to kick his addiction cold turkey with the support of people at a local mosque. There he found religion for the first time, and his inaugural mission in Lavapies was to save his fellow Muslim junkies, including the three Oulad Akcha brothers from his home barrio of Mezuak.

Chino convinced Rachid and Mohammed Oulad Akcha to quit. Khalid Oulad Ackcha resisted. Khalid would always remain wary of Chino, though the two continued to deal together. Mohammed and Rachid became devoted to Chino, willing to place their lives on the line for him. In Madrid’s underworld of petty criminals, they were dubbed “Chino’s bodyguards.” They would later die with Chino.

After Chino kicked his drug habit he became a serious businessman. During 1999 — 2000 he was dealing in ecstasy from the Netherlands. The price of making a tablet in Holland was the equivalent of 100 pesetas (.60 euros). The selling price of a tablet on the streets of Madrid was 2000 pesetas (12 euros). Chino imported lots of 30 to 50,000 tablets and sold them for about 465 pesetas a tablet. He made several of these deals, sometimes making the equivalent of a couple of hundred thousand dollars a deal. That’s pretty good money. No longer simply small time, Chino was now a big shot in his petty criminal underworld. In Amsterdam, he asked some Moroccan radicals in mosques if it’s permissible to sell drugs, and he’s told he can sell them to “atheists” (atheos) to “fuck them up,” even if it kills them. This, again, is fa’i, illegal activity for the greater benefit of the Muslim community. He also got a BMW 318 out of it.

Another of Chino’s operations is obtaining false documents for illegal immigrants, especially Chileans, according to Rosa. On March 25, 2000, police nab Chino for this. Under the name Said Tildni, he’s locked up in the Centro de Internamiento Extranjeros Madrid (Madrid Center for Internment of Foreigners). The Center’s Chief Inspector would report on Said Tildni’s behavior:

“He called the officials ‘Sons of a Whore’ (hijos de puta) and threatened them with death once got out of the Center. Later, in a private conversation, he manifested that he had millions coming from drugs, but that he had been chosen by Allah to benefit his people and lead them; he went on to say that, because he had no fear of dying, he was nothing less than invincible, and that his grand illusion was to march on Israel to kill Jews. In another moment of the conversation, he threatened to provoke his companions into a hunger strike if his “great mission” (alta mission) was disturbed (molestado). In view of these manifestations, it appeared that we found ourselves, if not before a religious fanatic, at least before a megalomaniac with twisted mental faculties that could imperil the peace and the social stability (convivencia) in this Center.”

Chino escaped the detention center on April 4, more interested now in fighting for Islam than in making money. But where and how to fight?

According to New York Times Reporter Andrea Elliot, who interviewed some of Chino’s family and friends:

“One day, while traveling in Holland, he called his brothers and told them to set fire to his cars. “Life is worth nothing,” Chino told his brother Mustafa. “We won’t live long.” (They ignored the instruction. “Mustafa likes cars,” one brother explained.)... He began sending cash to the mother of the man he had stabbed in Tetouan. He continued to drink and do drugs. But his drunken binges sometimes ended with him crying over the stabbing and the mother of the victim, one of his Madrid friends, Abdelilah el Fadwal el Akil, recalled. “He would say that it was his fault she had lost a son, and that the least he could do was take care of her;” Akil wrote to me from a Spanish prison, where he was being held as a defendant in the Madrid bombing trial.”

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Chino decided to visit his family in Morocco, and take the equivalent of 15 to 20 thousand euros with him to take care of the charges against him. But that apparently isn’t enough. He’s arrested and jailed for murder but never tried. No one, it seems, would dare testify against him.

Chino’s family hired one of Tetuan’s better known criminal lawyers, Mourad Elkharrazz, who recounts that during Chino’s three years in prison his client went from sporting jewelry and jeans, and cursing up a storm, to what the people of Mezuak describe as “going Afghan,” in emulation of the pious and heroic mujahedin who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan. That means wearing a coarse cotton tunic and pants, unlike the refined Moroccan robe, with a skull cap and sandals. It also means preparation for Jihad.

With a Koran almost always in hand, Chino swore merciless justice against Jews and infidels, and against his Moroccan judges for keeping him from his son. In April 2003, a couple of months before his release, Chino made repeated visits to the prison cell of Alí Hidaoui, a member of Morocco’s most prominent militant (though ostensibly non-violent) Muslim group, Al ‘Adl wal Ihsan (Justice and Charity). Chino was there to discuss Islam and question Hidaoui about the Qaeda-affiliated group Salafiyah Jihadiyah. According to a report by Spanish Intelligence:

“Alí Hidaoui informed that although Jamal Ahmidan (Chino) was reticent towards JAOI [Justice and Charity], based on the passivity of this group, he detected that [Chino] presented the profile of a violent Islamist, with a discourse along the lines of Salafiyah Jihadiyah.”

Chino’s drug-dealing buddy Abdelilah finally payed off the last 10,000 euros to get his friend out of prison (the lawyer, of course, refused to speak to me about this).

July 29, 2003. Chino’s back in Madrid. Rosa remembers that day well:

“He called me and said: ‘Come down.’ ‘Where?’ ‘To the door.’ I almost died when I saw him, I was shaking. I was in love and I still am. I mean, I know what he’s done. It’s very hard to say. You can’t control your feelings... Shit, I saw him arriving at Lavapies when he came out of prison, taking all the drug addicts (yonquis) to pray at the mosque. And I said: ‘But where are you gong Jamal?’ Many times I’ve thought: ‘Was he a psychopath?’ But how could he be two things, what I saw and something different?’

She says that he was kind and affectionate towards her:

“We walked in the street, hugging each other, kissing.”

At first, it seems as if Chino might be slipping back to his old life. He’s left the Afghan tunic behind for short-sleeve shirts and jeans again. He beats up guys who owe him drug money, but


he also tells his old friends: “don’t drink, don’t go to bars, don’t take drugs.” He goes back to dealing drugs with his friend Abdelilah, though he shies away from alcohol and taking drugs himself. Abdelilah, though, is running the drug operation now, not Chino. Chino’s heart just doesn’t seem to be in it anymore. He and Abdelilah would float the drugs with tires along the Mediterranean coast to the nearby Spanish enclave of Ceuta. But when one shipment goes to the bottom of the sea, Chino becomes stressed out and depressed, says Rosa: “he felt old, finished.” He’s 32 years old.

“Then, like in September or October, I started hearing about Serhane, The Tunisian, and Jamal began to change. He didn’t touch me anymore.... My mother’s ex-boyfriend, who was with him because he took care of his cars [Chino still had plenty of money from the drug business and had bought a new BMW], told me ‘Rosa, there is somebody who is eating his brain; he talks about him the whole day. Be careful, because he is telling Jamal [to get rid of] that Spanish girl.’”

No one has been able to clarify exactly when and how Chino and The Tunisian connected, but their respective social networks overlapped considerably and there were numerous possible pathways for them to link up. One was through the many everyday interactions in the Lavapies neighborhood. Chino would deal drugs in the Plaza Cabasteros, and sometimes stop by the halal butcher shop owned by the family of his friend Rachid Aglif, a delinquent nicknamed “The Rabbit” (El Conejo) because of his elongated face and big front teeth. He’d walk on down Tribulete Street past Jamal Zougam’s phone and internet shop on the way to the Alhambra restaurant, where just about everyone in the neighborhood would eat and chat on occasion, including The Tunisian. At the nearby barbershop they’d discuss the world while their hair was cut, and make ablutions and pray there too.

Plaza Cabasteros, Lavapies,
Once Mostly North Africa Now Black African
Chino’s most loyal pals, Mohammed and Rachid Oulad Akcha, would sometimes also pray at the Alonso Cano mosque, located in a fancier neighborhood. (The mosque was just an apartment: there are many such “mosques” in European cities, with no obvious outward signs to mark them.

When we talked with people on Alonso Cano Street, no one who wasn’t Muslim was even aware of the mosque’s existence, including people who had lived nearby for decades). At Alonso Cano, The Tunisian, who had by now acquired a reputation in Madrid’s North African community as a radical firebrand, preached the kind of things that the Oulad Akchas knew Chino would appreciate. Also, in front of Oulad Akchas’ house, in the Madrid suburb of Villaverde, people from both The Tunisian’s and Chino’s circles would play soccer together, and sometimes pray in the nearby mosque where Cartagena had preached (though referred to as a “substitute Imam,” he was actually a diaz, an unordained and informal preacher like The Tunisian had now become).

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In November 2003, one of the Oulad Akchas, Khalid, who is in prison in Salamanca on drug charges, calls his brothers Rachid and Mohammed in Madrid. Chino answers the phone.28 Khalid suspects something dangerous afoot involving his brothers and warns Chino not to lay off them. Whether from friends, family, dangerous rivals or police, warnings to Chino are like red capes flashed at a bull.

The Afghan and The Kid

“The Afghan,” Abdennabi Kounjaa, and “The Kid,” Asri Rifaat Anouar

Two other buddies from Mezuak who would play an important part in the plot came to be tightly woven into these overlapping social networks: Abdennabi Kounjaa, who was known in Mezuak as that neighborhood’s “first Afghan,” and Asri Rifaat Anouar, a slight and gentle vendor of candies who people simply called “The Kid” (El Niño). Everyone I’ve talked to in Mezuak says Rifaat didn’t have a religious bone in his body until he hooked up with Kounjaa’. Rifaat’s family seems thoroughly secular, like the Oulad Akcha family (which now lives by the family garage in another part of Tetuan). Rifaat’s sisters are known in the neighborhood as “moderns” who wear short skirts and like “la mode” (French “fashion”). But Rifaat was drawn to

28 Information provided by the Centro Nacional de Inteligencia (CNI).
the manly, bearded, brooding preacher who was Kounjaa’. Rifaat fell into jihad because he first fell for Kounjaa’. Rifaat, it appears, was gay. (Semen samples from a bed show Rifaat’s mingled with another man’s; however, there is nothing to suggest that Kounjaa’, who was married, had anything more than feelings of fraternal affection and responsibility for The Kid).

As The Tunisian became radicalized to Jihad at the M-30 mosque and soccer picnics in Madrid, so Kounjaa’ became radicalized to jihad at the Dawa Tabligh mosque in Mezuak (also known as al-Rohbane), and in the soccer outings nearby. He would go out to some of the less radical mosques in Mezuak and adjacent neighborhoods to distribute tracts extolling the Salafi way, calling for jihad, and denouncing the Justice and Charity movement in Morocco as a Sufi heresy, impure and un-Muslim. In the Mezuak, he alone of the Madrid plotters is remembered as being intensely religious, and many who knew both Chino and Kounjaa’ (and being unfamiliar with The Tunisian) believe it could only have been Kounjaa’ who inspired the plot and the martyrdom after. Although Chino and Kounjaa’ went to the same grade school and high school, and lived within a few hundred meters of one another, by the time of their manhood they inhabited two different worlds, the criminal and the religious, until they joined up in Madrid.

Kounjaa’ and Rifaat showed up in Madrid around 2002. Like many Moroccan immigrants, especially the illegals, Kounjaa’ became a construction worker, where he hooked up with Rachid Oulad Akcha, one of the “homeboys” from Mezuak, and became involved in the drug trading network of the Oulad Akchas (Chino, remember, is in jail in Morocco). One reason Rifaat came to Madrid was that he thought it would be easier to make his way to his mother’s relatives in Belgium from there. Rifaat’s own mother died and home was never the same once his father took a second wife.

Rifaat drifted closer to religion and did charity work helping out other immigrants. People liked him. Around 2003, Basel Ghalyoun, The Tunisian’s friend, was apparently touched by Rifaat’s sincerity and took The Kid under his wing.29 By the time Chino returned to Madrid from his prison stint in Morocco, the Mezuak homeboys had already merged socially with The Tunisian’s circle. When The Tunisian and Chino finally meet, all become energized. Rifaat, some say, fell head over heels for Chino. He would go on to kill and die for an unrequited passion that came to embrace the whole Muslim world.

The Rabbit, The Connector, and The Spanish Triangle

“The Rabbit,” Rachid Aglif

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“The Connector,” Rafa Zouheir

“The Spanish Triangle,” Antonio Toro, Emilio Transhorras & Carmen Toro-Trashorras
Ahmidan’s friend and suspected fellow drug peddler, Rachid Aglif, worked in the family butcher shop in Lavapies. Known as “The Rabbit” (El Conejo) because of his long, thin face and prominent teeth. Aglif put Chino in touch with a wheeler-dealer, Rafa Zouheir, who had known Aglif since The Rabbit first came to Spain from Morocco. Zouheir, a part-time night club bouncer and exotic dancer had a long string of arrests ranging from aggravated assault and arms trafficking to car theft and narcotics. In 2001 he was arrested for robbing a jewelry store in the northern Spanish province of Asturias and landed in a prison cell with a Spaniard, Antonio Toro, who had been jailed for illegal possession of hashish and explosives.

Toro introduced Zouheir to his cousin, another convict named Emilio Trashorras, who was looking to sell explosives filched from the Conchita mines in the northern Spanish province of Asturias where he and Toro sometimes worked. All three ex-cons were also informers who ratted on friends and acquaintances to help get themselves out of their frequent troubles with police and to keep from going back to jail. (In the courtroom at the bombing trial, Zouheir, always muscle flexing and fidgeting – and trying for some reason to get my attention, “He’s got a thing for you,” said Marc — was expelled for punching a fellow defendant who called him “snitch”; Antonio Toro and his sister Carmen refused to even look at their relative Emilio Trashorras, who was constantly gnawing across the fingernails of both hands).

In May 2003, Zouheir’s handler, Victor (a captain in the judicial police, Unidad Central Operativa), tells his charge to return to Asturias to contact the Spaniards about finding customers for the explosives. In late September or early October, around the time Chino connects with The Tunisian, Chino lets The Rabbit know that he’s looking for explosives. The Rabbit taps Zouheir who has been hinting around at the Flowers whorehouse north of Madrid where the two often go that he’s looking for clients to buy explosives. Zouheir now becomes the plot’s Connector.

October 28, 2003 at the McDonald’s restaurant in the Carabanchel neighborhood of Madrid. For a moment, at least, McWorld and Global Jihad come together in perfect harmony. The Connector and The Rabbit are there with Chino and his loyal buddy, Mohammed Oulad Akcha. The Moroccans have come to meet up with the plot’s Spanish Spaniards: Emilio, his cousin Antonio, and Carmen Toro, a department store security agent who is Antonio’s sister and Emilio’s fiancé. The Spaniards call Chino “Mowgli” after the darling nature boy of Jungle Book, Disney’s film adaptation of the Rudyard Kipling classic. But behind his back, they deprecate Chino and his friends as the “The Moors.”

The Moroccans agree to give the Spaniards 35 kilos of hash in exchange for 200 kilos of dynamite and detonators and a bit of money. Playing with the detonators one day, The Connector almost blows off his hands as The Rabbit watches. The hospital report, though, only raises eyebrows after the trains are bombed.

For the first delivery, Emilio instructs his courier to tell The Moors that the money “was stolen” on the bus from Asturias to Madrid. Chino greets the courier at the bus station, listens to the courier’s baloney, then beats the courier to a bloody pulp and strips him of everything, including his clothes. From then on, relations between the Spaniards and the Moors are civil and correct, complaisant even.
It’s doubtful that The Rabbit, The Connector or The Spanish Triangle knew anything about the jihadi nature of the plot they were getting into, or that they ever cared to know. The Spanish court will conclude, however, that Emilio knew in the end that the explosives were to kill and maim, and not just for robbing jewelry stores as he claimed.

The Role of Petty Criminality

Madrid was the second most expensive jihadi terrorist attack so far this century. According to the Spanish government’s indictment it cost from 52-54,000 euros (about $50,000 at the time). It was almost entirely a local operation, self-financed by work wages, collections and, mostly, Chino’s drug activities (32-45,000 euros). Although authorities were told of the drug-for-dynamite exchange, both from informers on the drug side and informers on the dynamite side, they could not fathom that the evolutionary landscape of Jihad had changed.

Today, in 2009, Spanish police and intelligence now tell a different: jihadi networks in Spain, and much of Europe, are very much intertwined with petty criminal networks: drug trafficking, stolen cars, credit card fraud, and the like. This wedding of jihadi and criminal networks was not inevitable or even desirable from the jihadi side (on principle, many jihadis still shun potentially lucrative relations with common criminals). To a significant extent, the joining of jihadis and criminals was a shotgun wedding, with U.S. counterterrorism being the unwitting father of the bride holding the gun. Here’s why:

To most quickly understand how 9/11 happened, and to find and neutralize its planners, U.S. investigators realized early on that they had to “follow the money.” 9/11 was a relatively complicated affair, involving many months of planning across three or four continents. It cost money, somewhere in the range of $400,000 to $500,000. Although this is a trivial amount compared to the estimated trillion or so dollars that the short-term reaction to 9/11 has cost, it was enough to have left a traceable financial trail. Almost immediately, the U.S compelled the world’s major financial institutions to monitor money transfers that could be potentially linked to terrorist financing, and to freeze the accounts of any organization – charitable or otherwise – that appeared to be involved in such transfers.

One unintended consequence of the successful implementation of this new financial regime was to force would-be terrorists to rely on local, low-cost, underground and informal methods of financing. In addition, the elimination of Al Qaeda’s training facilities in Afghanistan and the disruption of its networks for supplying expertise in logistics, bomb-making and so forth, meant that jihadis would have to find new means for executing terrorist operations. Petty criminal networks just happened to step into both of these niches: they had the informal financial wherewithal and the hands-on expertise in logistics (transport, safe houses, access to weapons) that the jihadis needed. Finally, as counterterrorism efforts continued to focus on Al Qaeda and the major jihadi organizations and operatives, many of whom continued to balk at dealing with mundane criminals, a newer wave of would-be jihadis was emerging. These were less educated, less ideological, less skilled and therefore more socially compatible with petty criminals.

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30 Madrid Train Bombing Indictment, Cuadragésimo quinto: Análisis de la financiación y otras cuestiones relacionadas, pp. 1126-1149.
To illustrate how social networks combine in the maturing plot, we present five social circles that are both interconnected and independent to various degrees. Each has an active “membership” of only a few people:

1. “El Chino’s Devoted Circle” consists of the Oulad Ackha brothers, Kounjaa and The Kid (Rifaa). All are from Chino’s home neighborhood in Tetuan, Morocco and all seem to be passionately devoted to him and to the cause he has taken up. This circle become the plot’s operational core.

2. “El Chino’s Support Circle” consists of cousin Hamid, friends Adelilah El Akil and The Rabbit (Rachid Aglif), and Otman Gnaoui. (Gnaoui will provide false identity papers to Chino and also accompany him to the mine in Asturias to pick up the dynamite. At the trial, he’ll receive the longest prison sentence: 42,924 years.) All know one another and know everyone in Chino’s Devoted Circle. All work occasionally at the farmhouse on tasks that are only indirectly related to the plot, including maintenance, transportation and the like.

3. “El Tunecino’s Religious Circle” includes remnants from the Yarkas – Azizi meetings at the Navalcarnero River and the after-mosque meetings at Allouch’s house in Villaverde on the outskirts of Madrid. Members of this circle, which include Jamal Zougam and Basel Ghalyoun, are also in intermittent contact with members of Chino’s circles and part of operations. The Tunisian himself becomes the spiritual leader of Chino’s Devoted Circle.

4. The “Explosives Circle” is composed of the Spanish Trashorras – Toro family.

5. The “Explosives Support Circle” include the Spanish co-workers and acquaintances of the Explosives Circle who engage in petty criminal activity.

Finally, there is “The Connector,” Rafa Zouheir, who facilitates contacts between Chino’s Circles and the Explosives Circle.

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32 Aglif denies knowing the Oulad Akcha in his pre trial written statement: “No conoce a los hermanos Mohamed Oulad Akcha ni a Rachid Oulad Akcha; tampoco a otros acusados.” But in his court testimony of Feb 21, 2007 Aglif identifies Rachid and Moh Oulad Akcha from their fotos as having been the two other guys who were “thin and tall” at the October 28, 2003 at the Macdonalds in Carabanchel.
Theoretical Considerations:

Organized Anarchy

In hindsight, the failure of Spanish police and intelligence authorities is stunning. The narcotics police were on to Chino, or at least to a number of his aliases, but completely ignored the multiple clues indicating his association with jihad and with the explosives deal. The police who were trying to set up a sting for the explosives weren’t at all interested in the drugs, which would have led them to Chino. Cartagena’s pointed warning to the police that The Tunisian just might try something spectacular for Jihad was simply ignored, perhaps because Cartagena himself told them that The Tunisian had no obvious practical know-how or means for the job but also because they just didn’t want to be bothered.

There are numerous specific examples of the inability of the authorities to keep track of information they already had. For example, in early January 2004, Chino cracked up his new BMW 530 D in a multi-car collision. The Madrid traffic police checked his false Belgian passport, issued in the name of Yousef Ben Saleh, the same passport and car that Madrid traffic police had checked the month before, when they had ordered the nervous owner to open his glove compartment, containing knives, a billy club and jihadi literature. It’s also the passport that Madrid traffic police checked when they ticketed Chino for speeding in a Toyota Corolla with license number 9231 DCW on February 29, 2004, the day he brought a shipment of dynamite from Asturias to Madrid. And during the night of March 4, 2004 police brought El Gitanillo (“The Little Gypsy”) for driving the same Toyota Corolla without a license and into an accident. Emilio Trashorras, who had sent El Gitanillo from Asturias to Madrid to pick up the Toyota, was furious that the boy had instead driven off with it to Toledo to visit an uncle.

To top it all off, ever since February 2003, Spain’s anti-terror brigade has been "kept under surveillance a group of radical Islamists which... later comprised the ‘commando’ unit that perpetrated the March 11 attacks." But the surveillance team was dissolved in February 2004 for “lack of means” and absorbed in other security services (like the screening for the wedding of Prince Felipe, the son of the King of Spain). This and other bureaucratic missteps demonstrate are truly mind boggling, given the wide reporting and awareness of U.S. and intelligence failures in the lead up to 9/11.

Perhaps to compensate for their failure to systematically track and interconnect participants in the plot who were already known and under surveillance, Spanish authorities as well as the press insisted that the ability of the plotters to operate under the radar screen was clear evidence of a carefully staged plot by some Terror Central Organization, be it ETA (the favorite hypothesis of those close to rightist political circles) or Al Qaeda (the favorite hypothesis of those closes to leftist political circles). Both sides pointed to the fact that the plot involved the complex coordination of dozens of participants. In fact, the plotters and the plot fell under the radar screen for precisely the opposite reason: because it was so anarchic, fluid and improbable. Political scientists and organizational theories refer to this kind of structure as “organized anarchy,” with the following four properties:

- **Fuzzy preferences.** The network operates on the basis of ill-defined and inconsistent preferences; it discovers preference through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences. Members participate without sharing consistent goals, and decisions reflect goal-ambiguity and capricious decision-making.

- **Tinkered technology.** Although the network manages to survive and carry through operations, its own processes and means are not understood by its membership. It operates on the basis of trial-and-error learning, the residue of learning from accidents of past experiences, and pragmatic inventions of necessity.

- **Fluid structure that varies over time.** Participants vary in the amount of effort devoted to different domains, and their involvement varies from one time to another time. As a result, the boundaries of the network are changing and uncertain.

- **Embedded in larger social networks** rather than isolated from them. This makes it imperative to compare who opts for violence versus who doesn’t within these larger social networks. But police and intelligence authorities, as well as much of the press, are usually only concerned with the people directly implicated in a plot or crime, and care little for understanding the wider social history and environment of their path to violence. Concentrating only the perpetrators may teach very little about terrorism.

### Small Group Dynamics and The Fundamental Attribution Error

For Americans bred on a constant diet of individualism the group is not where one generally looks for explanation. But science tends to support the finding that “groupthink” often trumps individual volition and knowledge, whether in our society or any other. Social psychologists have investigated the “fundamental attribution error,” a tendency for people to explain behavior in terms of individual personality traits, even when significant situational factors in the larger society are at work. U.S. government and media characterizations of violent extremists, such as suicide bombers, as cowardly homicidal lunatics may suffer from a fundamental attribution error: no instance of religious or political suicide terrorism has ever been known to stem from the lone actions of a cowering or unstable bomber.

In 1955, social psychologist Solomon Asch wanted to investigate what human beings would do when confronted with a group that insists that wrong is right. In his experiment, he showed groups of 7 college students a line, and then asked each student to identify which of several other lines matched it in length. Only one student, however, was being tested. The others were in on it with Asch and only acting. The actors all picked the same blatantly wrong answer. 75 percent of the subjects then chose wrong line at least once, rather than the line their own observation indicated was the correct one.

Our research colleague Greg Berns, a physician and psychologist, has done brain imaging studies with his associates at Emory University using the Asch experiment. He found that

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subjects appeared to reach conformity by re-calibrating the figure in parts of the brain dedicated to visual processing (occipital-parietal network) rather than to executive reasoning and decision making (pre-frontal cortex). This suggests that people might actually picture reality differently under peer pressure. The results also indicate that to stand alone and resist conforming may be emotionally costly (for example, in being associated with increased activity in the amygdala, a “primitive” brain structure the shape and size of an almond that has long been linked with a person’s emotional state).  

Recently, psychologists at Temple University in Philadelphia found that adolescents and young adults between ages 13 and 23 were more inclined than adults to take risks under peer influence of three or more friends. One study, dubbed “The Chicken Experiment,” used a driving-simulation game to see which age groups take more risks in deciding whether to run a yellow light. Results showed that “although the sample as a whole took more risks and made more risky decisions in groups than when alone, this effect was more pronounced during middle and late adolescence than during adulthood.” Indeed, most crimes by teens and young adults are perpetrated in packs. Sociologist Randall Collins finds that gangs and rioters (and police who try to control them) commit most of their violence when a cluster of four or more act in concert.

Part of the answer to what leads a normal person to terrorism may lie in philosopher Hannah Arendt’s notion of the “banality of evil,” which she used to describe the fact that mostly ordinary Germans were recruited to man Nazi extermination camps, not sadistic lunatics. In the early 1960s, psychologist Stanley Milgram tested her thesis. For his experiments, Milgram recruited a number of college-educated adults, supposedly to help others learn better. When the “learner,” hidden by a screen, failed to memorize arbitrary word pairs fast enough, the “helper” was instructed to administer an electric shock, and to increase the voltage with each erroneous answer (In fact, the learners were actually actors who deliberately got the answers wrong, and, unbeknownst to the helpers, no electrical shock was actually being applied.) Most helpers complied with instructions to give what would have been potentially lethal shocks (labeled as 450 volts) despite the learners’ screams and pleas.

Although this experiment specifically showed how situations can be staged to elicit blind obedience to authority, a more general lesson is that manipulation of context can trump individual personality and psychology to generate apparently extreme behaviors in ordinary people. In another classic experiment from over thirty years ago, the "Stanford Prison Experiment," normal college-age men were assigned to be guards or prisoners; the "guards" quickly became sadistic, engaging in what psychologist Philip Zimbardo called "pornographic and degrading abuse of the prisoners.” It’s hard to think of torturers as just your average Joe, but other studies indicate it is just so.

Recall Cartagena’s testimony at the Madrid trial:

“When the setting was more or less ready, he [The Tunisian] recited a bit from the Koran and said... ‘We need martyrs who are ready where they are. If one lives in France then he’s prepared for France; if one lives in Spain, then he’s prepared for Spain. Who is prepared?’ Everybody raised their hand, including me.... But I didn’t want to be a martyr at that moment, no, no, I didn’t like that, it scared me.”

Research on Groupthink indicates that when people are given information about the specific ability-related or morality-related behaviors that others say they will perform, these people come to believe that they also will perform such behaviors.\textsuperscript{42}

If group cohesion is based on how much the members like the group and get along with everyone, then the group members are less likely to speak up against the group norms and the group is more likely to make poor decisions. This is because like-minded individuals in a group are more concerned with their social relations than their tasks; they are less prone to cause conflict within a group in order to maintain congeniality. When you couple this with the reality bias wherein group members believe others to be more extreme than themselves, then the whole group tends to shift to a more extreme position as people bend over backwards to accommodate to what each believes is the other’s more radical position. Social psychologists refer to this particular group dynamic as “extremity shift” or “outbidding,” which is responsible for a “bandwagon effect,”\textsuperscript{43} whether in the rush to support a patriotic war or the cause of martyrdom.

But there’s more to group dynamics than just the weight and mass of people, their behavior and ideas. There are also the structural relationships between group members that makes the group more than the sum of its individual members. It’s also the networking among members that distributes thoughts and tasks that no one part may completely control or even understand.

It’s not that hard to understand how networks transcend individual limitations of physical and mental power to get things done. Anyone who has ever worked on a team or a production line knows that. But networks also have more far-reaching properties that enable them to transcend physical constraints of space and time in surprising ways that are only now beginning to be understood by science.

Take obesity. A recent medical study shows that even body weight can be strongly influenced by social networks of friends.\textsuperscript{44} Researchers examined a densely interconnected social network of over 12,000 people from 1970 to 2003. A person’s chances of being obese increased by 57% if a friend became obese, 40% if a sibling became obese and 37% if a spouse became obese. The study suggests that these trends cannot be attributed to the selective formation of social ties among people who might naturally incline to obesity. The biggest influence comes from close


mutual friends, even if they live far away. The far-away friend has even more influence on your weight than close neighbors or relatives who live with you. Although subsequent studies may show that there are other causal factors involved in these long-distance relationships, the results clearly have as much or more to do with social ties than with genes or physical proximity. If even body weight can be significantly molded by social networks in fairly short order, and perhaps even across great distances of physical separation, think how much easier it is to mold ideas among friends in neighborhoods or in chat rooms over the internet. The key difference between terrorists and most other people in the world lies not in individual pathologies, personality, education, income or in any other demographic factor, but in small group dynamics where the relevant trait just happens to be Jihad rather than, say, obesity. This is what we mean by “the ordinariness of terror.”
HEBRON CASE

AUTHORED BY
Scott Atran
The Hebron Case

At 5 AM on February 4, 2008, 20-year-old Mohammed Herbawi and his close friend and soccer buddy Shadi Zghayer, silently left their homes in the West Bank City of Hebron on a suicide bombing mission across the Green Line to Israel. As always with this sort of thing, parents were left completely in the dark. At 10 AM, one of the young men managed to detonate his vest near a toy store in a shopping center in Dimona, a small town that houses Israel's secret nuclear program, killing 73-year-old Lyubov Razdolskaya and wounding 40 others. Lyubov had been on her way to the bank at the along with her husband, Edward Gedalin, who was critically wounded. The couple immigrated to Israel from Russia in 1990, and worked in the physics department of Ben Gurion University until they retired in 2002. They were shortly to have celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Hamas poster of Martyrs Mohammed Herbawi (left) and Shadi Zgyaer

Hamas took responsibility for the Dimona attack – the first suicide attack claimed by Hamas since it suspended “martyrdom actions” in December 2004 – after Fateh’s Al Aqsa’ Martyrs Brigades had first claimed it for their own. But the Hamas politburo in Damascus clearly didn’t order it or even know about it. Usamah Hamdan, the de facto Hamas Foreign Minister headquartered in Beirut, initially said he had no idea who was responsible. When senior Hamas
leaders in the West Bank were asked if this meant that the political leadership exile didn’t know about the attack, they said: “yes, you can conclude that; we certainly didn’t.”

The immediate lead up to the attack probably began on January 15, 2008, when a son of Mahmoud Zahar, the leader of Hamas in Gaza, was killed by Israelis (another son was killed in a 2003 attempt to assassinate Zahar). On January 18, Israel Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered the army to seal all border crossings with the Gaza Strip, cutting off the flow of vital supplies to the besieged territory in an attempt to stop Palestinian Arab rocket barrages on Israeli border towns. But violence continued. On January 23, thousands of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip poured into Egypt after militants blew a large hole in the border wall that separates Gaza from Egypt.

Senior Israeli officials informed our research team that Zahar and Ahmad Al-Ja’abri, the military commander of Hamas’s Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, had probably wanted to launch an operation across the Israel — Egypt border after Hamas breached the border wall between Gaza and Egypt. That didn’t work out, so al-Al-Ja’abri called upon his clan ally in Hebron, Ayoub Al-Qawasmeh, to carry out an operation from the West Bank. Ayoub Al-Qawasmeh then tapped into the young men on the soccer team who had been earnestly wanting to do something. The two young men infiltrated across a part of the border that had no wall, which has since led to renewed commitment and funding to completing the wall separating Israel and the West Bank (Hamas’s suspension of suicide bombings in December 2004 and the legal actions initiated against the wall had led Israel to slowdown the wall’s completion).

The two young men who carried out the Dimona attack were members of the same Hamas neighborhood soccer team as several others who died in 2003: the Masjad (mosque) Al-Jihad soccer team located in the neighborhood of Wadi Abu Katila with participation also from members of the Masjad al-Rabat soccer team. Wad Abu Katila is a residential quarter of 7 – 8000 people, neither rich nor poor but with lots of unfinished construction because of the collapse of the Palestinian economy during the ongoing Intifada.

Soccer field graffiti in Wad Abu Katila honoring martyr Ra’ed Missak Qawasmeh
Herbawi had been arrested on March 15, 2003 just after a suicide attack by four others on the team (March 7, 2003, Muhsein and Hazem Al-Qawasmeh, Sufian Hariz and Fadi Fahuri) and before another suicide attack on May 17, 2003 (Fuad Al-Qawasme and Basem Takruri). All of the young soccer terrorists were between the ages of 18 and 22. Some studied, or planned to study, at the local branch of the Palestine Polytechnic College in Wad Abu Katila:

— Hamza al-Qwasmeh (18, killed in shooting attack on outpost in Hebron area January 17, 2003, construction worker)

— Mahmoud al-Qawasmeh (20, suicide bombing Haifa Bus March 5, 2003, Polytechnic student)

— Muhsein al-Qawasmeh (20, killed in suicide shooting attack on Kiryat Arba settlement March 7, 2003; family owned one of Hebron’s largest bookstores)

— Hazem al-Qawasmeh (22, killed in suicide shooting attack on Kiryat Arba settlement March 7, 2003, worked in Goldsmith’s shop)

— Fadi al-Fahudi (22, killed in suicide shooting attack on Gevohot settlement March 7, 2003, worked as an electrician)
— Sufian Hariz (21, killed in suicide shooting attack on Gevohot settlement March 7, 2003; the only one who apparently did not play on the soccer team)

— Fuad al-Qawasmeh (21, suicide bombing in center of Hebron, May 17, 2003, hairdresser trainee)

— Basam al-Takruri (19, suicide bombing on Jerusalem Bus May 18, 2003; ran family’s convenience store, Polytechnic student)

— Mujahed al-Ja’abri (19, failed suicide bombing near A-Ram roadblock in Jerusalem area May 18, 2003, Polytechnic student)

— Abdel Shabneh (18, suicide bombing of Jerusalem bus, June 12, 2003, planned to go to the Polytechnic College)

The terrorist teammates reflect the strata of Hebron society: some were simple workers; some were from the middle class; some were well-established and educated. Fadi al-Fahudi worked as a private electrician; Hamza al-Qawasmeh was a simple construction worker; Muhsan al-Qawasmeh’s family owned one of the largest bookstores in the city; Hazam al-Qawasmeh was a mechanic; Basam al-Takruri ran his family’s convenience shop; Fuad Qawasmeh’s father was a moneychanger and his uncle ran Hebron’s education department.

The operations out of Hebron revolve mostly around one clan: the Al-Qawasmeh hamula (clan) with help from the Al-Ja’abri hamula. Abdullah Qawasmeh, killed by Israel in June 2003, and his brother Basem Al-Qawasmeh, killed by Israel in September 2003, were the military leaders of Hamas in the area who tasked the young men in 2003. The towns and cities of Palestine are organized very much like the villages: a few major clans, and some minor clans that are attached to the major clans, vie for local power. They often do this by differentially allying themselves with outside power. In Hebron, which has a population of about 150,000, there are four major clans (hamula, pl. hamayil); Al-Qawasmeh (4-5,000 people), Al-Ja’abri, (10,000), Natshe (15,000), and Abu Sinein (20,000). The Al-Qawasmeh and Al-Ja’abri clans are linked to Hamas, whereas Natshe and Abu Sinein are more closely associated with Fateh, though there is considerable crossover. In Palestine, the breakdown of political and religious affiliations along clan lines, including membership in militant and extremist groups, is commonplace (as it also appears to be in Lebanese Hizbollah and in Turkish Hizbollah).

Although the Israeli security forces have a vast intelligence network monitoring the militant groups, the bombings by young men from Hebron, a closely watched city, shows how the militants can still elude the security dragnet because of strong ties of family and friendship.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Parochial Altruism

One hypothesis that emerges from our study of the Hebron case in particular, but which also seems to bear directly on the Madrid and Hofsstad cases, is that through the creation of emotionally tight-knit brotherhoods, terror groups often form a virtual family whose members may be just as willing to sacrifice for one another as a parent for a child. These culturally contrived group loyalties mimic and (at least temporarily) override genetically based fidelities to kin while securing belief in sacrifice to a larger group cause. The mechanism of bonding may well resemble that of elite army units, which trains soldiers in small groups of committed buddies who then grow willing to sacrifice for one another.

Charles Moskos, a former draftee who became one of America’s most respected military sociologists, observed: “In ground warfare an individual’s survival is directly related to the support — moral, physical, and technical — he can expect from his fellow soldiers. He gets such support largely to the degree that he reciprocates to others.” Reciprocating strategies of the sort “you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours” frequently occur among primate species. Apes spend

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lots of time grooming one another of parasites, and baboons in a troop will defend each other from outside attack. There are also a few cases of reciprocity within non-primate species, like well-fed vampire bats which regurgitate blood into the mouths of hungry bats but expect a meal in return if the need arises at a later time.

Heroism and martyrdom, however, go way beyond principles of reciprocity, such as Tit-for-Tat or even the Golden Rule. Darwin puzzled mightly over what would motivate “the bravest men, who were always willing to come to the front in war, and who freely risked their lives for others?” Since the brave risk death more than others, they would have less offspring on average, “therefore, it hardly seems probable that the number of men gifted with such virtues… could be increase through natural selection, that is, by survival of the fittest.”47 Darwin readily acknowledged that the brave warrior who survives the fight will often gain more power or wealth or social worth, and so improve his chances for reproducing healthy and successful offspring. But if the risk of death is very high, then it is very doubtful that the probable gain will outweigh the likely loss.

How, then, could self-interest alone account for man’s aptitude for self-sacrifice to the point of risking his life – the totality of his self interests – for his extended family, tribe, nation, religion, or for humanity? The puzzle led Darwin to modify his view that natural selection only produces selfish individuals. In The Descent of Man, he suggests that we humans have an innate, naturally-selected propensity to moral virtue, that is, a willingness to sacrifice self interest in the cause of group interest. Humans are above all moral animals because they are creatures who love their group as they love themselves:

“It must not be forgotten that although a high standard of morality gives but a slight or no advantage to each individual man and his children over the other men of the same tribe, yet that an advancement in the standard of morality and in increase in the number of well-endowed men will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another.”48

Altruism is the sacrifice of one’s own interests for the sake of others, as in giving to charity, lending a helping hand, or just taking time to offer directions to a stranger. Parochial altruism, especially bravery and heroism in war, involves sacrifice for one’s own group to the detriment of rival groups.49 Parochial altruism is a basic aspect of the evolutionary imperative of human populations to “cooperate to compete.” In all cultures, parochially altruistic acts are considered noble and good. Though what is good and noble in one culture and time can be evil and ignoble for another. Individuals within a society may also differ widely in their appreciation of the value of an altruistic act, such as suicide bombing or the struggle for civil human rights (which is also parochial in the sense of being against those who would deny such rights).

48 Ibid., p. 166.
Family Ties

For nearly a century after Darwin, evolutionary thinkers struggled unsuccessfully to reconcile the seemingly antagonistic concepts of “self love” versus “group love” in biological terms. The first real progress was made in the early 1960s by William Hamilton, a British graduate student who became interested in the mathematical study of eugenics: how human heredity can be improved through intervention (now called “genetic engineering”). He also happened to be fascinated by Hymenoptera, social insects that live in colonies, like ants, bees, wasps and sawflies.

Each colony of Hymenoptera consists of chambers connected to each other and the surface by small tunnels. Colonies function around one or a few queens who can usually live for years. The queen’s task is to produce offspring. Fertile males mate with the queen to produce daughters then die. Sons have no fathers; all of their genes come from the queen mother. Most of the eggs laid by queens grow up to be sterile daughters called “workers,” who are specialized to maintain the colony’s chambers as “rooms” for nurseries, food storage and mating. Workers usually do double duty as “soldiers” who defend the colony against attack — if needed, at the cost of their lives. Sometimes there’s also a more specialized soldier caste whose behavior and anatomy is modified for group defense, including self-sacrifice.

Hamilton reasoned that because the daughters share most of their genes, it makes evolutionary sense for them to devote and sacrifice their lives for the group. The evolutionary task of these highly cooperative sisterhoods of workers and soldiers is to help their queen mother produce more members of the sisterhood — that is, more genetic near-copies of themselves. This insight led Hamilton to a broader theory of altruism in terms of “kin selection” and “inclusive fitness.”

In a nutshell: genes for altruistic behaviors should tend to increase in population when:

\[ \text{Kin } B > C \]

Here, the fitness “cost” to survival, \( C \), is less than the benefit to the survival of others, \( B \), multiplied by their coefficient of kin-relatedness, \( \text{Kin} \). By this logic, it “pays” for an individual to die if this action saves 2 siblings, 4 nieces or nephews, or 8 first cousins.

Hamilton’s theory goes some way towards explaining cooperation in human groups. Not as a case of morally pure self-sacrifice, but as a particular variant of a broader evolutionary principle: “Cooperate to Compete.” Take the Arab dictum: “Me against my brother, brothers against cousins, cousins against the tribe, the tribe against the world.” Yet even blood feuds between kin groups rarely, if ever, follow strict Hamiltonian logic. Human reckoning of kinship obligations almost never follows a purely genetic reckoning of biological relationships: Among Arab tribes of the Middle East and North Africa, which are organized exclusively through descent in the father’s line, which anthropologists call a “patrilineage,” parallel cousins (father’s brother’s son and daughter) are considered first-degree “blood” relatives whereas cross cousins (mother’s brother’s son and daughter) are not. This bit of Arab cultural logic, which gives preference to parallel over cross cousins, has no real basis in biological logic.

A woman’s worth in property in an Arab tribe is never more than half her brothers’. If she marries within in her own patrilineage, she effectively loses control of the property to her father, brothers, and paternal uncles and cousins. If her father exchanges her for a bride price to make an alliance between his patriline and another patriline, and she cedes to her husband’s request to bring her property under her husband’s control, she loses the support of her father and brothers. It’s easy, then, for her husband to divorce her on a whim at no cost. In most of the Middle East, he merely repeats three times, “I divorce you,” and the woman becomes a “partner of the wind.” Although justification for such practice may be found in some interpretations of the Koran, the behaviors themselves likely antedated Islam, which merely normalized customs widely used at the time. These pre-Islamic mores had already violated the biology behind Hamilton’s “coefficient of relatedness” in a significant way.

Kinship, then, is not enough to explain levels of cooperative behavior within human societies, or the differences in collective behavior across societies. Cooperative mechanisms or algorithms that are based on genetic kinship should be designed to focus benefits only on close relatives. So biological kinship could not directly explain how groups of individuals who are distantly related or unrelated can cooperate to the point of willingness to sacrifice their lives for one another.

**Imagined Kinship**

Because humans evolved in small groups whose members were closely related, evolution favored a kin psychology designed to help out members of their groups. By “overextending” the idiom and sentiments of kinship to non-kin, large-scale cooperation may be facilitated for trade or war. As “imagined kin,” members of groups perform and profit from many tasks that they could not do alone, one by one, or only with genetic family.

Even casual study of anthropology and history indicates that the sentiment and idiom of kinship were critical to the formation of political communities and alliances. Among Native Americans of the Northwest Coast, war between chiefdoms would end, and trade begin, when their leaders (“Big Men”) exchanged gifts and became ceremonial “brothers.” For the ancient Hebrews and Phoenicians, “the worshipper is called brother (that is, kinsman or sister of the god).” “Brotherhood” is also the common term applied today among the Christian faithful and to the fraternity (ikhwan) of Islam. The rhetoric of family and kinship has also been a critical mobilizer in the formation of the “imagined community” of the modern nation, and a potent motivator in modern warfare.

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The language of kinship, and the emotions it evokes, is also a sustaining feature of durable social movements as diverse as civil rights and Jihad. Consider the “Oath to Jihad” quoted below. The oath affirms that by their sacrifice members help secure the future of their family of fictive kin.

*Each [martyr] has a special place — among them are brothers, just as there are sons and those even more dear.*

- “Oath to Jihad” for members of *Harkat ul-Mujahedin*, a Pakistani affiliate of the *World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders*, an umbrella group formed by Osama Bin Laden in 1998

From an evolutionary standpoint, imagined kinship isn’t all that different from pornography or advertising sex to sell cars or yoghurt or almost anything at all. Our psychology evolved to respond to certain stimuli indicating fecundity, virility or good health. This happened to help us find mates that propagate our genes: like men to full breasts, women to well-formed muscles, and both sexes to white teeth. But evolution only produces what’s better than worse, not what’s best. It was better to be sexually stimulated by features signaling reproductive potential than not. The fact that pornographers and advertisers can “trick” and “tweak” our evolutionary proclivities for all sort of other ends was not a concern in the ancestral environment that selected for human sexual psychology. At least since the Venus of Dolní Věstonice, a 30,000 year-old ceramic nude with exaggerated hips and breasts, human cultures have learned to manipulate our species’ biological endowment to make us think and act in ways that go way beyond what was necessary or relevant to survive and reproduce in ancestral evolutionary environments.

**Friendship**

Friendship among peers has always been critical to human cooperation and survival, ever since our big-brain but weak-body ancestors became human by forming strongly-coordinated teams to forage and fight. But in today’s era of globalization and cultural fragmentation, friendship has come to the fore as traditional families and cultures disintegrate. As every parent in a family on the move learns hard, the dearest thing for young people who need to make their way in the world is to make and keep friends.

People are becoming more mobile and distant from their origins, and their relevant knowledge about the world is acquired horizontally through media and peers, rather than vertically from generation to generation. Larger social movements, with their greater moral causes, are not enough to prevent young people on the move from drowning in a sea of anonymity or motivating them to kill and die for others. For that you need smaller groups of friends.

In the case studies on terrorism, we’ve seen how friendships form for Jihad in terms of fictive kin.

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But what is the broader evolutionary appeal and logic of friendship that makes it such a robust strategy for sustaining larger groups and mass movements? And especially so in today’s world, where the larger movements transcend traditional ethnic and territorial affinities and aspirations? Friendship is a workhorse of innovation in Silicon Valley, a springboard to power in democratic politics, and the strongest base, or al-qaeda, for Jihad.

One problem with Tit-for-Tat, the Golden Rule and other reciprocity strategies for cooperation, is how they can spread in a population of strangers who may initially suspicious of one another. Spatial constraints, like living or working in the same neighborhood, can increase the probability of encounters between would-be cooperators. So can social constraints on interactions, like belonging to the same linguistic group, profession or academic discipline. When spatial and social constraints coincide or strongly overlap, as with a village or tribal lineage, and the number of people is small enough so that everyone knows everyone else either directly or through someone they know, then defection become relatively easy to spot and weed out. But as the world becomes more cosmopolitan, fakers, shirkers and spies can rove into neighborhoods and mimic the prevailing linguistic dialects and cultural signals. With friendship, where the focus is on specific partners who are well known rather than on randomly encountered individuals, deception is much less likely to succeed.

Humans can’t remember, integrate and update all past interactions with everyone else in a group beyond about 5 to 10 individuals. More or less the number in a group of close friends, or clique. But even friends usually don’t closely monitor past dealings with one another in some monotonous way, where each transaction is equally weighted and scrutinized. Friends, however, do tend to concentrate their memories and interactions on one another, and to be relatively uninterested in learning about or interacting with strangers once a sufficient number of friends is found.

Anthropologists Daniel Hruschka and Joe Henrich have developed a mathematical simulation of friendship as a stable and robust evolutionary strategy which is forgiving towards preferred partners but tends to defect in interactions with strangers. The model’s assumptions are intuitive. People are sensitive to early interactions in a quest for reliable partners. If they encounter repeated defectors they don’t continue to play with them, as in Tit-for-Tat and other iterated versions of the prisoner’s dilemma, but go off somewhere else to look for them. Once people build up a sufficiently strong group of preferred cooperators, they cultivate and maintain this small set of local relationships. They begin to stop looking for new partners and become slow to break with old ones.

This makes friendship a particularly useful and stable strategy in a large and noisy world. Friendship maximizes cooperation and trust among a happy few, while minimizing the menace of

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defection and deception from the multitude. But there’s also a potential downside to over reliance on friendship: by sticking only to friends, new opportunities to hook up with even better cooperators and to achieve greater benefits may be lost. Getting through from the outside to cliques of youthful friends is a difficult thing to do, especially those on an adventurous moral mission. But that is what well may be needed needed to move the next generation away from the adventure of heroism for Jihad.

**Sacred Values**

Sacred values often have their basis in religion, but such transcendent core secular values as a belief in the importance of individual morality, fairness, reciprocity, and collective identity (“justice for my people”) can also be sacred values. These values will often trump economic thinking or considerations of *realpolitik*.  

Devotion to some core values may represent universal responses to long-term evolutionary strategies that go beyond short-term individual calculations of self-interest but that advance individual interests in the aggregate and long run. This may include devotion to children, to community, or even to a sense of fairness. Other such values are clearly specific to particular societies and historical contingencies, such as the sacred status of cows in Hindu culture or the sacred status of Jerusalem in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Sometimes, as with sacred cows or sacred forests, what is seen as inherently sacred in the present may have a more materialistic origin, representing the accumulated material wisdom of generations who resisted individual urges to gain an immediate advantage of meat or firewood for the long-term benefits of renewable sources of energy and sustenance.

Matters of principle, or “sacred honor,” are enforced to a degree far out of proportion to any individual or immediate material payoff when they are seen as defining “who we are.” Revenge, “even if it kills me,” between whole communities that mobilize to redress insult or shame to a single member go far beyond individual “tit-for-tat,” and may become the most important duties in life. This is because such behavior defines and defends what it means to be, say, a Southern

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65 Rational choice involves selecting and ordering the best means for achieving goals in the future. It operates on the principle: “a bird in the basket is worth more than two in the bush.” The further down the line a goal is, the less it’s real value here and now, and the less committed a person is to implement the means to realize it. But sacred values upset these calculations. In many cases, sacred values are concerned with securing tradition and looking backwards to the future. In other cases, the future takes on a transcendent value, the dream of what ought to be rather than what is, as in the fight for liberty or justice. Sometimes, sacred values take on aspects of both tendencies: say, to regain the freedom that should have been, or the dream of a righteous Caliphate. In all of these cases, there’s no discounting of the future. In fact the opposite: on the basis of sacred values, people may purposely choose to live and act now for a remote end.


gentleman, a Solomon Islander, or an Arab tribesman. The Israeli army has risked the lives of many soldiers to save one or a few as a matter of “sacred duty,” as have certain elite U.S. military units.

Of course, sincere displays of willingness to avenge at all costs can have the long-term payoff of thwarting aggressive actions by stronger but less committed foes. Likewise, a willingness to sacrifice for buddies can help create greater esprit du corps that may lead to a more formidable fighting force. But these acts far exceed the effort required for any short-term payoff and offer no immediate guarantee for long-term success.

Across the world, people believe that devotion to sacred or cultural values that incorporate moral beliefs—such as the welfare of their family and country, or their commitment to religion, honor, and justice—are, or ought to be, absolute and inviolable. Our parallel research, supported by the National Science Foundation, suggests that people will reject any type of material compensation for dropping their commitment to their sacred values and will defend their sacred values regardless of the costs.

In our research we surveyed nearly 4,000 Palestinians and Israelis from 2004 – 2008, questioning citizens form across the political spectrum including refugees, supporters of Hamas and Israeli settlers. We asked them to react to hypothetical but realistic compromises in which their side would be required to give away something it valued in return for lasting peace.

Using controlled experiments, all those surveyed responded to the same deals. In one cycle of experiments we used a “between-subjects” design where we randomly chose some subjects to respond to a deal with an added material incentive such as financial compensation, while a third group responded to a deal where the other side made a symbolic sacrifice over one of their own sacred values. In another cycle we used a “within-subjects” design, where all subjects would be exposed to the same set of deals. First they would be given a straight-up offer in which each side would make difficult concessions in exchange for peace; next they were given a scenario in which their side was granted an additional material incentive; and last came a proposal in which the other side agreed to a symbolic sacrifice of one of its sacred values. Our results were much the same for both the between-subjects and within subjects designs, indicating that the order in which deals were presented didn’t matter and that people responded the same way to deals give singly or as part of a set.

Each set of tradeoffs included an original offer we pre-tested as likely to be rejected (“Taboo”), and the same tradeoff with an added material incentive (“Taboo + ”). For example, a typical set of tradeoffs offered to Palestinians might begin with this (Taboo) premise: “Suppose the United

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Nations organized a peace treaty between Israel and the Palestinians; Palestinians would be required to give up their right to return to their homes in Israel; and there would be two states, a Jewish state of Israel and a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.” Second, we would sweeten the pot (with the Taboo +): “In return, the USA and the European Union would give Palestine one billion dollars a year for 100 years.”

Indeed, across the political spectrum, almost everyone we surveyed rejected the initial solutions we offered — ideas that are accepted as common sense among most Westerners, like simply trading land for peace or accepting shared sovereignty over Jerusalem. Why the opposition to trade-offs for peace?

Many of the respondents insisted that the values involved were sacred to them. For example, nearly half the Israeli settlers said they would not consider trading any land in the West Bank — territory they believe was granted them by God — in exchange for peace. More than half the Palestinians considered full sovereignty over Jerusalem in the same light, and more than four-fifths felt that the “right of return” was a sacred value, too. In one scenario Israeli settlers were offered a deal to give up the West Bank to Palestinians in return for an American subsidy to Israel of $1bn a year for 100 years. For those among them who had chosen to live in the Occupied Territories for reasons of economy or quality of life, the offer led to increased willingness to accept land for peace, a decrease in disgust and anger at the deal, and a corresponding reduction in willingness to use violence to oppose it. But for settlers who believe the Occupied Territories to be God’s ancient trust to them, expressions of anger and disgust and willingness to use violence rose markedly. Among Palestinians, the greater the material incentive offered the greater the disgust registered, and the more joyful the thought of suicide bombing.
This sort of "moral absolutist" sentiment runs directly counter to prevailing economic theories of rational choice and to political science theories of rational play in negotiation. Our results imply that using the standard approaches of "business-like negotiations" in such seemingly intractable conflicts will only backfire, with material offers and sweeteners interpreted as morally taboo and insulting (like accepting money to sell your child or sell out your country).⁷⁸

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When you look at young people like the ones who grew up to blow up trains in Madrid in 2004, carried out the slaughter on the London underground in 2005 and hoped to blast airliners out of the sky en route to the United States in 2006; when you look at whom they idolize, how they organize, what bonds them and what drives them; then you see that what inspires the most lethal terrorists in the world today is not so much the Koran or the teachings of religion as a thrilling cause and call to action that promises glory and esteem in the eyes of one’s friends, and through friends, eternal respect and remembrance in the wider world that they will never live to enjoy.

Our research also tells us that when there is a confrontation involving sacred values, then offers to give up or exchange sacred values for material incentives may be taken as a deep insult, which only increases disgust and the moral outrage that inspires violence. According to the U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review, the chief aim of counterterrorism efforts is to “minimize U.S. costs in lives and treasure, while imposing unsustainable costs on the enemy.” Given our results on the “backfire effect” associated with material incentives, this strategy may well be counterproductive. To a significant degree, devoted militants may not respond to a utilitarian cost-benefit analysis. (For example, the conspirators in the summer 2006 plot to blow up airliners with liquid chemicals smuggled aboard in toilet kits knowingly chose the targets most watched; in fall 2007, plotters in Ulm, Germany knew they were under surveillance and flaunted this knowledge in a display of costly commitment to their cause.)

Committed fighters respond to moral values, and may be more than willing to die for the cause. Rather than “minimizing” the appeal and effect of violent jihad by raising their costs in lives, each death may inspire more young Muslims to join the cause. Indeed, our utilitarian position may play into the hands of terrorists who turn it around to show that America and its allies try to reduce people to material matter rather than moral beings.⁷⁹ A more productive strategy, then, may be to quietly support, or just let be, moral alternatives that provide non-violent pathways of expression, even if they do not match our own moral values, such as Salafi organizations that are opposed to Takfiri ideals and as well as most madrassahs.

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TOWARD A SOCIAL-COGNITIVE THEORY OF RADICALIZATION

AUTHORED BY
Jeremy Ginges
Descriptive features of network radicalization

The Hebron, Madrid and Hofstad cases reveal significant commonalities. Each case study presents a detailed description of the networks, and comparisons across networks. Here we will briefly describe some overlapping patterns, and discuss the questions these patterns pose for the development of theories of network radicalization, focusing on the relationship between ideas and behaviors at both the individual and network levels. Then we will describe a social-cognitive theory that accounts for the data and yields testable hypotheses concerning the relationship between ideas and violent behaviors at the individual and network levels.

Feature 1: *There is no reliable demographic pattern describing those who become radicalized.* In the Madrid, Hebron and Hofstad cases members of radicalized networks, those who volunteered or carried out violent actions, come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, from the well-educated middle class to tradesmen and petty criminals. Theories of radicalization focusing on personal characteristics hold little traction when trying to distinguish between aggrieved populations and the small, radicalized networks within them. Nevertheless, a general tendency to marginalization appears members of violent extremist networks in recent years.

Feature 2: *Highly developed group bonds seem important precursors of collective radical action.* In the Madrid and Hofstad cases, initial steps towards radicalization occurred in the context of attendance at common mosques. In the Madrid and Hebron cases, membership in soccer teams also seems to be particular important. These types of collective actions are known to enhance collective identities and parochially altruistic actions.

Feature 3: *A formal process of recruitment and “brainwashing” is not a necessary feature of radicalization.* The three cases differ in the level of organization with the Hofstad “network” showing the least formal organization, being a self organized loose collection of like minded people, and the Hebron case the greatest level of organization. However, in each case individuals who end up becoming highly radicalized are volunteers seeking greater involvement, motivated, in the Madrid and Hofstad cases, by similar feelings of alienation from the West and outrage at the perceived injustice experienced by Muslims in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere, and in the Hebron case by the Israeli occupation. The Madrid case shows evidence of greater organized attempts at radicalization, while the Hebron case involves some formal organization at the local level. Theories of radicalization that focus on the manipulation of vulnerable young people do not seem to hold much traction. As suggested in the Hofstad case, radical networks do not have to be formal conspiracies but can in fact be informal networks. Sageman describes these as “blobs” and notes that imposing formal structures describing recruitment, training or information flows can be misleading. How then to explain how these informal groups become radicalized? If not products of formal recruitment and training, other mechanisms must apply.

Feature 4: *A sophisticated ideological basis for radical action is not a necessary precursor of radical action, and violent networks are not distinguishable from the communities they are embedded within by a special sense of moral outrage.* As demonstrated by the Hofstad case, the relationship between ideas and action is certainly not one way and certainly not unidirectional. As we discuss below, the notion that behavior stems directly from ideas has been questioned by decades of social psychological research reporting that ideas often follow from rather than

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preceding behavior people are often unaware of the true causes for their behavior. Thus theories that intimately tie ideology with different forms of action do not seem very useful. While widespread radical views (e.g., hostility towards and delegitimization of authorities) may be helpful to violent groups in terms of support they do not seem good predictors of radical action. Only a small minority of those with apparently radical world-views will translate those views into behavior. This begs the question: what mediates the relationship between radical ideology or radical world-views and radical action?

Feature 5: The pathway to violence is typically a graduated one, on both an individual and a collective level. It appears that radical movements of diverse ideologies tend to move through various stages of radical action from peaceful protest to violence as a product of experience at each stage. In each of these cases the experience of one type of action, whether that action occurs virtually in internet chat-rooms or as part of actual protest in some way propels a subset of people along a radicalization pathway. As noted in the review of the Hostad case, on a collective level the Hebron case seems an exception to this. However, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza over the past 40 years has experienced the same gradual radicalization. Opposition to Israeli occupation has developed from wearing Palestinian flags hidden beneath shirts in the 1970s and 1980s, to the civil disobedience and low level violence of the first Intifada, to the to suicide attacks of the second Intifada.

A common explanation given for this process is that people move to violence because other actions are seen as less effective. We must this explanation with caution as both case studies and experimental investigations show that people tend to ignore instrumental outcomes when thinking about political violence.

Theory development

The theory suggested here is in three parts. First we describe the cognitive component of radicalization as a change in moral priorities. Second, we describe how cognitive dissonance theory can be applied to the topic to predict how individuals can radicalize, and the relationship between ideas and behaviors in the radicalization process. Third we extend this discussion to describe how radicalization may spread across networks.

I. Radicalization as changing moral priorities.

The radicalization process is not primarily a process of changing ideas, but the interplay of changing behaviors and changing moral priorities. While many people may share strong moral outrage as a result of perceived injustice, few will radicalize such that they abandon common life goals (work, family) for the sake of radical political action. What is likely to separate those with strong grievances from those who articulate those grievances using violence is shifting moral priorities that both sanction and proscribe violence. Those who use violence form a belief that no other type of action is possible in the circumstances and prioritize their belief in the “virtue” of

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violence over other virtues such as those to family, village or religion. Importantly, the notion of changing moral priorities does not require sophisticated beliefs within the individual or coherent shared belief structures within the network. Instead it posits that the radicalization process is one where commitment to the use of violence becomes prioritized over other duties.

*Experimental evidence.* Other research we have done in Palestine demonstrates the importance of moral priorities. In multiple surveys we have asked participants to rank different virtues in order of importance, including alms giving, Haj, duty to family, belief in god, prayer, fasting, and “Jihad against the enemies of Palestine”. The table below shows the results of an analysis from a 2006 survey regressing identification with Hamas on “Jihad” (the relative moral ranking of violent Jihad computed by subtracting mean ranking of other moral duties from the mean ranking of Jihad. Higher scores indicate greater relative moral importance of Jihad). For every increase in scores for Jihad, the predicted odds of identifying with Hamas increases by 159%. This analysis controls for whether participants lived in the West Bank or Gaza, age, gender, economic status and income.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>95% C.I.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JIHAD</td>
<td>.466</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>22.875</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.593 1.316 1.928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEST BANK(1)</td>
<td>.221</td>
<td>.202</td>
<td>1.194</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.275</td>
<td>1.247 .839 1.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE(1)</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>1.106 .813 1.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>2.568</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.109</td>
<td>1.054 .988 1.123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFUGEE(1)</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.199</td>
<td>4.599</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>1.534 1.038 2.267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOME</td>
<td>-.073</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>1.381</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>.929 .822 1.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.233</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>2.498</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next figure shows the correlation between relative moral importance of Jihad (horizontal axis) and the predicted odds of identifying with Hamas (vertical axis; r = .861).
These results have been replicated in other surveys and using other measures of radicalization. They provide initial evidence that shifting moral commitments is a highly significant cognitive component of the radicalization process.

II) Cognitive dissonance and the radicalization process: individual radicalization.

The second component of the theory concerns the mechanism for the radicalization process. An explanation for the process of radicalization — for how moral priorities shift — must accomplish two things. First, it must work both on an individual level and on the level of networks. Second, an explanation should account for two significant components of the data: the importance of activities promoting collective identities (such as sporting teams, collective meals and mosque attendance), and the graduated process of radicalization.

Beliefs and behavior. Fifty years of social psychological research has demonstrated that the intuitive notion that beliefs and attitudes cause behavior is incorrect. In the 1950’s research first showed that the opposite can occur: behaviors can change beliefs. Initial studies showed that people asked to say or do something contrary to their beliefs subsequently changed those beliefs.\(^83\) This effect is moderated by the extent to which people can attribute their actions to some external cause such as a monetary reward. Festinger proposed that when people have to do something that is difficult, for example, making a difficult moral choice, they experience cognitive discomfort or dissonance which leads them to change their beliefs unless some external

cause for their behavior can be located. Without an obvious external cause for a behavior, people reduce their discomfort by changing their private opinion to match their behavior.

The classic cognitive dissonance experiment involved participants being asked to tell the next (confederate) participant that a long, monotonous task that they had performed, ostensibly for the study, was in fact a fun and interesting task. Some participants are offered a paltry amount of money (e.g., one dollar) to perform the contrary-to-opinion act, while some are offered a more significant amount (e.g., twenty dollars). Across multiple studies highly consistent results are found: those participants who receive a paltry amount to tell another participant that the monotonous task they just performed was, indeed, interesting, consequently rate the tasks as more interesting and enjoyable than did those participants who are paid significant amount. This effect has been very reliable across tasks but has mainly been tested with college students who have been found to change their opinions post-dissonance to become more favorable to tuition increases, parental access to health records, and alcohol bans.

Brehm described another form of dissonance more relevant to the radicalization process: post decision dissonance. Post decision dissonance results when an individual is forced to make a difficult choice between two options. In these experiments people are first asked to rank order preferences (e.g., between seven types of candy). One group of participants are asked to make a difficult choice, say between candies ranked #3 and #4. A second group is given candy #3 with no choice. All participants then re-rank all seven types of candy. The standard result is that those in the no choice condition re-rank in the same way as previously. However those asked to choose change their preference structure, with the candy they chose being ranked higher and the candy they did not choose being ranked lower than previously. Dissonance is created when the choice is made, and efforts to reduce this dissonance culminate in attitude change. The alternative that was chosen becomes the more desirable option, post-decision and the road not taken becomes less desirable. Furthermore, the magnitude of dissonance, and therefore the pressure to change one’s attitude, is greater when the two choices are more equally desirable.

These findings are not merely a consequence of conscious rationalization. Later research demonstrated that memory of this choice is not necessary for attitude change to occur. In a study comparing amnesic and normal participants, experimenters asked participants to rank order ten art prints. The amnesic amnesic participants were later unable to remember their choice (which art print they chose (preferred) or rejected), while normal participants were able to correctly remember this information. However, both sets of participants showed an equal amount of post-decision attitude change, preferring (and ranking higher) the art prints they chose.

The effect of difficult choices on changing preference structures may be an evolutionary adaptation. Researchers have recently observed the effect in children and capuchin monkeys.

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Children and monkeys either had to choose between two equally attractive options (two different stickers for the children and two different colored M&M’s for the capuchin monkeys), or were given no choice and simply offered one of the objects. The children and the monkeys were next given a choice between the non-chosen (or non-offered) option and a third, equally desirable option. Both the children and the capuchin monkeys reliably preferred the third option to the non-chosen option, compared to children and monkeys who had not been presented with the original choice, demonstrating attitude change away from the non-chosen option.

*Experimental evidence* In other research, we have conducted an initial study examining whether difficult moral choices can effect radicalization. The guiding principle is that people in a conflict situation, whether that involves living under occupation or being a member of an alienated minority, face different difficult moral choices. A young adult may have to decide whether to disobey his father and attend a political demonstration, or whether to work to feed his family or attend a meeting. According to cognitive dissonance theory, the action chosen could effect moral priorities such that decisions to, for example, trade-off duty to family for duty to revolution leads to a greater later prioritization of duty to the revolutionary cause.

To carry out an initial test of this hypothesis we embedded an experiment in a 2007 representative survey of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. To measure radicalization we asked all participants to rate their approval of a series of hypothetical tradeoffs involving a militant delaying a violent action (such as carrying out a suicide attack or a roadside bombing) for some other duty: to family, to religion, to village. One group of participants had previously been asked to make difficult choices by ranking duties including alms giving, attending the Haj if able, duty to family, belief in god, prayer, fasting, and “Jihad against the enemies of Palestine”. A second control group were only asked to make the difficult choice (ranking) after the radicalization measure. Prior ranking (difficult choice) effected radicalization such that making the difficult choice in favor of Jihad (ranking Jihad higher than other duties) led to more radical beliefs regarding the trade-offs.

Thus, initial experimental evidence reinforces observations from the Hofstad and Madrid cases in particular showing that the process of radicalization is a gradual one. Our preliminary hypothesis is that participation in an action such as a political demonstration alters moral preferences such that duty to the political goal increases in its ranking relative to other duties.

**III) Vicarious cognitive dissonance and the radicalization process: network radicalization.**

Importantly, research on cognitive dissonance shows that it occurs *across* networks of individuals observing each other, demonstrating how radicalization may spread through networks. Individuals observing members of salient in-groups making a difficult choice change their own preferences as a consequence of others behavior. Vicarious cognitive dissonance is also profoundly effective in explaining how, in Sageman’s terms, a “violent bunch of guys” can break away from the “blob” of others with similar beliefs. In a series of studies as yet unpublished (Joel Cooper, personal communication), witnessing hypocrisy of other members of a social network

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can change the observers behavior. These studies have been in the field of health but are easily applied to radical political action. Participants observed a member of an in-group at the University of Queensland in Australia advocate for the use of sunscreen to prevent skin cancer. Some participants also witnessed evidence that the speaker was hypocritical – that he or she did not practice what they preached. Witnessing of hypocrisy changed behavioral tendencies to a greater extent than mere advocacy. Those who witnessed hypocrisy were more likely to use sunscreen in the future than those who merely heard someone advocate for sunscreen. Later studies showed that this effect only holds when witnessing a member of one’s group’s hypocrisy.

To understand how vicarious cognitive dissonance works, the theory of vicarious cognitive dissonance emphasizes the role of social identity and group membership in the effect of attitude change. It argues that attitude change will only occur when an individual witnesses a member of his/her own group perform some hypocritical act, and that this group must be important to the individual’s identity. Social identity theory argues that people derive part of their sense of identity from the groups with which they identify, and that the degree to which they identify with these groups will impact the effect that the groups have on their attitudes and behavior. Only when group identification is strong enough will witnessing an ingroup member’s hypocritical act or statement produce psychological discomfort, and therefore attitude change.

Given that different cultures have differing orientations towards the self and towards the ingroup or the community, as well as differing attitudes towards contradiction and inconsistency. One plausible conjecture is that the effect of vicarious cognitive dissonance may differ in magnitude across cultures, and perhaps be more prevalent in more collectivist, community-oriented cultures.

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APPENDIX A

The Hofstad Case
The Hofstad Case

The Active Core

- **Samir Azzouz**: Samir Azzouz was born on July 27, 1986 in Amsterdam. His father works for a flower nursery and his mother stays at home. They had both immigrated from Morocco. When he was a little boy, his father took him to the Al-Tawheed mosque, where he learned Arabic and followed a religious curriculum. He was a good student, and was in an academic high school when he dropped out. He seemed concerned for the welfare of the international Muslim community from an early age. At 8, he was following the news about the war in the Balkans. At 10, he asked his father to take him to a store where they sold used military clothes so he could go and help in Bosnia. He wanted to become a pediatrician to help Palestinian people either directly as a physician or indirectly through raising money. During the second intifada, Samir became obsessed with the Palestinian cause. He was arrested during an anti-Israeli demonstration for six hours in early 2002. At the demonstration, he met Khalid, with whom he continued an intense Internet chat. Khalid (Hussam) was half Moroccan and half Egyptian in origin, and the two of them seem to resonate. Samir also met a girl named Dienna (who turned out to be Abida Kabaj) on the chatroom. She told him her real name, her job and the fact that she was going to travel to the Palestinian territories in the near future. Samir wanted to meet her and go to Palestine with her, but she seemed cool to the suggestion. Samir and Khalid decided to go to Chechnya instead. Because they estimated they would need about 2,000 Euros, Samir raised money by working at a hospital kitchen for the summer, saving his school bus fare by walking there, selling fake designer clothes and running errants for a pharmacy. Khalid introduced Samir to several of his acquaintances from the Al Tawheed mosque, who included el-Morabit, Taybi and Fahmi Boughabe. In late summer/fall 2002, Abida returned from Palestine. She and Samir participated in anti-Israel demonstrations. They liked each other despite the age difference (Abida is six and a half years older, and Samir was only 17), and decided to get married in order to continue seeing each other because it was not permitted for them to do so otherwise. They got married in a religious ceremony on December 6, 2002, with Khalid and el-Morabit as their witnesses. Samir still wanted to go to Chechnya, and Abida wanted to go with him, but he persuaded her that she still had an important job to do at work. On January 28, 2003, Samir and Khalid left for Chechnya. They were arrested in the Ukraine because they lacked the proper visas and appropriate clothing. They were repatriated back to the Netherlands, in the midst of great publicity. After the failed trip, Khalid faded out of the relationship. His parents pressured him not to see Samir again. He was never active in the group again. On the other hand, Samir started spending more time on the Internet. Abida and he moved to an apartment in The Hague, with the approval of both sets of parents, who in the meanwhile had discovered that the couple had married. Samir started hanging out with his new friends at the Al-Tawheed and As-Soennah mosques. He met Akhnikh in February 2003 and then Jason Walters around the same time. This led to more meeting of likeminded people, who started socializing with each other in an informal network: el-Morabit introduced him to Bachar, who in turn introduced him to al-Issa. After
hearing al Issa preach, Azzouz traveled to Schidam along with a friend, Bouali, to visit the itinerant preacher a few days later. In the summer 2003, Abida and he went for their honeymoon in Spain. Upon their return, on August 18, 2003, he started a new business (Islamic Bookstore Noer) and spent time trying to sell Islamic books and magazines at local markets.

In October 2003, Akhnikh and he drove to Barcelona to meet with Akoudad. Shortly thereafter, Samir, Jason Walters, al-Issa, Akhnikh and Fahmi Boughabe got arrested on October 17, 2003 for suspicion of attempting a terrorist plot in the Netherlands. They were all released on October 28. Meanwhile, his school work started to deteriorate. He had to repeat a grade and when he failed again, he got expelled. He changed school to Rotterdam. At the end of 2003, Abida and Samir moved in with her mother in Rotterdam to be closer to school. In January 2004, he supplemented his income by working at a nearby Edah supermarket after school. The supermarket was robbed on April 8, 2004 when Samir was not at work, and after the robbery, he decided to quit the job. His grades had improved and he had succeeded in gaining entry to the final year of high school. On June 1, 2004, the couple had their first child, a boy named Abu Bakr. On June 30, 2004, Samir was arrested on suspicion for the supermarket robbery. During a search of his home, chemicals were found for a homemade bomb (fertilizer and ammonia) as well as maps of Schiphol Airport and the nuclear power plant in Borssele.

During his prison stay, Samir taught himself Russian as he still wanted to go to Chechnya. His wife and mother-in-law visited him regularly, and he started a correspondence with Abida, which allowed them to get to know each other better. His trial for the robbery and attempted terrorist activity started in March 2005, and on April 6, 2005, he was acquitted on the terrorism charge because although he did possess a homemade bomb, he had the wrong type of fertilizer and it would not have worked. He got convicted on illegal possession of a firearm and sentenced to three months in jail. But since he had spent so much time in detention, he got released immediately. Abida and he moved back to The Hague, near Bachar’s home. Samir started taking chemistry classes at a local university. On October 14, 2005, he got arrested again with six other people in connection of the Piranha case (attempting to procure heavy firearms and planning a terrorist attack against national politicians and the AIVD headquarters in Leidschendam). The next month, on November 18, an Appellate Court confirmed his 2005 acquittal because although it considered it beyond doubt that he had terrorist intentions, it found the preparations he made so “immature and clumsy” that no real threat stemmed from them.

In June 2006, the couple had their second child, a daughter named Shahida. On September 14, 2006, a TV station broadcast a video-testament that was found at his house after his arrest. The Piranha trial started on October 16, 2006. Samir Azzouz was found guilty of terrorist conspiracy and sentenced to 8 years in prison on December 1, 2006. On further appeal of his 2005 acquittal, the Dutch Supreme Court opined that the reading of the Appellate Court had been a “too limited and thus incorrect” interpretation of the concept of terrorist activity. The law stated that it was illegal to possess objects “apparently destined” for a crime. His acquittal was vacated on February 20, 2007, and Azzouz was sentenced to four years in prison at a retrial for the original 2004 arrest on terrorism charges. Meanwhile the Piranha case was also
appealed, and his sentence in that trial was augmented to 9 years in prison on October 2, 2008. Samir Azzouz allegedly suffers from ulcerative colitis and his wife Kabaj is leading a campaign to have him get proper care in prison.

- **Nouredine el Fatmi**: Nouredine was born on August 15, 1982 in the village of Douar Beni Bouyeri Louta, Morocco. His father divorced his mother when he was young and Nouredine felt responsible for the rest of the family. At the age of 15, he first went to Spain to work illegally then to Portugal. He first came to the Netherlands in 1998/1999. In 2001, he began to visit the Al Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam, where he met many of the future members of the Hofstad network. He gradually adopted extremist views. Since he had no legal status or home in the Netherlands, he lived with friends and stayed with Bouyeri for a while. In 2003, he also went to the Internet café in Schidam with Samir Azzouz to visit with al Issa. In October 2003, he was arrested with four other members for plotting a terrorist act in Holland, but was released with the others eleven days later.

In June 2004, two other members and he traveled to Portugal a few days before EURO 2004. On a tipoff from the AIVD, the trio was arrested and sent back to Holland, where they were interrogated and released for lack of evidence. Surprisingly, given his illegal status, the Dutch authorities did not deport him back to Morocco. He regarded teenage girls and women as a tool for recruitment and personal pleasure. He had a girlfriend, Nawal, when el-Morabit introduced him to Malika Chaaba in July 2004. He called her up on October 2 and asked her to marry him. He wanted al-Issa to perform the ceremony, but since the latter was gone, Bouyeri did so two days later. The newlyweds spent the night in Bouyeri’s small bedroom watching jihadist films about decapitation in Iraq and Chechnya.

On November 1, he fled the Netherlands back to Morocco with a forged passport. In the beginning 2005, he was intermittently back again. In April/May 2005, he met Lahbib Bachar and Hanan Sarokh. Nouredine and Soumaya Sahla (whom he had married, see Sahla’s story) took them to a forest in Amsterdam, where they produced an assault rifle, took some shots and forced the other couple to do likewise. The couple later said they were terrified by el-Fatmi, but they seemed to acquiesce to his wishes. He told them he wanted to get an apartment in Brussels, and forced them to drive him there (with Soumaya) and sign the rental contract in their name. Soumaya and he stayed at Martine van den Oever for two weeks at the beginning of June 2005. On June 22, Martine drove them to Amsterdam, where the three of them got arrested for possession of an assault rifle. On March 10, 2006, he was convicted and sentenced to five years in prison on the Hofstad case, but was acquitted on appeal two years later. On the other hand, he was convicted and sentenced to four more years in prison on December 1, 2006 in the Piranha case, which was increased to eight years on appeal on October 2, 2008.

- **Jason Walters**: Jason was born on March 6, 1985 in Amersfoort. He is the son of an African American father and a Dutch woman. He has dual US and Dutch citizenship. He is the brother of Jermaine and they also have a sister. He was raised Baptist. In 1997, the parents split up and his father became depressed and became a Muslim. However, Jason and he hardly spoke to each other. After his parents’ divorce, Jason got into a lot of fights with his mother. Jason himself converted to Islam at the age of...
14 and quickly became fanatical about his new faith. Before that, he had been a fervent defender of the U.S., tolerating no criticism of his country, but after his conversion, he totally flipped around and considered his father’s country the ‘army of disbelief.’ In school, he was a smart kid but did not have any real friends. He was also the center of bullying. Besides going to the local fundamentalist mosque, he also became a regular visitor to the Al-Fourkaan Mosque in Eindhoven and an admirer of Imam Abdul-Jabbar van de Ven. A lot of younger people at his local mosque respected his quick learning and knowledge about Islam.

He finished high school in 2003 and went on to study Arabic and Islamic studies at the University of Leiden and learned Arabic in two years. The 9/11/01 attacks inspired him to inquire into the Islamic resistance against the US invasion in Afghanistan and later Iraq through the Internet. He tried to get in touch with militants via the Internet. He first met Samir Azzouz in February 2003 at a mosque in Rotterdam. Azzouz told him about trips to Pakistan organized by the Tabligh Jamaat. Walters expressed desire to go and gave his passport to Azzouz, who gave it to Saleh Bouali, who had already visited Pakistan and arranged for the tickets. This was a last minute affair, and Walters did not know how Bouali got the tickets from. He went to Pakistan with Ismail Akhnikh, his best friend in August for a month. Zakaria Tayba joined them for a week. (He later testified in court that he did not travel there with Akhnikh, but met Akhnikh there in a madrassah.) On September 3, 2003, Walters flew back to the Netherlands from Jalalabad. Upon his return, he was very active in the forums, trying to convince young Muslim boys to go to the training camps to pursue jihad. He would then refer them to Azzouz, who grew very discontent with the qualities of the referrals and prohibited Jason from sending him anymore. On October 17, 2003, he was arrested at his home (along with Azzouz, Akhnikh, al-Issa and Boughaba) for suspicion of planning a terrorist activity in Holland. He may have been in electronic contact with Akoudad. The group was released on October 28 because of lack of evidence.

On December 22, 2003, Jason went to Pakistan once again. He was accompanied by Zakaria Taybi. Alerted by the AIVD, the Pakistani services follow them, and they return early nine days later. Jason may have had contact with the Iraqi Kurdish Ansar al-Islam and possibly Jaish-e-Mohammed. At the beginning of 2004, he met al-Issa in the company of Taybi. He barely knew el-Fatmi, as he was not a friend of his. He first met Bouyeri in April/May 2004.

Jason started wearing a beard and traditional Islamic clothes. He clashed with his mother and sister because he thought they were dressed too revealingly. The women were afraid and fled to a women’s refuge centre in June 2004. He started his study of Arabic at the university in September and moved into an apartment in The Hague with Akhnich on September 1.

Jason dated a woman Latifa via an Internet forum and asked her to marry him. She traveled to The Hague and at their first encounter, he suggested that they marry immediately. She was afraid to refuse, and he took her to Redouan al Issa to perform the ceremony. She begged off spending the night with him, claiming that she had her period and went back to her hometown. The next day, she called Jason to tell him that she had changed her mind. They were divorced five days later. On November 10, 2004, the police came to arrest Akhnich and him. He threw a hand grenade at them,
severely wounding a policeman. They were taken into custody after a ten hour standoff. On March 10, 2006, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison for the attempted murder.

- **Ismail Akhnikh**: Ahmed Ismail Akhnikh was born on October 22, 1982, in Amsterdam. He was one of 11 children born to an immigrant family from Morocco. He is a cousin of Abdelkader Hakimi, who is a member of GICM in Belgium. He was a difficult child to control and was expelled from secondary education, even though he was a good learner. His parents sent him to Syria to follow religious studies. When he returned to the Netherlands, he worked for a cable company, where he met Ahmed Hamdi, and then a cell phone company. Starting in 2002, he attended the Al-Tawhid Mosque in Amsterdam, where he got acquainted with future members of the Hofstad network. He introduced Hamdi to the group. In the summer of 2003, Jason Walters and he went to Pakistan to attend a terrorist camp. He only stayed for one week, while Walters stayed for a month. In the fall of 2003, Samir Azzouz and he went to Barcelona to meet with Akoudad, a friend of his cousin, who had the reputation of being an important militant. After the Spanish police arrested Akoudad on a Moroccan warrant, Akhnikh, Azzouz, Redouan al-Issa, Mohammed Fahmi Boughaba and Jason Walters were arrested on October 14, 2003 on suspicion of planning a terrorist attack in the Netherlands. They were released for lack of evidence ten days later. Ismail became an active member of the network and regularly came to meetings at Bouyeri’s apartment. In October 2004, he moved into the same apartment as Jason Walters. Shortly thereafter, he got married in an Islamic ceremony to one of the Hofstad girls, nicknamed Oum Khataab. She stayed over for a night at the apartment, and after consummating the marriage, they tried to pick warrior names for their future children. They came up with Osama and Khataab, but Ismail rejected them because they were already used in the Hofstad network. On November 10, 2004, the police came to arrest him and Walters. They resisted arrest, and Walters threw a grenade during the standoff. On March 10, 2003, Ismail was first sentenced to 13 years in prison for being part of a terrorist group and complicity in an attempted murder. However, on appeal, he was exonerated from the charge of belonging to a terrorist group, and his sentence was reduced to 15 months. He was released on January 23, 2008.

- **Mohammed Bouyeri**: Mohammed was born on March 8, 1978 in West Amsterdam. His family had just come from the Rif, in Morocco, although his father had already come to Holland in 1965 (dish washer at Schiphol Airport) and went back and forth to his family in Morocco. Mohammed studied hard, was a good student and played soccer. Mohammed Bousklatti (6 years younger) and Rachid Bousana (same age) lived on the same street. In 1995, he started studying accounting, but soon switched to business and IT. However, after several years, he dropped out of school: he spent a lot of time chasing women, smoking marijuana, drinking and partying. He got into periodic trouble with the law: fall of 1994 (fight at the closing of a youth center); resisting arrest on November 9, 1997 during a coffee shop raid; summer 2000, small fight in a café during a soccer match... In 1998, he tried to get a job as a security agent at Schiphol, but failed to get a clearance because of his record. In 1999, he had a short relationship with a modern Tunisian Dutch girl.
In January 2001, he moved to a small apartment on 27 Marianne Philipsstraat, West Amsterdam. In the spring of the same year, he threatened one of his sister’s suitors. In July 2001, Bouyeri got into a fight with him. The police tried to break it up, but Mohammed drew a knife and tried to stab the officers. He was sentenced to 12 weeks in prison and was released on August 20, 2001. In December 2001, his mother died of breast cancer (his father eventually remarried in 2003 in Morocco to his former wife’s younger sister). Mohammed had been quite close to her, and her death changed him. He began wearing traditional Muslim clothes and went to Al-Tawheed mosque. In December 2001, he started getting welfare for the first time. He volunteered his time at a local neighborhood center, but slowly problems surfaced as he continued his path to extremism. At the beginning of 2003, he refused to pour alcohol at the center and tried to ban women from coming in at the same time as men. He left the center in 2003.

Mohammed formed new friendships after he left the center. He grew a beard and began to wear a djellaba. At the Al-Tawheed mosque, he met other people sharing his beliefs, like Samir Azzouz and Nouredine el-Fatmi. He started inviting people to his home. He first met Redouan al-issa at an Internet café in Schiedam, where he had gone with el-Fatmi. They invited al-issa to come to his home in Amsterdam. He spent more time on the Internet and was an active participant in many forums. In April 2004, his welfare checks stopped as he no longer met the criteria (he got into an altercation with an employee at the Welfare office at the time). His online post showed an gradual increase in his extreme views. In March 2004, he published “To Catch a Wolf” under his alias, Abu Zubair. On March 5, he published a translation of Qutb’s “Milestones”. In May, he published some writings by Mawdudi. On July 2, he translated ibn Taymiyyah’s “Obligation to kill those who revile the Prophet.” On July 29, he translated “The Battlefield: the safest place on earth.” In his writings, he constantly referred to Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, Abu Hamza al Masri and Abu Qatada. Starting in August, he published threatening letters against specific individuals (Hirsi Ali, Aboutaleb, Wilders…) in the forums under a new name Saifu Deen al Muwahhied. On September 23, he wrote his testament.

On November 1, he took a walk in the evening with his two friends, who lived on the same street (Bousana and Bouklaoui) and Hamdi (his roommate at the time) around a lake close to his home. He gave Bousana four letters to be opened later on. The next morning, he killed Theo van Gogh, who had just made a film making fun of Islam. After the killing, he was prepared to die a martyr and waited for the police to show up. He got wounded in the ensuing firefight and got captured. At his trial, he remained silent and refused to recognize the authority of the court. On July 26, 2005, he was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison without parole.

**Followers**

- **Ahmed Hamdi**: He was born on September 5, 1978 in Beni Said, Morocco. He and his family moved to the Netherlands in the 1990s and he received his Dutch citizenship in 2004. He was married and they had two children. He began to change after befriending Ismail Akhnihk at his workplace. He began changing, became more religious, had quarrels with his wife and occasionally beat her. He was accepted in the
network and was its computer expert. He was an administrator of some of the forums. He was active in the network since early 2003. He got a new girlfriend and also had an Internet fiancée. He left his wife and children and moved in with Bouyeri in early September 2004. His girlfriend testified that he was a Takfiri. He was arrested on November 2, 2004. He was originally sentenced two years at the Hofstad trial but was acquitted on appeal in that case. He was originally acquitted in the Piranha trial but sentenced to three months on appeal in that case.

- **Soumaya Sahla**: Soumaya was born on July 5, 1983 at The Hague. She grew up in a family of seven children. She was religious from the start and spent a lot of time at the El-Islam mosque at The Hague. This is a moderate, easily accessible mosque, which is involved in a lot of neighborhood activities. She was one of the most active adolescents at the mosque. In 2001, her father took her to Mecca, and after her return, she started wearing a niqab (despite her father’s disapproval) and attending the As-Soennah mosque in town. She took lessons with Sheikh Fawaz’s wife and considered the sheikh and his wife as family. Even though she did not spend much time on the Internet, but liked to read books instead, she started posting comments on a forum urging her brothers to do jihad in Chechnya. She wanted to study in Saudi Arabia, but needed to have a Mahram (male relative) there. She decided to marry, but her father tried to discourage her from doing so. She had started to study to become a doctor’s assistant, but she had to quit because she was not allowed to wear a veil. Finally, her father relented and agreed to her marriage with Abdelhakim Adachour on February 18, 2003. Her father suspected he would not be as liberal with her as he claimed. This turned out to be the case, as Adachour tried to limit her activities. Soumaya complained to Imam Fawaz from the As-Soennah mosque, and the Imam told her that her husband did not deserve her.

Adachour returned Soumaya to her parents in the summer 2004. Soumaya tried to resume her studies after the divorce. She wanted to study in Saudi Arabia and wanted to open an Islamic bookstore in the Netherlands for women only. She dreamt of expanding it to an Islamic beauty parlor and Islamic clothing store. She registered at the Islamic University in Schiedam.

Soumaya was introduced to Nouredine el-Fatmi by her friend Hanan Sarrokh. Shortly thereafter, she secretly married Nouredine on April 5, 2005 according to Islamic Law. She was attracted to him because of his knowledge of Islam. Because Nouredine was on the run, they spent a few weeks living at Hanan and Lahbib Bachar’s home. During that time, her husband and she took their host couple shooting at a nearby forest. The couple managed to go to Morocco for a week to visit with Nouredine’s family. On their return, they lived at Martine van den Oever’s home in The Hague. On June 17, 2005, her family reported her missing. During her stay at Martine’s home, she called her sister Hanan to find out the address of some of the national Dutch politicians who have an anti-Muslim reputation. She also boasted having a gun to her brother on the phone. On June 22, 2005, Martine drove the couple to Amsterdam and the police arrested them there. In the trunk of the car, the police found a loaded assault rifle and Nouredine tried to pull out his handgun from the bag he carried on his shoulder.
Throughout the altercation, Soumaya was repeatedly screaming “Allah Akbar!” She became a defendant in the Piranha case, but is released during the summer along with Martine van den Oever. Soumaya went to live with her friend Celestina, Mohammed Chentouf’s wife. The police arrested her again on September 5, 2005 for possession of firearms. In one of the bags in the home, there was the Skorpion machine pistol and the Smith & Wesson pistol that the Piranha defendants had in the Brussels apartment. She was tried and convicted for the possession case on October 18, 2005 and sentenced to nine months in prison. She was also tried for the Piranha case, and was convicted and sentenced to three years in prison on December 1, 2006. In the meanwhile, she divorced Nouredine el-Fatmi while in prison. On appeal, her sentence was increased to four years in prison on the Piranha case on October 2, 2008. Meanwhile, she started to study with an Orthodox rabbi, Aryeh Lieb Heintz, while she was in prison. She was released from prison in June 2009.

- **Redouan al-Issa:** Redouan al-Issa goes by many names and birth dates, most of which are around 1959 and 1961 in Syria. He is a professional geologist, who came to Germany in 1995 to seek asylum. He spent two years in a center in Olsberg, but his request was rejected in 1997. He did not show any signs of religiosity at the time: he liked women and had a lot of money, through drug smuggling (he had been convicted of drug trafficking). In 1998, he went to the Netherlands to seek asylum. At this point, he already acquired extreme religious views, influenced by a takfiri ideology. He lived above an Internet café in Schiedam, where he had a room and gave Quran lessons. Many future members of the Hofstad network came to listen to him and some invited him to preach at their home. He met Mohammed Chentouf, who had married Celestina, the daughter of a woman of Surinam origin. Celestina converted to Islam. Chentouf introduced al-Issa to Celestina’s mother, Usha, who converted to Islam as well and married al-Issa in 2003 in an informal religious ceremony. They got a child soon thereafter. He and Usha also wanted to adopt Mohammed Fahmi Boughabe as a son. At the beginning of 2003, al-Issa tried to travel to Frankfurt with a fake Dutch passport. He was arrested and sent back to Olsberg. He kept in touch with his Dutch friends and returned to Schiedam, where he got arrested on October 17, 2003 (along with Azzouz, Walters, Akhnikh and Fahmi) for plotting a terrorist attack in the Netherlands. He was released on October 28, but was declared an illegal alien in December 2003. He went back to the Netherlands illegally, and spent time at The Hague, Amsterdam and Zierikzee. In late October 2004, Rachid Belkacem got him a ticket to Istanbul, from where he would return to Syria. On the morning of November 2, Belkacem drove him to Brussels, where he boarded the plane. Since that time, he has disappeared in Syria.

- **Mohammed Chentouf:** Mohammed was born in Tilburg on December 13, 1974. He was raised in The Hague and is now married with a child. Chentouf became a good friend of Redouan al-Issa. He first met al-Issa at a telephone center in Schiedam, where other members of the Hofstad network occasionally came. He met Azzouz there. He married a step-daughter of al-Issa, Celestina. Mohammed introduced him to
a Surinamese woman, Usha, in The Hague. Al-Issa married her in an informal religious ceremony. Celestina was good friends with Hanan Sarrokh. On June 21, 2005, he went to Bachar, Sarrokh, Hamdi and Harhour to Brussels, and Hamdi and Harhour stayed there at an apartment, where there was a pistol and a Skorpion machine pistol (which featured in Azzouz martyr video later on). As el-Fatmi was arrested the next day, Bachar and Sarrokh came back to pick them up. After their return to the Hague, Bachar and Sarrokh stayed at his home, probably to discuss next steps. He was arrested on October 14, 2005. He was sentenced to 4 years in prison on December 1, 2005 because the court found him guilty of belonging to a terrorist organization. His sentence was raised to six years on appeal on October 2, 2008. He was declared an illegal alien (first person born in the Netherlands to achieve that status) and will be deported to Morocco upon his release from prison. However, this may be difficult to do because he has a Dutch wife and child.

- **Saleh Bouali**: Saleh Bouali was born on September 3, 1977 in Beni Boukhlef, Morocco. It is unclear when he came to the Netherlands, but he lived in Rotterdam and had a stand in a market in The Hague, where he sold pants. He told future members of the Hofstad network that he had gone to a training camp in Pakistan, near Kashmir. He posted calls for the jihad on the Internet. In the summer of 2002, he was in close contact with two suspects in an investigation into recruitment for jihad. He first met Samir Azzouz in April 2003, and apparently arranged for Walters’s first trip to Pakistan in August 2003 via Azzouz. He was suspected of being one of the perpetrators of the robbery of the Edah supermarket in Rotterdam on April 8, 2004 with Samir Azzouz. In the fall of 2004, he visited Walters and Akhnikh at their home in The Hague, and according to Walters was the one who provided them with a grenade. He was arrested on October 28, 2005 on suspicion of being a member of a terrorist organization. The press, lawyers and the Hofstad defendants suspected him of being an AIVD informant. In December 2005, he testified against the defendants in the Hofstad trial, denied working for the AIVD, having been in the camps, supplying the grenade. He said he had connections to the Tabligh Jamaat. He was released on December 13, 2005 and acquitted of all charged on March 9, 2006.

- **Yehya Kadouri**: Yehya was born in 1987 in Sas van Gent, Netherlands. He was a good student and represented his school at a model European Parliament. His father had immigrated to the Netherlands around 1970 and worked in a fertilizer factory. His family is not religious. Yehya was a quiet boy, who did not appear a fanatical Muslim. However, he was constantly on the Internet. Starting July 6, 2004, he posted several violent threatening messages under the name of AIVD-doder (AIVD-killer). An investigation on the Internet succeeded in identifying him. He was active on other forums under the name of ‘Fighter Yehya’ or ‘Yehiyaayyash’. He would quote from Abdallah Azzam and Abu Hamza al Masri. His chat sessions showed that he was making preparations for a bombing and the police decided to intervene. On September 27, 2004, the police arrested him. He admitted to the police that he had been experimenting with explosive devices twice, although with little success. On his computer hard drive, there was information on a detonator and booster charge, information on ammonium nitrate, maps of the center of The Hague and addresses of
embassies. On February 14, 2005, a court convicted him of publishing death threats on
the Internet towards Dutch politicians and collecting information and raw material to
make an explosive device, and sentenced him to 140 days in jail and compulsory
admission to a psychiatric institution after that.

- **Abida Kabbaj**: Abida Kabbaj was born in 1980 in The Hague. Her mother and she
converted to Islam and both embraced fundamentalism very quickly. They withdrew
from contact with their family members. She went to college to study for a social
judicial employer and also went to the Islamic University of Rotterdam to study
Arabic in the evening. In 2001, she was the spokesperson of the Al-Aqsa Foundation
in Rotterdam, where she also met Martine van den Oever. She had previously gone to
Palestine to lend her support. In 2003, the foundation had to close because of previous
support to terrorist organizations. She met Samir Azzouz online on a forum discussing
the Intifada. They agreed on everything and soon they exchanged private messages
online in 2002. They first met in person during a pro-Palestinian demonstration. Even
though Samir was seven younger, she was attracted to his wisdom. They decided to
marry quickly for they were not allowed to date according to their beliefs. They got
married on December 6, 2002. Before their marriage, she received messaged from
several of her friends, saying, “Abida, we wish you all the luck in the world and that
you may make many bombs together and that you will destroy all the Jews.” Shortly
after their marriage, Samir left for Chechnya. She had wanted to go with him, but
couldn’t because of her work at the Al-Aqsa Foundation. She was prepared never to
see her husband again. After Samir was arrested trying to get into Chechnya and
repatriated back to Holland, the couple moved in with her mother in Rotterdam. They
have two children together, Sayfoudine, born at the end of 2003, and Shahida, born in
2006. Although she was never arrested, she is a very strong supporter of her husband’s
work.

**Peripheral Members**

- **Bilal Bakaja**: Bilal Bakaja was born in 1985 in Amsterdam, and is Abdullah’s
brother. His family immigrated from Morocco and was a success story: one of his
sisters is a physician and another a judge. They don’t wear headscarves and one of
them is married to Samir Azzouz’s uncle. He was a classmate of Azzouz. Bilal had a
long history of delinquency and received a 15 month sentence for stabbing someone
with a screw driver in 2003. He and his brother Abdullah belonged to a group of hard-
core Moroccan frequent offenders in West Amsterdam. Around 2003, he started
suffering from mental illness, which was later diagnosed as schizophrenia. He was
involuntarily confined to a mental ward several times. He was allegedly part of a plot
to attack an Israeli airliner, along with his brother Abdullah and Azzouz in October
2005. His brother, Azzouz and five others were arrested for this plot on October 14,
2005. He was not arrested. However, after a deterioration of his mental condition over
time, he was hospitalized. On October 14, 2007, he was allowed to leave the clinic to
celebrate the end of Ramadan. He escaped from his escort, and went to the neighborhood police station, where he jumped over the counter and stabbed a police woman in her breast and a policeman in the neck. A police woman shot him dead.

- **Abdullah Bakaja:** Abdullah, the brother of Bilal, was born in 1987 in Amsterdam. He was heavily influenced by his brother and they both had a long history of juvenile delinquency: mostly street crime, crimes against property and a lot of burglaries. In October 2005, the police received information that he and his brother were in touch with Samir Azzouz and el-Fatmi, and they were planning to blow up an El Al plane at Schiphol Airport. Abdullah might have been a suicide bomber. He was arrested on October 14, 2005 in connection to the Piranha case, spent a couple of weeks in detention and released.

- **Mohammed el Bousklaoui:** Mohammed was born on December 4, 1984, in Amsterdam. He lived on the same street as Bouyeri, whom he knew since 1988. Bouyeri was the older boy on the street, and Bousklaoui looked up to him. Bousklaoui lived with his parents and worked in the kitchen of the VU Hospital. After Bouyeri moved to West Amsterdam in 2001, Bousklaoui continued to visit him. (He seemed to have come regularly to Abdel Samad’s preaching in 2002.) He was a regular at the meetings in Bouyeri’s home from October 2003 onwards, and met all the Hofstad members, who came. He was somewhat of a chauffeur to members of the network. Taybi’s, el-Morabit’s and Ettoumi’s cars were all registered in his name. He drove el-Fatmi and el-Morabit to Portugal in June 2004. He drove el-Fatmi and Malika to Bouyeri’s house on October 4, 2004 for them to get married. He came with Bousana to Bouyeri’s home on November 1, 2004 in the evening and went for a walk around a nearby lake with Bouyeri and Hamdi. He was arrested on November 2, 2004. He was released on January 5, 2006 and was acquitted on March 10, 2006.

- **Mohammed el-Morabit:** Mohammed was born on January 24, 1981 in al-Hoceima, Morocco. He came to the Netherlands in 1998 and learned Dutch at a secondary school. He frequented the Al-Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam and came into contact with many of the later Hofstad members through it. He met Azzouz in 2002. In an Internet chat on September 24, 2003, Jason Walters tried to persuade him to come to Pakistan. Mohammed wanted to go there to find a wife and get married, but Walters told him, “No, you are going there to become a shahid.” After that, he was no longer interested in traveling there. He became good friends with Bouyeri and was a very frequent visitor there. During Ramada, in October 2004, he would bring food to Bouyeri. He was part of the trip to Portugal with el-Fatmi and el-Bousklaoui in June 2004.

Mohammed seemed focused on marriage. In the summer of 2003, he returned to al-Hoceima to reconnect with his neighbor Naoual el-Majjoui. They became engaged and were supposed to get married in February 2004, but it never happened. Mohammed married ‘Naima’ according to Islamic Law, and intended to marry ‘Fatima’ as his second wife. He had also met Malika Chaabi in July 2004 and wanted to marry her. He even approached her family, who refused because he had the reputation of being an extremist. Mohammed was arrested on November 10, 2004 as
part of the Hofstad case. On March 10, 2006, he was sentenced to two years in prison, but was released immediately since he had served his time in pre-detention. On appeal, he was acquitted on January 23, 2008.

- **Mohammed Fahmi Boughabe**: Mohammed was born on December 6, 1981 in al-Hoceima. His father was a fish seller, who had moved to The Netherlands in the 1980s. According to an uncle, he was a friendly boy, who had never seen the inside of a mosque while he lived in Morocco. He moved to The Netherlands in 2000 to be reunited with his family. He started coming to the Al-Tawheed mosque in Amsterdam, and there met several of the future Hofstad members. He worked for a construction company. In the fall of 2001, he met Bouyeri at the mosque and offered to refurbish his bathroom. He became best friend with Nadir Adarraf and was also a friend of Azzouz. He was arrested on October 17, 2003 with Azzouz, Akhnikh, Walters and al-Issa. He seemed to have been in contact with Akoudad. In his apartment, the police found a bag that Fahmi was keeping for Azzouz and contained ammonia, fertilizer, hydrochloric acid and protective goggles. He was released with the rest on October 28, 2003. He frequently came to the informal meetings at Bouyeri’s home, where he met the other Hofstad members. In fact, at one point, he shared the apartment with Bouyeri, who was one of his best friends. Walters called him on November 10, 2004 right after he had thrown the grenade at the police. He was arrested then. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison on March 10, 2006 in connection to the Hofstad trial. However, he was later acquitted on appeal on January 23, 2008. However, on October 23, 2006, he was handed over to the Moroccan authorities and ‘disappeared’ since then. He apparently was married in 2004.
- **Rachid Belkacem**: Rachid was born in 1973 in the Netherlands. He lived in Zierikzee and collected funds for the Al-Aqsa Foundation at his shop. He spent most of his time on extremist websites and forums. He was a frequent visitor at the Internet Café in Schiedam, where Redouan al-Issa gave lessons to young Moroccans. He met some of the future Hofstad members there, and invited al-Issa to preach at his home in Zierikzee and the ‘brothers’ from Rotterdam. In 2003, al-Issa was deported back to Germany and Rachid and two other Hofstad members traveled there to meet with him. In late October 2004, he had driven al-Issa from Amsterdam to Brussels for the latter to escape. He also received frequent visits from Nouredine el-Fatmi at his home in Zierikzee after the van Gogh murder. Rachid went to England in January 2005, allegedly to marry. However, there was later testimony at court that he had talked about a suicide attack against unspecified targets. He was arrested in London on June 22, 2005 and extradited back to the Netherlands on July 26, 2005. He was released provisionally in March 2006 and was acquitted on March 10, 2006 in the Hofstad trial. He was found dead in his home on July 15, 2006. He had foam in his mouth, and friends thought he might have been poisoned. At the end of a thorough medical investigation, there was no evidence that his death was due to a criminal act, and the case was closed in May 2007.

- **Rachid Bousana**: Rachid was born on May 6, 1978 in Beni Said, Morocco. He is not married. He grew up in the same neighborhood as Bouyeri and became close friends in the late 1980s. Their friendship was cemented by the fact that they both delivered newspapers at a time when this was not cool in their neighborhood. However, they both wanted to make something out of their lives (and get away from others in the neighborhood who earned their allowances in an illegal way). He had been arrested for theft in 1990 and spent three days in jail. He said that he had learned his lesson and decided to stay on the right side of the tracks. He also held a cleaning job with Bouyeri when they were between 16 and 20. Up until 2001, Mohammed Bouyeri, he and other friends spent most of their days drinking and smoking marijuana. In the summer 2001, this changed after Bouyeri spent three months in jail for assault and battery of a policeman. Mohammed’s house became a hangout after his release from prison, where everybody would hang out together. He noted that some of Bouyeri’s friends had been arrested on terrorism charges in October 2003. In the summer of 2004, he started distancing himself from Bouyeri because he did not agree with the Takfiri ways of his friend. Despite their distance, he came to meet his friend on the eve of van Gogh’s murder. Bousklaoui, Ahmed Hamdi (Bouyeri’s roommate at the time), Bouyeri and he went for a walk around a nearby lake, and Bouyeri gave him four envelopes (two letters for Bouyeri’s family; one for Hamdi [with money] and one for Taybi). When Rachid heard about the murder, he wondered whether it was his friend that committed it, and bicycled to his home, where he was arrested. At trial, he was wearing secular clothes and said he had not visited a mosque for a long time. He worked for Getronics. On March 10, 2006, he was acquitted of all charges.

- **Bilal Lamrani**: Bilal was born in 1985, in Amsterdam. He was a close friend of Bouyeri. He became a pizza delivery boy in the Red Light District of Amsterdam. In 2004, he became one of the most prolific contributors of multiple Dutch Muslim
Internet forums, where he strongly advocated violent jihad. He was arrested on November 5, 2004 and admitted that eight months prior he had not been religious and knew very little about Islam. He had become of the ideologues of the network. On February 25, 2005, he was sentenced to ten months in prison, but was released on March 5. He was rearrested on March 24, 2005 on suspicion of conspiracy to commit a terrorist crime. While in prison, he was strongly proselytizing to other inmates. In February 2006, he was sentenced to an additional three years in prison for plotting murder and attempting to recruit prison inmates to carry out terrorist attacks.

- **Mohammed Hamdi**: Mohammed Hamdi was born on September 29, 1986 in Amsterdam. He grew up there and was a good friend of Brahim Harhour. He was an administrator of one of the forums used by the Hofstad members, which included Bouyeri. The core members liked to watch gruesome videos on beheading and the torturing of defenseless hostages. Mohammed first met el-Fatmi in March 2005. In June 2005, he saw him again at Martine van den Oever’s home near The Hague. Nouredine was staying there with Somaya Sahla. Despite the fact that Nouredine had told him not to enter the bedroom, Mohammed did so to retrieve some personal items that he had previously left there. On the bed he saw an Agram 2000 assault rifle. On June 21, he went to Brussels with Chentouf, Harhour in Sarrokh and Bachar’s car. The next day, after the drivers heard that el-Fatmi had been arrested, they returned to Brussels to pick up the three folks. He and Azzouz communicated through an e-mail account, where they set up clandestine meetings (at least four) in the summer of 2005. He was arrested with six others on October 14, 2005 in the Piranha case. During the interrogation, he was not shy about sharing his approval of van Gogh’s murder. He was acquitted on December 1, 2006, but received a three months prison sentence on appeal on October 2, 2008.

- **Brahim Harhour**: Brahim was born on June 16, 1983, in Amsterdam. He was a close friend of Mohammed Hamdi. Through Mohammed, he had met Nouriddin el-Fatmi and in January 2005, he had given el-Fatmi a false identity card. It seems that in the fall of 2005, el-Fatmi, Azzouz and Chentouf wanted to recruit people for a terrorist attack (Piranha case). Harbour went with Chentouf to Brussels for a day with some of the potential recruits, but was arrested on November 8, 2005. On December 1, 2006, he was sentenced to three months in prison for provision of a false document to el-Fatmi.

- **Nadir Adarraf**: Nadir was born on December 31, 1981 in Ait Tznachte Tchouket, Morocco. He moved to the Netherlands in 1998, with his parents. He became best friend with Mohammed Fahmi Boughabe in 2000. Between the middle of 2003 to November 2004, he was a frequent visitor at Bouyeri’s apartment, where he met many of the other members of the future Hofstad network. He first met Azzouz in April 2005, after the latter’s release from prison. He was arrested on November 10, 2004 and released on September 2005. He was acquitted of all charges on March 10, 2006 in the Hofstad case. He has filed for compensation for his imprisonment.

- **Yousef Ettoumi**: Yousef was born on October 20, 1977 in Amsterdam, where he still lives. He is married and prays at the Al-Tawheed mosque. In 1992, he took part in a
fight at school and was sentenced to 30 days in youth detention for a burglary. He knew Zine Labidine Aouragha since the mid-1990s. He came in contact with the Hofstad members in 2003, mostly through the neighborhood and the mosque. He was trying to get his license to work at a farmer’s market. Zine lived with him for two months, along with a Tunisian roommate. He was arrested in the Hofstad case in November 2004, convicted and sentenced to one year in prison on March 10, 2006. However, he was exonerated from belonging to a terrorist group on appeal on January 23, 2008.

- **Zakaria Taybi:** Zakaria was born on January 4, 1984 in Amsterdam, where he still lives. He went back to Morocco as an infant and returned to the Netherlands when he was four years old. He finished high school and studied economics. He worked as a cleaner at Schiphol Airport. When he tried to apply for a job requiring a security clearance, it was denied. He worked with Nadir Adaraf. He got involved with the Hofstad network around 2003. He traveled to Pakistan and met with Jason Walters and Ismail Akhnikh in August 2003. He gave his passport to el-Fatmi for the latter’s trip to Portugal in June 2004. He was a frequent visitor at Walters’ s and Akhnikh’s home at The Hague, and investigators later found a videotape of the three praising the murder of Theo van Gogh at the home. He was arrested on November 10, 2004 (and tried to convert the policemen to Islam during his arrest). He was tried on the Hofstad case and acquitted on March 10, 2006. On May 18, 2006, he sent flowers to the editors of the TV show on Ayaan Hirsi Ali.

- **Zine Labidine Aouragha:** Zine was born on July 18, 1978 in Nador, Morocco. It is not clear when he first came to the Netherlands (probably in the mid 1990s), but he was an illegal there. He did not speak Dutch or Arabic very well. He was dependent on his friends for income and shelter. He prayed at Al Tawheed mosque and came into contact with most of the members of the Hofstad network. He was a regular visitor at Bouyeri’s home, the Internet café at Schiedam, where al-Issa gave his lessons, and later to Walters’ s home at The Hague. He stayed mostly at Lahbib Bachar’s home, where he became good friends with el-Fatmi. He later stayed at Walters’ s home in the fall of 2004 and then at Ettoumi’s home at the time of his arrest. In 2003, he married Oum Youssef (Amal) according to Islamic law. They had one child at the time of his arrest on November 2, 2004 on the Hofstad case. In May 2005, Amal gave birth to their second child. He was viewed as the pretty boy by many sisters. He was arrested when he came to Bouyeri’s house on the day of the murder of van Gogh to ask Bouyeri to be his imam for his second marriage to Oum Osama. He was released on September 22, 2005 because his pre-trial detention would have exceeded his sentence. He was transferred to alien detention and deported back to Morocco in January 2006. On March 10, 2006, he was convicted in the Hofstad case and sentenced to 18 months in prison. However, this conviction was vacated and he was acquitted of all charges on appeal on January 10, 2008.

- **Hanan Sarrokh:** Hanan was born in 1981 in The Hague. She was married to Lahbib Bachar. The pair drove Nourredin el Fatmi to Brussels several times and rented an apartment there for him. El-Fatmi also used their home as a hiding place. On June 21,
2005, they drove Chentouf, Hamdi and Harhour to Brussels and came back. When Azzouz called to tell them that el-Fatmi had been arrested, they drove back to Brussels to collect the passengers. She was close friend with Chentouf’s wife. Her husband and she were arrested in October 2005 and they decided to turn state witnesses against their former colleagues. They were themselves convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, but got reduced sentences of three years because of their collaboration in March 2008.

- **Lahbib Bacher**: Lahbib was born in 1978 and is married to Hanan Sarrokh. He is a distant nephew of Dutch State Secretary Ahmed Aboutaleb, and he allegedly wanted to kill his relative because he was not a true Muslim. Lahbib’s family takes care of Aboutaleb’s possessions in Morocco. He was arrested on October 14, 2005 for being part of the Piranha conspiracy. His wife and he did drive Chentouf, Hamdi and Harhour to Brussels on June 21, 2005, but they returned immediately home. Upon learning that el-Fatmi was arrested, they returned to Brussels to pick up the three. He claimed that his wife and he were afraid of Chentouf’s radicalism and went along with Azzouz and el-Fatmi for years against their will. His wife and he testified against Azzouz, and the court took that into consideration when it sentenced them to three years in prison in March 2008.

- **Malika Chaabi**: Malika was born in 1988, in Amsterdam. She was living with her parents, when she met Mohammed el-Morabit, who immediately wanted to marry her. Her family objected because he was extreme and perhaps involved in terrorist activities. Mohammed saw her one day, with Nouredine el-Fatmi (whom Mohammed was hoping would help her convince Malika to marry him). They sat in a car, showing her jihadi movies. She apparently quickly enjoyed watching them. On October 2, 2004, Nouredine called her to ask her to marry him. He was in a hurry because he wanted al-Issa to perform the ceremony. On October 4, al-Issa was already gone, and Bouyeri performed the ceremony at his home. On October 8, she was again at his house when Nouredine led the meeting in which he justified violence against infidels. Malika showed the audience how to behead people. She apparently agreed with the arguments. Malika’s father reported her as missing on October 23, 2004 and her older sister Halima tracked her down. She later gave a full account to the police on August 30, 2005. Two months later, she received a letter telling her she was helping infidels. This caused her to stop cooperating with prosecutors or the police. She refused to testify at the trial on December 5, 2005.

- **Martine van den Oever**: Martine was born on November 23, 1979 in Delft. She lived in a small town, close to The Hague. She was brought up a Christian but converted to Islam when she was 18, after being introduced to the religion by some Moroccan classmates. Before that, she went out to discos. She went on to work for the Dutch police force and was also a part-time social worker. She started coming to the As-Soennah mosque in The Hague, and followed the lessons of the Imam Sheikh Fawaz Jneid, whom she had helped with his naturalization process when she had been working for the police. She started traveling to the Middle East, to study and give humanitarian help for the Al-Aqsa Foundation (linked to Hamas), where she met
Abida Kabaj. After the foundation was shut down, she and Abida founded the Jerusalem Foundation to continue their humanitarian work. After a visit to Syria (a few years later), when she studied Islam and Arabic, she started wearing the veil, and when she returned to the Netherlands, she got criticism from both Muslims and non-Muslims alike, which contributed to her radicalization. Her radicalization process was so fast that she was under suspicion of being an undercover AIVD agent. By 2005, her home was the place where some members of the Hofstad network congregated. Hamdi used her place on some occasion, as did Nouredine el-Fatmi and Soumaya Sahla after their marriage. She called him laptop, because he used to read from a laptop when he preached. In fact, she was arrested with Nouredine and Soumaya on June 22, 2005. She had just driven them to Amsterdam and her friends were in possession of an assault rifle. She was released six weeks later for ‘personal reasons.’ She had written what appeared to be a goodbye letter to her friend Soumaya, in which she announced an important event two days after her arrest. (“In two days, it will be time. Finally one of my dreams will come true. Can you keep it to yourself? I want to ask you, when I’m gone, or if something happens, will you always stay in touch with my mother and sister?”) She was never charged, and she went on to marry a Muslim of Algerian descent, who had been a defendant at the Jerome Courtailler trial. Imam Jneid had performed the marriage ceremony. She now has a child.

- **Jermaine Walters**: Jermaine was born on January 20, 1987 in Amersfoort. He is the younger brother of Jason Walters and a dual US and Dutch citizen. He was very much influenced by his brother. When his parents split up, he went to live with his best friend, Berry Smith, and his family for two years. During his final years of high school, he was not interested in religion. He was more interested in school, martial arts and friends. Jermaine accompanied his brother to the local mosque. The board of directors of the mosque became fed up with them and ejected them from the building. They also visited the Al-Fourqaan mosque in Eindhoven. However, Jermaine did not formally convert to Islam until March 2004. After school, he went to study at a preparatory technical vocational training school, where he got a degree. He then worked in the storage room of a bakery near their home. When the family was evicted from their home in June 2004, he moved to another suburb. He was arrested on October 10, 2004 on the same day as his brother. Compromising documents at his home were judged not to be his and he was not part of the regular visitors at Bouyeri’s house. He was acquitted from the charge of being part of a terrorist group on May 4, 2005.
APPENDIX B

The Madrid Case
The Madrid Case

“Where are you Osama Bin Laden?”

By late fall 2003, The Chinaman and The Tunisian were trying to raise money for the plot, tapping everyone they know. But they still aren’t sure how, where or when to act. A detailed attack plan only began to coalesce in late December, shortly after the internet tract “Iraqi Jihad, Hopes and Risks” appears with a call for “two or three attacks… to exploit the coming general elections in Spain in March 2004.” The tract first appeared on the Zarqawi-affiliated website, Global Islamic Media Front, which The Tunisian and The Chinaman have been logging onto systematically. Chino, especially, identified with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Like Chino, Zarqawi had been a violent criminal and Jew-hater who radicalized to jihad in prison. When authorities recovered Chino’s computer, they find it full of Zarqawi’s rants and accolades to the man who claimed al-Qaeda’s mantle in “Mesopotamia” (Iraq).

New Year’s Eve 2003; The Tunisian drives Chino up to Bilbao in Spain’s northern Basque country to collect drug money from a debt for their jihad in Spain. Chino talks to Rosa over the phone, and in the background she overhears The Tunisian: “Leave her she’s a Christian, leave her.” Rosa snaps at Chino: “Is there a parrot with you?” Chino snaps back: “Nobody tells me what to do.” When Chino arrives in Bilbao, he calmly walks into a bar, whips out a pistol without a word, and kneecaps a fellow drug dealer who owes him money. Then Chino calls out after another man who runs out onto the street that he too better pay up or else.

Even The Connector, Rafa Zouheir, the most physically imposing and brutish of all the people associated with the Madrid plot, is impressed by the diminutive Chino. Shortly after the bombing, The Connector would tell his police handler, Victor, about The Chinaman. Desperate not to be directly linked to the bombing, The Connector thinks that Victor is not taking him seriously and so embellishes his description with notions of a Qaeda-related conspiracy concocted while Chino was in prison in Morocco. But the portrait of Chino is otherwise arresting and consistent with other accounts: 91

Zouheir: He’s rather short, the eyes like… he has dark hair, you know? He’s an extremely religious guy; he always goes to the mosque on Fridays, in a … BMW 500, one of the latest, costs 30,000 euros….

Victor: Aha.

Z: Look man, if you don't think he has something to do with it, leave it; well I'm sure he has something to do with it; otherwise I wouldn't tell you so. This isn’t a joke, damn it.

V: Aha.

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91 Madrid Train Bombing Indictment, transcript of cell phone conversation, 17 March 2004, phone number 620087429 belonging to Rafa Zouheir.
Z: … I can't tell you that he's alone; maybe there are some more there…. And of course, he was in prison in Morocco, with a plan, with a plan inside the prison, because he got contacts from inside, in Afghanistan and all that you understand?....And he started having relations, and of course he came out of prison after 3 years — for murder after 3 years you are out. But after 3 years the guy changed. He came here and changed. He began to pray… thinking about… Allah, and all that stuff. You know what I'm talking about? I mean, he doesn't drink alcohol, he doesn't steal anymore, nothing… he began trafficking, he came here to mess things up, I swear by my father, I mean, come on… I'm absolutely sure it's him….

V: Ok, all right.

Z: I don't have anything against him, you know? The guy has always behaved well with me, but…he sent money, I swear it, ah? As if you saw it with your own eyes, ah Victor? To Chechnya and Afghanistan, I swear it, as if you saw it with your own eyes; I mean, money, man, I mean lots of money….

V: Aha.

Z: He has false papers, from Holland and Belgium… if you stop him or something he will notice or something, you understand? You guys just follow him, like nothing was going on, you know what I mean?

V: Aha.

Z: Ok, besides… he has machine guns, he has pistols, you know? Hey man, man, that I've also seen. But there is something… this guy — I've never told you about it — this fellow I tell you is very, very radical, man; this one is very radical, be careful, you know? Anything, I'm serious, that fellow, at the slightest thing he's not like the other ones I've told you about, huh? This guy shoots you huh, you understand? I mean… so radical, so radical that he doesn't give a damn, and he doesn't like at all those who aren't from his religion, you know? He is a weird fellow, you understand?

V: Aha.

R: You understand? He's weird and he has a Spanish woman. He's very strong.

In one recorded conversation about a month before the bombing that was entered into the indictment material, Lofti Sbai, who was a sometimes rival and sometimes associate of Chino in the Madrid drug trade, received phone call from Abdelilah, who was using Chino’s phone:

Lofti: “Where is Jamal?”

Chino’s phone: “He is here with me. Where are you Osama Bin Laden?”92

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92 Madrid Train Bombing Indictment, transcript of cell phone conversation, 9 February 2004, Phone number 699576294.
**Hatching the Plot**

Beginning in January 2004, details of the plot are hammered out at a farmhouse outside of Madrid that formerly belonged to The Tunisian’s brother-in-law, Maymouni, who has since returned to Morocco. The Rabbit’s brother later testifies at the trial that he and The Rabbit would bring lamb meat from their butcher shop for barbecues there and at the Navalcarnero River. But the picnics no longer have wives or children as in the early days of Amer Azizi and The Tunisian. The farmhouse and river meetings now primarily involve Chino and his friends rather than The Tunisian’s circle, although The Tunisian is regularly at the farmhouse leading the discussions, observes The Rabbit’s brother. It seems that when push comes to shove, several in The Tunisian's circle skirt the call for martyrdom, but Chino’s circle stands fast.

At the farmhouse, the groups coordinate efforts to acquire the weapon components and related paraphernalia: explosives, detonators, cell phones, rucksacks, and shrapnel. Chino’s cousin, Hamid Ahmidan, who is working on fixing up the farmhouse, will later testify that he saw members of Chino’s Devoted Circle in the farmhouse kitchen manipulating a device with cables. At Hamid’s own home, after the bombing, police will find 59 kilos of hashish worth 75,000 Euros and 125,000 tablets of ecstasy worth 1,275,000 Euros. (The prosecution asks for a sentence of 23 years for Hamid’s complicity in the plot, which he gets).

Chino frequently calls Carmen’s phone to coordinate the procurement and transfer of explosives (though Carmen claims it was really her husband, Emilio, who was using her phone to do this). Emilio works with a combination of his contacts, small-time Spanish crooks, and Chino’s associates to procure and transfer the explosives. But the relationship between Emilio and Chino circles now goes beyond business. On February 14, Chino, Mohammed Oulad Akcha and The Rabbit attend the wedding of Emilio and Carmen. Then Chino picks up Carmen and Emilio at the Madrid airport after they return from their honeymoon in the Canary Islands and takes them directly to the farmhouse. Carmen would later claim that Chino merely wanted to show the newlyweds some nearby property for sale at a cheap price. Spanish investigators would later conclude that bomb preparations were going on in the house at the time. After the bombing Carmen will go free, not because the trial judges thought that she was looking for real estate while her husband was making bombs, but because – in the classic ploy of a prisoner’s dilemma – by turning on her husband she could walk.

On February 28 to 29, Chino, Mohammed Oulad Akcha and Kounjaa travel to the Conchita mine in Asturias to pick up the explosives from Emilio. The next day Rachid Oulad Akcha, The Kid and Otman El Gnaoui join them. A 17-year-old, nicknamed “El Gitanillo” (“The Little Gypsy”), who acts as a delivery boy for Emilio, overhears his boss telling The Chinaman, “don’t forget the nails and the screws.” That and Carmen’s crocodile love will get Emilio sent up for 34,715 years.

Jamal Zougam, who now seems to have jumped into the plot with both feet after some earlier hesitation over The Tunisian’s notions of killing Spanish civilians, uses his business ties to acquire the phones and SIM cards needed to detonate the homemade bombs. Zougam will be the only surviving plotter convicted from eye-witness accounts placing him on one of the trains with a backpack. (Although the witnesses’ accounts are not altogether consistent, he’ll get 42, 922
years). Kaliji, the Syrian-born undercover policeman who had earlier infiltrated Yarkas’s circle for Judge Garzón, provides the SIM cards and reports his suspicions. There’s no follow up from the police or Spanish intelligence. It is a partial thumbprint on a SIM card that will lead police to their first suspects after the bombing.

The group makes the bombs, filling each sport sack with 10 kilos of dynamite surrounded by shrapnel of nails and screws, and connected to a cell phone-triggered detonator. A final irony: Chino had to give the others money to buy the bags at the Chinese luggage store just below the Plaza Cabasteros to carry the bombs because everyone else was always broke. Typical.

**Madrid Train Bomb Diagram Drawn from the Original Court Indictment**

Thursday morning, March 11, 2004, the plotters are early to rise. They drive a stolen Renault Kangoo van to the town of Alcalá de Henares, where they board and exit four different trains
bound for Madrid, leaving their bombs behind.

At 7:38 A.M. a train is about to pull into Madrid’s Atocha station (not too far from the Reina Sofia Museum that houses Picasso’s Guernica, the 20th century’s most famous painting, symbolizing the atrocity of war). Three explosions suddenly shatter the steel cars and send hunks of human flesh smashing into the windows of nearby apartments. Sixteen seconds later, four bombs demolish another train nearing Atocha, dispersing body parts in all directions from all kinds of people — Christian and Muslim, men and women, old and young, students and workers and children going to daycare. Had the bombs gone off when the trains were already inside the station, thousands would probably have died in Spain’s busiest terminal: trains at that hour are filled with daily commuters, including many immigrants lured by Spain’s booming economy.

Five kilometers away, at 7:40 A.M., another pair of bombs destroy a train at El Pozo station and take many more lives and limbs and loved ones. At 7:43 a final bomb explodes at the suburban Saint Eugenia station, killing and wounding scores more, just as the first rescue crews arrive at Atocha. About a third of the dead are immigrants from 11 countries, including a Polish man and his six-month-old daughter. 13-year-old Sanæe Ben Salah is one of three murdered Moroccans whose broken bodies will be mourned at the M-30 mosque that weekend. A child of divorced parents who lived with her uncle in Alcalá de Henares, she would take the morning train to school in Madrid and come around to the mosque as often as she could. Many describe her as a pretty and loving girl who found at the mosque kindness and friendship in return. She will be shipped home to Morocco in a metal crate, “collateral damage” on the path to glory.

Here is how The New England Journal of Medicine describes what the bombs did to bodies:

“Most who died did so at the scene. When an explosive device detonates, a small volume of explosive is rapidly transformed into a large volume of gas. A high-pressure blast wave expands outward at the speed of sound and, in interacting with the body, causes primary injuries (mainly at air interfaces such as the lung, ear, and bowel). The resultant blast wind propels solid matter into the patient (secondary injury) or the patient into solid matter (causing tertiary injury). Quaternary injury is caused by heat, flames, or the inhalation of smoke and hot gases. Confined spaces exacerbate such effects: surface reflections amplify and prolong the blast wave, the blast wind is channeled, and heat and gases are contained. The severity of injuries and the resultant mortality are thus greater. The total number of persons endangered is increased by detonation within a rush-hour commuter environment. Among the survivors, traumatic tympanic perforation was common. Secondary injuries, including penetration by biologic material, were frequent, as were traumatic amputation and smoke inhalation.”

Damage to the survivors’ minds is ongoing and has yet to be assessed, even for those who didn’t have screws and nails blasted into their skulls.

Around 11 A.M., police in Alcalá de Henares received a tip from someone who spotted the white
Renault Kangaroo by the train station. They notice that the license plate doesn’t match the van, the sort of detail ETA never overlooks, but no one bothers to look inside until later that afternoon. Meanwhile Prime Minister José María Aznar, whose conservative Popular Party is up for re-election on a platform that calls for muscling ETA, suspects that ETA has beaten him to the punch. Although his party is ahead of the Socialists by five points in the polls, Aznar immediately starts to convert the bombing into what seems likely to be an election-winning crusade against the arch enemy. (In 1995, only the armor of his car prevented Aznar himself from being assassinated by an ETA bomb.)

But in the van, police find a tape with Koranic verses in the cassette player, and under the seat there are seven detonators like those used to denote the Goma-2 explosives identified in the trains. Funny, Koranic recitations and Goma-2 are also not ETA’s thing; yet that evening Aznar assures the editor’s of Spain’s leading newspapers that all evidence points to the Basque separatists. He personally appeals to the patriotic solidarity of the editor of the Socialist-leaning daily El País to print the story, which El País does. The editor of rival El Mundo, which supports Aznar’s Popular Party, is more cautious and wants some concrete evidence before going all out for the government’s tale.

Around midnight evidence starts pouring in. Detectives find 10 kilos of Emilio’s Goma-2 in a sports bag surrounded by screws and nails. The explosives are connected to a detonator, which is attached by wires to a cell phone. The phone’s SIM card lead to two merchants that sold Zougam the “hot” phones and then to Zougam himself. Several survivors from one train will later identify Zougam as one of those who left a bag on board a train that morning. The dialed numbers recorded on the phone chip also lead to a wider social network of North African immigrants with no known ties to ETA.

Friday afternoon, and the Interior Minister, Ángel Acebes, is still insisting that ETA is the only real suspect, although investigators on the ground know better. By now, bits of evidence linking the bombing to Islamists angry at the Aznar’s government’s support of U.S. actions in Iraq are filtering out across the web and radio and into the streets. By evening, over a quarter of Spain’s population of 40 million is in the streets demonstrating against the violence and, already for many, against what is starting to look like a government snow job to keep the illusion of ETA’s involvement going until at least after the election. But in a stunning upset, a scornful public votes in the Socialists, who promise to pull out of Iraq, just as the plotters had planned.

El País feels betrayed and begins an unrelenting campaign against Aznar and his party for supposedly tricking the nation for political gain. Although the still fragmentary evidence clearly points away from ETA, El País will incautiously insist that it clearly points toward Al-Qaeda. El Mundo will feel compelled to throw earlier caution to the wind and defend the ETA thesis as an honest possibility, no matter how deceptively. And truth, as often happens, falls into the abyss.

**The Plotters become Martyrs**

Martyr’s video found in the rubble of the plotters’ hideout in the Madrid suburb of Leganes. Rosa recognizes the hands and voice as Chino’s
With the government still insisting the attack is ETA, a video soon comes to light from an anonymous tip-off to a Madrid television station. A man speaking Arabic with a Moroccan accent says the attacks were revenge for Spain's "collaboration with the criminals Bush and his allies", the government said. He mentions Iraq and Afghanistan in particular and says more blood will flow if the injustices do not end. (The Spanish government backed the US-led invasion of Iraq last year despite polls showing 90% opposition to it from the Spanish public.) "You want life and we want death," says the man in the tape, who is later identified as Chino.

Immediately after the attack Chino goes into hiding but contacts Rosa. He also visits his brother Mohammed, who later testifies that he couldn’t look Chino in the face. "How could you do this in a country that took you in?" Mohammed asks him. Chino answers that no one cares about all the Muslims who have been killed in Iraq and elsewhere.

Abdenabi Kounjaa leaves behind a statement that Spanish authorities find at the house of a fellow Moroccan, Saed El Harrak, a religious friend who Kounjaa had first met on the job at a construction site in 2002. El Harrak says he last saw Kounjaa on March 10, the day before the bombing, but that he was unaware of the testament: "Why would I have held on to it and not burned it if I knew what it was?" El Harrak will later tell the court. Part of Kounjaa’s “final testament” reads:

"Do not have pity on the lousy infidels because they declared war on us. They kill Muslims every day in every part of the world and all of them keep silent."

The plotters draw up a list of further targets and plant a bomb along the route of the high speed train that goes between Madrid and Toledo. The cables leading to the bomb are spotted in the nick of time by personnel inspecting the tracks. Zouheir later testifies that Chino had learned to prepare the detonators. But the Kid’s fingerprints would identify him as the one who placed the bomb. Spanish authorities let on to me that it was Chino who likely taught The Kid what to do.94

One April 2 2004 a handwritten fax in Arabic is sent claiming responsibility in the name for the

94 Interview with Spanish Guardia Civil personnel.
March 11 bombings and for placing explosives on the high speed train tracks in the name of Al Qaeda in Europe. The handwriting is later identified as The Tunisian’s.

Fearing an imminent attack and widespread panic, authorities crank up their manhunt. They nab The Rabbit at his butcher shop and find out that The Kid will come by for some meat. Agents tell The Rabbit to put a transmitter in the back with meat. They track The Kid to the subway but lose him when he throws away the bag. Through a telephone relay they catch one of the plotter’s calls and stake out the second story apartment on Calle Carmen Martín Gaite in the Madrid suburb of Leganes where several of the plotters are hiding out.

Cartagena is hauled out in the middle of the night from his home in southwest Spain and driven to Madrid. At around 3 P.M., police surround the red-brick apartment block in the unremarkable commuter community of Leganes. Abdelmajid Bouchar, a young Moroccan immigrant who became involved in the plot, but who is still unknown to authorities, runs errands for the group and is taking out garbage. He hears a radio transmitter, sees a police woman ringing apartment bells at the entrance to the apartment, and spots her associates. He calls out to his friends just before he bolts. (A semi-professional runner, he manages to escape and flee the country but is caught some months later on a false passport in Eastern Europe and accused of planting bombs on the trains.)

Voices from the apartment cry out, “Allahu Akhbar!,” and machine-gun fire rakes the street. Spain’s elite Grupo Especial de Operaciones move in to clear nearby apartments, backed by tanks and helicopters. Cartagena is told to go up to the apartment where the plotters are holed up and try to get them to surrender “or at least count them.” “Go to Hell,” Cartagena says he told the police, even if they separated him from his family and deported him, as he claimed they had threatened to do. In the early evening, Chino calls his mother in Morocco to say goodbye, she hears an explosion, and the phone goes dead.

The force of the explosion propelled the body fragments of The Tunisian, The Chinaman and his four buddies from Mezuak through the back wall into the swimming pool below. It would take several months to finally complete DNA analysis of a skull fragment from the seventh suicide. It belonged to Allekama Lamari, perhaps the angriest of the bunch and probably the first to detonate. He had been jailed in 1997 by Judge Baltasar Garzón along with 10 members of the Algerian terrorist Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA), though there was scant evidence that Lamari ever belonged to GIA or actively engaged in any terrorist activity at the time. Eventually sentenced to 14 years (later reduced to 9) he was released from prison in 2002 through an administrative error, went underground and vowed revenge against Spain. A few days before he died, Lamari called a friend in Valencia to say that “we will meet in heaven and tell my friends to pray for me.” Intelligence officials tell me insistently that Lamari was the “brains” behind the attack, though they say they can’t reveal the evidence. Marc Sageman is more than skeptical:

“You don’t spend all your time picking asparagus and artichokes (as Lamari did before his arrest) if you’re running a terrorist operation. He probably was picked up because he happened to know some bad guys, got pissed off in jail, and came out ready to kill.”

Whither Al Qaeda?
As in the Hofstadt case, many significant jihadi-inspired acts of terror today do not seem to be well-planned engineering feats of military precision under clear command and control. They are opportunistic on unforeseen and contingent events: the effects of the U.S. counter-terrorism financial regime in moving jihad into underground haunts shared with petty criminals; The Tunisian bonding with Chino on the latter’s rebound from prison; Chino knowing someone who happened to know someone who happened to have been in prison with two guys who could get dynamite; having friends from the same neighborhood back home as confidants to bring along; police incompetence.

The weakly interlocking series of loose and flat networks of friends and family from the mosques, the neighborhoods, work, prison, and so forth gives the illusion of a deviously well-structured chain whose links were carefully designed to operate as semi-autonomous cells. There is, however, no Intelligent Designer. How is it that a plot involving nearly 40 people was able to go on for months right under the noses of Spanish authorities, especially when many of the participants were known to Spanish police or intelligence and even in contact with them? The irony of it all is that if the plotters had real organization and sophisticated knowledge, they probably would have been caught before the bombings. The plot was so scattered, improbable and whimsical that even a competent police watch wouldn’t have had an easy job of tracking it.

Under uncertain or constantly changing conditions, relatively fluid and flat networks that are self-organizing, decentralized and overlapping — like terrorist or drug networks, financial or black arms markets, or information webs of the Google or Wikipedia kind — tend to outperform relatively rigid, centralized and hierarchical competitors. Hierarchies are structured so that the bottom layers (workers) perform day-to-day tasks and the upper layers (management) plans for the long term. But in a rapidly changing world, large management structures set up for long-term maintenance of their organization’s position in a predictable world often cannot compete with smaller, self-motivated and self-correcting systems that can more readily innovate and respond when opportunities or challenges arise. Just think of IBM trying to hold on to its control of the computer market with main frames well after the first PCs came out of the garage.

In the case of terrorist networks, the heightened burden of surviving and maintaining security under sustained attack from law enforcement and counterterrorism might be expected put a fatal break on efficiency and innovation. But the interlocking relations of trust and familiarity inherent in the organic bonds of friendship, kinship and neighborhood make these networks highly resilient to local failures and to predatory attacks from the outside. Of course, criminal gangs, like the Mafia and the Latin American drug cartels, also have these sorts of resilient networks. Terrorist networks, though, have even something more: commitment to a moral cause, which allows for greater sacrifice than is usually possible with typical reward structures based on material incentives. In the Jihad, even petty criminals come to transcend any usual motives for

96 B. Ivry (2003) Black-Market Arms Dealing Still Thriving. The Record, October 7; available online at www.sais-jhu.edu/publicaffairs/SAILSArticles03/Bond_BlackMarket_100703.pdf
gain. They see a way of becoming part of something grand rather than small, and willingly give up their lives for a greater Cause. No criminal enterprise compares.

The Madrid plot was incubated by a hodge-podge of childhood friends, teenage buddies, neighborhood pals, prison cellmates, siblings, cousins and lovers. These weren’t careful, well-trained, planning geniuses. They were almost laughably incompetent at times, though tragically only a bit less so than Spanish law enforcement and intelligence. They got lucky, and hundreds of people were killed or wounded. If the trains had been on time, many more would have died.
APPENDIX C

The Hebron Case
The Hebron Case

Hebron, Khalil in Arabic, is a city divided between 150,000 Palestinians and an enclave of 500 Jewish settlers separated by rings of concrete and razor wire and protected by the Israeli army. Between the two communities lies the Cave of the Patriarchs, holy to both communities, where it is believed Abraham and his sons are buried. On February 25, 1994, Baruch Goldstein, a 38 year-old Brooklyn-born physician, machine-gunned Muslim men, women and children as they knelt in prayer at the Ibrahimi mosque inside the cave. He killed 29 and wounded 150 before members of the congregation subdued him with a fire extinguisher and beat him to death. Palestinian rioting immediately followed the shooting in an escalating cycle of violence that culminated with Hamas’s first suicide bus bombing inside Israeli on April 4, 1994.

Goldstein belonged to the Jewish Defense League and the outlawed Israeli Kach party. Both militant organizations were founded by another Brooklyn-born extremist, Rabbi Meir Kahane. Goldstein is buried at the Meir Kahane Memorial Park in Kiryat Arba, a self-sufficient settlement of nearly 10,000 mostly hardline Jewish settlers next to Hebron. Goldstein’s grave has become a pilgrimage site for those who believe that Greater Israel, including all of historical Palestine and beyond, was given by God to the Jews and that Arabs are interlopers who must be expelled by force. A plaque near the grave reads: "To the holy Baruch Goldstein, who gave his life for the Jewish people, the Torah and the nation of Israel."

Kiryat Arba was founded in 1968 in the wake of Israel’s victory and conquest of the West Bank in the Six Day War. Although Israeli authorities at first deemed the settlement “illegal,” for the settlers, and much of the Israeli public at the time, Kiryat Arba symbolized the return of Jews to an area they had continuously inhabited until the summer of 1929. At that time, Arabs feared permanent loss of sovereignty in the face of rapid Jewish expansion under the British Mandate in Palestine Arab. Ethnic conflict broke out between Arab youths and yeshiva (Jewish “madrassah”) students, which led to three days of rioting, the deaths of 67 Jews and the relocation of several hundred remaining Jews to Jerusalem.

The spark for the 1929 was a demonstration on Jerusalem's Temple Mount in the name of Betar, the militant Jewish nationalist and anti-communist revisionist youth movement for what would become Israel’s Likud Party. Betar was protesting Arab "provocation" and harassment of Jewish worshippers at the Wailing Wall. This "harassment" included the installation of Moslem prayer callers (muezzin) and "musical ceremonies" (zikr) near the Wailing Wall, Judaism’s holiest site where Jews come mourn the destruction of The Second Temple (516 BC – 70 AD).*

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The Wailing Wall is the only structure that survived the destruction by Roman legions during the First Jewish Revolt. (The Arch of Titus depicting and celebrating the sack of Jerusalem and the Temple, still stands in Rome’s Forum). After the Second Jewish Revolt in 136 AD, Rome expelled Jews from Judea and renamed the country Palaestina (after the Philistines who once inhabited the coast, including Gaza and the area around modern Tel Aviv, as opposed to the Jews who mostly inhabited the hill country of what is now the West Bank). Despite the expulsion, some Jews never left and others soon began filtering back, especially to the Jerusalem and Hebron areas.
The Arab demonstration was itself in protest against was the Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, called the "arrogance" of Jewish "Bolshevists" who sought "to gradually take possession of Al Aqsa [Islam's third holiest mosque] on the pretense that it is the Temple, by starting with the Western Wall." It is both ironic and par for the course, that the proximate cause of the Second Intifada, was Likud leader Ariel Sharon’s promenade on September 28, 2000 with a cordon of soldiers on the Temple Mount (the Haram al-Sharif) in a muscle-flexing show of Israeli sovereignty over all of Jerusalem. The visit ignited riots all over Palestine, which resulted in dozens of Palestinian deaths the first five days, at least 47 Palestinians were shot dead, and 1885 were wounded, and Sharon’s election as Prime Minister.

**The Four Circles of Hamas**

Hamas is divided into 4 political “circles”:

- The Politburo, headquartered in Damascus with an arm in Beirut
- The Gaza Shura (Council)
- The Prisoner’s Group, which consists of Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails
- The West Bank Leadership

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100 Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, 11 October 1928, Hajj Amin el-Husseini, Mufti of Jerusalem, al-Jami'a al-Arabiyya; 3 December 1929, Minutes of Shaw Commission.
Organizational Structure

The Politburo. Khaled Mesha’al is the chair, Musa Abu Marzouk is deputy chair, and Usamah Hamdan in Beirut is the political liaison for external relations. Marzouk is considered by many Palestinians and Israeli intelligence officials as the “moderate” in the group. He was former chairman but was imprisoned in the USA (without being formally charged) in the early 90s and his deputy at the time, Khaled Mesha’al, became acting chairman then chairman and remains so to this day. Marzouk grew up in the same refugee camp in Rafa in the Gaza Strip, as did Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, Palestinian government spokesman Dr. Ghazi Hamad and the Prime Minister’s political advisor Ahmed Yusef (the Gaza “moderates).

The Gaza Shura. Mahmoud Al-Zahar is the chairman of the Gaza Shura. This was true even when Ismail Haniya was Prime Minister of the government. Haniya, being more moderate, was chosen as prime minister for the outside world, with Marzouk’s support. Ahmad Al-Jabri is commander of the military wing, the Ezzedin al-Qassam brigade. He is closely tied to Zahar. Zahar was kept in his place by the former political leader in Gaza, Abdel Aziz Rantisi, who was assassinated by the Israelis in April 2004. Both Haniya and Rantisi were close to Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the founder and spiritual guide of Hamas who was killed by Israel in March 2004. But Haniya was only Yassin’s personal secretary, whereas Rantisi was the chief political leader and strategist for Hamas. Sheikh Nazir Rayyan became the spiritual guide after Yassin’s death. Rayyan, who sent out his own son on a suicide mission against Israel, declared peace with Israel.
and the Jews to be impossible. He was killed by Israeli warplanes on January 1, 2009, along with his 4 wives and 11 children, having defiantly refused to evacuate his house after Israel began its most punishing attack on Gaza since the June 1967 Six-Day War. Another “hardline” senior Hamas political leader in Gaza, Said Siyam, was also killed in Israel’s January 2009 offensive. There was no apparently attempt to target Haniya’s circle. According to one Israeli official: “Israel tried to target people from the security apparatus. At this moment, we prefer that the less-radical wing will take over.”

In the lead up to first Palestinian legislative elections in 1996, Haniya argued for participation and was temporally expelled from Hamas for this by Rantisi. Zahar took up Haniya’s argument and was shouted down by Rantisi, and subsequently kept quiet. After Rantisi’s death, Mesha’al and Zahar become the dominant figures in Hamas, with Mesha’al in a superior position until the takeover of Gaza in June 2007. Now Zahar seems to have a co-equal or position because of his control of forces on the ground. According to one well-placed source in Hamas told me, Zahar and the other “hardliners” had been making contingency plans for the takeover of Gaza “within a matter of hours” following Hamas’s victory in the legislative actions. Allegedly, these were only contingency plans in the event that Fateh attempted to marginalize the Hamas-led government.

In fact, Fateh did attempt to marginalize the Haniya government by trying to control government salaries as well as government security forces. The straw that broke the camel’s back was the infiltration of several hundred Egyptian-trained (with USA and Israeli backing) Fateh fighters under Mohammed Dahlan. The aim was to promote a Fateh takeover of the Gaza security apparatus. Hamas put their contingency planning into effect and rapidly defeated Fateh forces.

The tactical result was the opposite of what the US, Israel and Egypt had wanted (a Hamas takeover rather than a Fateh takeover). But the strategic result was exactly what was wanted: international isolation of Hamas. Within the “moderate” group, Haniya publicly supported the takeover (some say he had no choice), whereas Ghazi Hamad publicly opposed it. Ghazi Hamad was “suspended” from his government functions, although he still remains a member of Hamas. Ahmad Yusef, political advisor to Haniya, tacitly (not publicly) opposed the takeover. He too, was suspended, but then reinstated as an advisor to Zahar.

The Prisoner’s Group, which consists of Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails. Palestinians and Israeli leaders alike consider the prisoner’s group, along with the West Bank leadership more moderate than either the politburo or the Gaza Shura. Working closely with the imprisoned leader of Fateh’s “young generation,” Marwan Barghouti, the Hamas prisoner’s group helped to draft and broker the “prisoner’s agreement” was instrumental to the 2007 Mecca Accords and the attempt to set up a unity government of all major Palestinian factions (but essentially a power-sharing arrangement between Hamas and Fateh). The “prisoner’s document” implicitly accepted a two-state solution within the 1967 borders, without explicitly recognizing Israel and with continued insistence on the repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their former homes (which is unacceptable to Israel).

The West Bank Leadership. All official Hamas lawmakers in the West Bank are currently in prison. Sheikh Betawi, who is now (2009) in prison again, remains a hardline spiritual guide both for the West Bank and prisoners. But many consider Naser Shaer, former deputy prime minister of the Hamas-led Palestinian government and Minister of Education, to be first among equals in the West Bank political leadership. Shaer is a professor of Islamic studies at Al-Najah University in Nablus He had avoided Israeli jail because he is not “officially” a member of Hamas, but it’s clear that he represents their interests in the West Bank. But following the 2009 Israeli incursion into Gaza, and the subsequent collapse of Israel-Hamas negotiations in Cairo over prisoner releases, Shaer was imprisoned along with others close to Hamas.

The Hamas's takeover Gaza in June 2007 strengthened the hardline faction within the Gaza Shura and split Hamas into roughly two camps: those who organized the coup against Abbas and his security forces and now control Gaza, and those who opposed the step or were not directly involved in decisions after clashes erupted. The latter group includes at least some of the exile leadership of the politburo in Damascus, most of the West Bank leaders and the prisoners circle, and the now somewhat marginalized Gaza group around the unity government’s former prime minister Isamil Haniya. (Haniya’s main allies in Gaza, Ahmed Yusef and Ghazi Hamad, admit they and Haniya have been eclipsed by those who have the allegiance of the Qassam brigades and other armed groups).

A key aim of the hardline Gaza group appears to be to prevent Fateh from returning to Gaza, and to deal with Israel alone in any future negotiations. The other Hamas groups believe that this uncompromising stance undermines Hamas’s position in the West Bank and threatens to solidify the separation between Gaza and the West Bank, forcing a permanent division of Palestine into two political entities or a civil war in the West Bank to reunite it under Hamas control. (According to polls by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, 80% of the population opposed the coup and nearly all want to keep Gaza and the West Bank united under one leadership).102

On March 5, 2008 Hamas Politburo Chairman Khaled Meshaal declared that Hamas would end the armed struggle if Israel recognized the pre-1967 borders, withdrew from all Palestinian Occupied Territories (including the West Bank and East Jerusalem) and recognized Palestinian rights which would include the "right of return."103 On May 27, 2008, Meshaal met Iran’s supreme rule Ayatollah Khameini in Tehran and told him: "The Palestinian nation will continue its resistance despite all pressures and will not under any circumstances stop its jihad."104

Clearly, nothing is quite clear about Hamas’s position on peace and eventual recognition of Israel in exchange for a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

102 See recent polls by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research at http://www.pcpsr.org/.
103 You Tube (2008) Talk to Jazeera - Khaled Meshaal, March 5; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O8TTjb54GzM.
March 2009. “Hamas is an ideological group,” Israel’s Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told our research team as her ruling party was about to cede power and go into the opposition, “and an ideological group finds it very difficult to compromise on anything that goes against their core beliefs and values. I know, I came from an ideological group [Betar].”

“As long as Hamas remains an ideological group, they will never declare their acceptance of Israel,” Livni went on: “But I believe there is a way for an ideological group to live with something that someone else does. If the Palestinian nationalist camp makes peace with us, Hamas can say ‘it’s not our fault’ and then accept the status quo as the will of the people without compromising itself. But time is working against the moderates because they see that the world is doing very little to stop the extremists who believe that all they have to do to win in the end is wait.”

Israeli AF Maj Gen (ret) Isaac Ben Israel, former parliamentarian and director of the Defense Ministry’s R & D, and more recently head of Israel’s space agency and the Curiel Center for International Studies, elaborated on Livni’s sentiments: “Hamas is an ideological group committed to its core principles, its sacred values; and that is why they would rather risk death and devastation for themselves and their people rather than compromise.”