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March 21, 2026



Sleeper cells do not suddenly appear the day an attack happens. They do not materialize out of nowhere when a suspect is arrested. They grow slowly and quietly, often for years, beneath layers of denial, political caution, and a media culture that refuses to speak honestly about the ideological forces behind them.

And not confronting them does not make them disappear.

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In fact, one of the least-discussed realities within Western security and political circles is the fear that confronting these networks too directly might provoke activation. The unspoken calculation often goes something like this: if we leave them alone, if we avoid aggressive action, if we do not expose the networks too openly, perhaps they will remain dormant and will not activate.

But history has shown repeatedly that this logic does not stop these networks from growing. It simply allows them to embed themselves deeper. Quiet cells become larger networks. Ideological circles expand. Financial and logistical connections strengthen beneath the surface.

In effect, these networks are treated as a risk to be managed, not a threat to be dismantled. Western institutions operate under the assumption that confronting these networks too directly could trigger the very violence they claim to be trying to prevent.

And so the hesitation continues. But refusing to confront a threat has never prevented it from developing. It only delays the moment it becomes unavoidable and ensures the consequences are far worse.

Every time a plot is uncovered in the United States or Europe, we are given a familiar explanation. A lone actor. A troubled individual. Someone “radicalized” online. The story is presented as an isolated incident, disconnected from any broader pattern. The motive is labeled “unclear,” even when the pattern is not. But when investigators begin pulling the threads, the story almost never ends with one man.

There are ideological pipelines. There are networks of influence. There are family ties, financial links, and connections that stretch far beyond the borders of the country where the attack was planned.

The recent Michigan synagogue attack case is only the latest reminder.

Early coverage of the suspect focused on the usual narrative. Another individual allegedly radicalized in isolation. Another domestic plot disconnected from any larger movement. But as more information surfaced, the picture became more complicated.

According to reporting confirmed by Israeli officials, the suspect’s brother was identified as a Hezbollah commander who had been killed in an Israeli airstrike.

That detail matters.

Not because responsibility passes from one family member to another. It does not. Every person is accountable for their own actions, but when investigators examine these cases, family background and ideological environments often reveal something deeper. They show the ecosystem in which activation and training take root.

And that ecosystem is something Western societies still refuse to confront honestly.

For decades, Islamist movements have built ideological and operational networks across the world. Some operate openly through political organizations and advocacy groups. Others function through militant structures such as Hezbollah, Hamas, or al Qaeda, while additional layers operate through propaganda channels, recruitment pipelines, and financial networks.

Many of these structures remain dormant for years until they are not.

In my book [*The Architecture of Jihad*](#), I documented how these systems operate. They operate as layered structures built on ideology, strategy, and patience.

At the outer layer are narratives and messaging that frame the conflict as a struggle between belief and unbelief. Beneath that layer are networks that reinforce the ideology through education, propaganda, and recruitment. Beneath that are operational circles capable of supporting or carrying out acts of violence when the opportunity arises.

The structure is not chaotic. It is methodical, and the existence of sleeper cells only makes sense when that structure is understood.

The Michigan case did not appear out of thin air. It fits a pattern that investigators have encountered repeatedly for decades.

Individuals living seemingly ordinary lives in Western societies eventually surface in connection with violent plots or Islamist networks. At first, the incident is framed as a personal tragedy or a lone act of violence. Then the deeper connections begin to emerge.

Sometimes there are ideological mentors. Sometimes online communities reinforce the worldview and normalize violence. Sometimes, investigators discover family ties to militant organizations abroad. In other cases, financial channels quietly link individuals in Western countries to organizations operating overseas.

Each case looks different on the surface. But the underlying structure often follows the same pattern. The methods vary. The long-term objective does not.

The Boston Marathon bombing exposed ideological influences that extended far beyond two brothers. The San Bernardino attack revealed how propaganda and digital recruitment networks could transform ordinary residents into mass killers. The Fort Hood massacre forced the country to confront how ideological radicalization could occur even inside the U.S. military itself.

None of these cases were isolated. They followed different paths, but they emerged from the same underlying structure.

Islamist movements are not random collections of angry individuals. They are ideological systems built on the belief that political authority must ultimately be governed by Islamic law and that resistance to that system is illegitimate.

Understanding that ideological engine is essential to understanding why sleeper cells exist in the first place. Western societies have spent years avoiding this conversation.

Political leaders worry about accusations of intolerance. Media organizations fear controversy. Academic institutions often treat ideology as irrelevant or secondary to social grievances.

But reality does not disappear simply because it is uncomfortable to discuss. Every uncovered plot forces the same questions back into public view.

How many networks are already embedded beneath the surface?

How many individuals are currently moving through the same Islamization pathways?

How many warning signs will be ignored before the next attack forces the issue again?

The purpose of confronting this reality is not fear, it is clarity.

For years, I have presented evidence showing how jihadist movements build influence and operational capacity over time. The research that led to [*The Architecture of Jihad*](#) was not built on speculation. It was built on patterns, documentation, and the repeated lessons of history.

And those patterns are not fading. They are repeating.

Get a copy of [*The Architecture of Jihad*](#) and equip yourself with the truth before the enemy overtakes you.

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