STRANGE BEDFELLOWS OR BROTHERS-IN-ARMS: WHY TERRORIST GROUPS ALLY

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ABSTRACT

Conventional wisdom holds that terrorist groups with a shared enemy or ideology have ample reason to work together, even if they are primarily engaged in separate conflicts. Partnering with another terrorist organization creates opportunities to bolster operational effectiveness, range, and efficiency as well as enhance legitimacy and stature. Cross-conflict terrorist group alliances, however, are rare because they expose partnering organizations to serious vulnerabilities, and terrorist organizations are ill-suited to forge these kinds of commitments. Therefore, terrorist alliances occur under limited—but poorly understood and rarely studied—conditions. The prevailing notion that terrorist groups with shared enemies or ideologies will naturally gravitate toward one another mischaracterizes the nature of relationships among these illicit, clandestine, and violent organizations. Furthermore, the common enemy and ideology explanations predict that alliances should occur more frequently than they do, and that alliances should form where none exist. Neither can account for the timing or duration of alliances; the variation in the amount of cooperation among different dyads that share either an enemy or ideology; or why the level of cooperation fluctuates over the course of relationships.

When alliances do occur, they are not evenly distributed across dyads. A small number of groups, termed “alliance hubs,” demonstrate an aptitude for forging partnerships. Understanding hubs’ anomalous behavior has significant scholarly and policy implications, given that their alliances account for a disproportionate proportion of the relationships. Rather than acting as the motives that precipitate and sustain alliances, this dissertation finds that shared ideology and
enemies act as identity features that guide partner selection. The primary impetus for alliances with hubs is organizational adaptation and learning needs for groups that lack self-reform capacity, often due to organizational youth, crises or rapidly changing environments. Alliance hubs emerge as superior alliance partners because they have the resources and willingness to fulfill other groups’ organizational needs. Hubs are willing to do so because they view themselves as the core of an ideologically defined, balancing coalition against their enemies. This position generates perpetual organizational needs that require alliances.
“Writing my dissertation was the loneliest and most difficult experience of my life”—an anonymous CIA officer who served in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Sudan.

“The show doesn’t go on because it is ready. It goes on because it is 11:30pm on Saturday night.”—Tina Fey, remarking on working at Saturday Night Live

My life was very different when I started down this road. That seems like an obvious thing to say, but it is sometimes hard to remember the person I was when I started the PhD program at Georgetown in 2006. My name was different. I lived in a different house. I had a different job. I had a vastly different vision for my future. The dissertation has been a part of my life for so long that I can’t quite imagine what it will be like without it. Will I still take my laptop everywhere, even to places as dangerous as Peshawar and on “relaxing” vacations to Costa Rica, simply because I might steal a few minutes to write? Will I start watching television programs and movies again? Will I read books for fun? I can’t quite imagine my life without a dissertation looming over me at all times. But it is time to try.

My struggle over the course of the PhD, which has so often felt like a solitary journey, has not been undertaken alone. I was fortunate to have an existing support system in place. My mom and dad read every page of this dissertation. Any remaining missing commas or “made up words” are my fault and mine alone. They tirelessly encouraged me, edited every page using their #2 pencils, and spent countless hours on the phone with me talking through their suggested changes. My brother Lee was by my side pouring through archives at Columbia University, acting as my “personal assistant and security” in Israel, creating reference indexes for lengthy trial transcripts, and coming over on Sundays to grocery shop, walk Gator, and help me keep up with my life. How do you thank your family for that kind of love and support? I don’t know, but I do thank them from the bottom of my heart. I love you.

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Section I: Literature Review and Theory
CHAPTER 1:
TERRORIST GROUP ALLIANCES: KEY CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The amount of media attention and policy concern that terrorist alliances receive obscures the reality that terrorist organizations struggle to form enduring cooperative relationships with one another. They face a number of structural hurdles that make cooperation difficult; they lack access to the mitigating strategies that states can sometimes employ to overcome these impediments. Their clandestine nature further exacerbates obstacles and creates additional challenges. Therefore, like alliances among states, partnerships among terrorist organizations occur under limited conditions.

The paucity of terrorist group alliances is at odds with much of the policy and popular discourse on these relationships. Alliances are often portrayed as ubiquitous and the natural, almost inevitable, outcome when illicit, violent, and secretive groups share an enemy or ideology. Yet if these two factors were the dominant reasons that terrorist organizations ally, then one would expect alliances to occur far more frequently and to endure more easily over time. While inter-state alliances are one of the most frequently studied and robustly theorized subjects in international relations, terrorist group alliances are relatively a poorly understood, under-theorized phenomenon that is often either over-simplified or examined narrowly with little generalizability. The existing non-state actor literature has examined related topics, such as competition and cooperation among factions within civil wars and internal conflicts, interactions between terrorist groups and organized crime networks, and terrorist organizations’ relationships with states. Empirical work on individual alliances, particularly those forged by al-Qaida, is also
abundant. But relatively little work has been done to determine: 1) the motives that spur groups to form and sustain relationships with one another over time; and 2) why certain groups are vastly more able and willing to do so than others.

This dissertation contends that rather than being the norm, alliances among terrorist groups are an anomaly. Moreover, when they do occur, alliances are not distributed evenly across all possible dyads. Instead, within this population of anomalies, a small number of groups actively engage in alliances and act as central nodes for multiple partnerships, termed "alliance hubs. While their alliance aptitude poses a compelling research puzzle and generates substantial policy interest, they have not received adequate scholarly attention.

A better understanding of alliance hubs’ behavior and appeal as a partner will have both academic and policy implications. These relationships defy predictions about the ability of entities to cooperate in an anarchical international system, perhaps even more so than states’ alliances, because of the secretive, violent, and illicit characteristics of terrorist organizations. From a policy standpoint, governments have had little success to date in disrupting terrorist alliances, though doing so has been a U.S. Government priority since at least 2001. The 2003 U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy asserted that “[t]he interconnected nature of terrorist organizations necessitates that we pursue them across the geographic spectrum to ensure that all linkages between the strong and the weak organizations are broken, leaving each of them isolated, exposed, and vulnerable to defeat” (United States National Security Council National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism 9). The State Department’s 2006 Country Report on Terrorism similarly argued that disrupting al-Qaida’s alliance network is a key counterterrorism goal since:

[d]isaggregation denies al-Qaida its primary objective of achieving leadership over extremist movements worldwide and unifying them into a single movement. It does not remove the threat but helps reduce it to less dangerous local components, which can be dealt with by individual governments and communities working together (13).
Understanding what motivates terrorist groups, particularly alliance hubs, to create partnerships is essential to more effectively preventing and disrupting their relationships and thereby reducing the threat.

This chapter defines key concepts and reviews the existing literature and theory on terrorist groups’ alliances. It is comprised of seven sections. First, it examines the obstacles that constrain terrorist groups’ alliances and describes why these partnerships present a compelling research puzzle. In the second section, it explains the potential benefits that can be derived from terrorist relationships. In the third section, the dependent variable, terrorist organization alliances is defined. Next, the phenomenon of “alliance hubs”—groups that demonstrate an exceptional ability to successfully forge numerous relationships—is identified and explained. The following section delineates the population of alliances of interest in this dissertation—non-competitor, so-called “distant dyads”—and described the differences between an alliance governed by a non-competitive dynamic as opposed to one immersed in a competitive dynamic. The chapter concludes with an examination of the existing theoretical frameworks commonly used to explain these relationships.

1.2 Obstacles to Cooperative Relationships among Terrorist Groups

Terrorist groups are poorly positioned to form cooperative relationships with one another (Oots 41; Bapat and Bond 820). They must overcome many of the same hurdles that states face when trying to form alliances in the international system. Terrorist groups are perhaps even more cautious about the abundance of dangers that constantly threaten their survival. Simultaneously, they have less access to the strategies that states and licit organizations use to mitigate the risk.

Bargaining theory elucidates one set of obstacles terrorist groups face when trying to create stable, cooperative relationships: difficulties making credible commitments. By design, terrorist
organizations are highly secretive and thus lack the requisite transparency to assure their partners that they intend to honor future promises and obligations (Bapat and Bond 811). The majority of terrorist groups’ lifespans are less than one year, which means few have the requisite shadow of the future to make attempting cooperation worth the risk (Rapoport “Terrorism” 100). To compound these problems, terrorist groups struggle to establish reputations as trustworthy partners (Bapat and Bond 821). As it is problematic to enforce accountability on clandestine, illicit, and violent actors, both sides have incentives to defect and use cooperation opportunistically to improve their own security. Meanwhile, adversary governments and other foes constantly seek to exploit these fears to undermine cooperative relationships and weaken the partnering organizations (Bapat and Bond 800).

Terrorist groups do not possess the qualities conducive to making credible commitments; they lack access to solutions to mitigate them, namely institutions, mechanisms to punish non-compliance, and third-party enforcement. Institutions are rarely available to illicit non-state actors, so groups cannot overcome mutual distrust by creating institutions to bind themselves to agreements nor can they enter into contracts to be enforced by an outside institution, like a firm. Given the violent nature of terrorist organizations, enforcement is difficult, dangerous, and costly.

Theoretically, the potential exists for a third-party to enforce cooperation. Another organization or, more plausibly, a state could, under some conditions, fill this role, although in doing so, it would change the structure of the operating conditions. An enforcer would introduce an element of hierarchy into the alliance, rather than the default anarchical conditions that dominate relations in the international system, including between terrorist organizations.

An enforcer must be both able and willing to police the partnering groups (Bapat and Bond 795). Why would a state agree to enforce cooperation between two terrorist groups? It requires expending resources to monitor behavior as well as to punish non-compliance, not to mention
possible reprisals from other states that are adversely impacted by the relationship or retaliation from the group being punished for non-compliance. Presumably, a state would only be willing to undertake this role if the alliance activities dovetailed closely with its existing preferences or it could manipulate the alliance to suit its interests (Byman *Deadly Connections* 26-32). The latter option distorts the alliance activities and forces the cooperating organizations to relinquish even more autonomy, which has the potential to make the relationship less desirable to either or both parties. A state’s willingness to exact punishment for non-compliance is more likely to be determined by whether a specific transgression also harmed the state’s interests. Most states would have little interest in acting as a neutral arbiter of relations between terrorist organizations or expending the resources to enforce the commitments unless its vested interests are also at stake. Furthermore, a state’s ability to punish non-compliance is not as straightforward as it might first appear. Unless a state provides the group with a constant form of support, such that it can readily denied or withdrawn, or has easy access to group members, punishing non-compliance is complicated. Many state sponsors overestimate their ability to manage their terrorist proxies, only to find, when push comes to shove, their expectations exceed their actual capability to control their clients. Thus a state acting as a third-party enforcer is not an ideal solution to the commitment problems terrorist groups face trying to form alliances and does not frequently occur. Consequently, few enforcement mechanisms are available to terrorist organizations and fears of freeriding and cheating often dog efforts to form cooperative relationships.

Beyond the structural impediments of cooperation under anarchy, alliances also present a security-autonomy tradeoff, in which an organization exchanges some independence for improved security. Any loss of independence is undesirable and can be untenable for a terrorist organization. It creates additional vulnerabilities and compounds the risks of defection. By relinquishing a measure of independence to a partner with different priorities, a group may become distracted
from its primary mission and involved in activities that do not further its goals, which can cause internal strife ultimately, a group's demise.

Partnering with another terrorist organization provokes new enemies and generates additional counterterrorism pressure. Alliances incite the adversaries of both partnering organizations because alliances have the potential to improve the capability, status, and power of an entity considered threatening. Therefore, groups may actually increase the threat they face by entering into an alliance. For example, despite its extensive public alliances, al-Qaida weighed this heavily in its initial decision not to announce its alliance with the Somali Islamist terrorist group, al-Shabaab. Usama bin Laden wrote to the leader of al-Shabaab advising against a public declaration arguing that, “[i]f the matter becomes declared and out in the open, it would have the enemies escalate their anger and mobilize against you; this is what happened to the brothers in Iraq or Algeria” (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000005”).

Because terrorist organizations impose a rigid in-group mentality, decisions to partner with another group can strain the internal cohesion of the partnering organizations, particularly if an alliance involves relinquishing autonomy or provoking a greater threat. One of the most important alliances of the contemporary era, between al-Qaida and the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), incited tremendous internal dissent within EIJ. Some within EIJ objected to an alliance with al-Qaida because it required that EIJ neglect its mobilizing mission against Cairo and invoke the wrath of United States, which meant being pursued by U.S. security services as well as the Egyptian Government (Scheuer 184). Others in EIJ objected to the alliance because they argued that bin Laden was untrustworthy, as demonstrated by prior failures to fulfill his commitments (Gerges 162-3; Tawil “Interview” 15; Higgins and Collison 2). When alliances cause internal dissension, it increases the likelihood that the group will splinter, thereby weakening the partnering organization and reducing the attractiveness of the alliance.
While an alliance can be a way to improve an ailing group’s standing, conversely, groups risk discredit themselves in the eyes of important constituencies, ranging from the international community to local support bases, with their ally choices. This constrains groups from forming an alliance with partners potentially viewed as unacceptable by its real or perceived constituents. An organization may also decide to distance itself from an ally, if the ally engages in activities condemned by supporters. Ethno-nationalist groups are perhaps most aware of this pitfall, as they have the clearest constituencies, tend to strongly reject the terrorism label, and seek international acceptance. For example, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) publicly distanced itself from its ally, the Italian Red Brigades, in the wake of the international outcry against the Red Brigades’ murder of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978 because the PLO was engaged in an effort to secure international recognition and approval (Alexander and Pluchinsky 46).

Just attempting to create an alliance involves incurring costs and risks for the partnering groups (Oots 41). Because the organizations may not be proximately located or able to easily access one another, simply establishing and negotiating the terms of a relationship involves the allocation of always-scarce resources. Groups must to deploy personnel or engage in long-distance communications, which are vulnerable to interception and manipulation by adversaries. For example, in 2005 in order to communicate between Pakistan and Iraq, then al-Qaida number two Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote a private, lengthy letter to al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi counseling him to revise some of his tactics and behavior. This letter was captured by the United States and used to publicly embarrass and drive a wedge between the two organizations (Al-Zawahiri). Each time the partnering groups need to interact in order to cooperate or maintain the relationship, they are forced to undertake risks.

One of the most frequent impediments to an alliance between terrorist organizations is the terrorists themselves (Oots 41). They possess a strong sense of in-group identity that is essential
for survival, but can make relationships difficult. In-group identities ensure loyalty within an organization and discourage connections with anyone outside the group. Allying with another group requires broadening the circle of identification, which goes against groups’ indoctrination process. This is coupled with the egos and idiosyncrasies of covert and perpetually suspicious actors, which further hinder alliance formation. Terrorist leaders are often charismatic figures with an inflated sense of purpose and ambition. Cooperation and compromise between such personalities can be problematic, to say the least. Thus personality clashes masquerading as ideological or strategic differences can stymie alliances as well.

Lastly, and of the greatest concern to terrorist organizations, alliances increase the possibility of betrayal or leaks. As clandestine organizations that operate at a material disadvantage to their adversaries, terrorist groups must constantly be vigilant to prevent enemy infiltration. Alliances increase the number of actors with knowledge of a group's activities, thus increasing the possibility of security breaches (Oots 41). Allies are yet another potential source of deliberate or inadvertent lapses in security that can seriously harm allying organizations. Groups struggle to verify that their partners have not been penetrated and are adequately security conscious; therefore, alliances involve incurring the serious risk of infiltration.

Even when groups successfully initiate an alliance, a constant risk for subsequent failure exists. Too often, alliances are viewed by outsiders and governments as static and self-perpetuating. For example, once a group is deemed an al-Qaeda ally, it is thereafter labeled—and sanctioned—as such permanently, even when scant evidence points to ongoing collaboration. While organizations may be apt to return to existing or previous partners when seeking assistance, relationships fluctuate over time. Alliances operate under varying conditions that can become unstable (Koza and Lewin 146). The informal or tacit agreements that allies often form are prone to misunderstandings (Parkhe 2). Terrorist organizations in particular are susceptible to sudden and frequent turnover,
which increases the possibility of misunderstandings, unfulfilled promises or defection when new personnel fill the vacated positions.

Terrorist groups thus are extremely cautious about partnering with other organizations. They must overcome a number of obstacles and be willing to assume substantial risks to form a relationship. Once the alliance is created, it is difficult to sustain over time. Far from being a natural outcome, cooperative relationships between these actors present a puzzle—under what conditions will terrorist groups ally? Even more puzzling is the existence of a small number of influential groups—alliance hubs—that have cultivated and sustained multiple alliances, despite this array of obstacles, acting as focal points for cooperation in a way that shapes the broader landscape.

1.3 Benefits to Cooperation

The obstacles to alliances discussed raise the question: what could groups acquire through an alliance that would warrant undertaking such risks? Terrorist groups can derive an array of benefits from working with one another. In a 2007 RAND study, Kim Cragin et al. argued that:

Terrorist interactions are a key aspect of understanding terrorist threats. These interactions allow terrorist groups to elevate the threat that they pose to state governments by sharing ‘best practices’ and therefore multiplying their own efforts with the knowledge and know-how from other militant groups (3).

Cooperative relationships offer avenues for groups to acquire new capability, expand their existing capacity or conduct activities more efficiently (Cragin et al. 6). Groups can train one another in new skills and teach one another improved techniques. For example, the training al-Qaida received from Hizballah in Lebanon in the early 1990s helped al-Qaida to generate a capability to conduct suicide attacks—a skill that al-Qaida subsequently employed with increasing sophistication and in turn taught its allies (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 61). An ally may improve its partner’s ability to acquire materiel, like weapons or documents. For instance, the
West German Red Army Faction sought out the Palestinian group Fatah in 1970 in order to access weapons that were not readily available in West Germany (Aust personal interview). Allies can offer facilitation or logistical assistance into areas that were previously inaccessible. Perhaps most importantly, groups that control territory or have unfettered access to a sanctuary can extend safe haven to their partners.

Alliances can help groups to withstand counterterrorism pressure and regroup after losses. Without its array of allies to fall back on in Pakistan, it is unlikely that al-Qaida could have survived the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent fall of the Taliban. Under some circumstances, alliances offer intangible benefits, such as improved credibility, legitimacy, and prestige, which can translate into assets like recruits or funds. Groups can project themselves as part of a broader movement by allying with another terrorist organization, a particularly valuable asset when the resonance of the original cause begins to wane.

By working with another organization, groups can access assets that would otherwise be unavailable. The benefits are clear and, under some conditions, sufficient to warrant the risks. For some groups, the resources and skills acquired through an alliance can be the difference between survival and extinction or between victory and defeat.

Graphic 1.1: Risks Usually Outweigh Benefits
1.4 Alliances between Terrorist Organizations

Before going any further, it is important to more precisely define the phenomenon under investigation: terrorist organization alliances. Each aspect of this dependent variable must be fleshed out because there is debate and confusion surrounding nearly all these terms. International relations scholar Ole Holsti remarked that “alliances are apparently a universal component of relations between political units, irrespective of time and place” (Holsti et al. 2). Yet definitions of alliances in the international relations literature are overwhelmingly focused on states, often in ways that are not relevant to non-state actors, which also cooperate within the international system and face some of the same challenges in doing so. State-focused definitions, with their conventional emphasis on formal treaties and institutions, such as NATO, are rarely applicable to clandestine, violent non-state actors.

International relations scholar Stephen Walt admitted in his seminal work, *Origins of Alliances*, that alliances are difficult to define and measure with precision (12). He defined alliances as “formal or informal relationships of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states” (Walt *Origins of Alliances* 12). International relations scholars Michael Barnett and Jack Levy employed a similar definition in their work “Domestic Sources of Alliances and Alignments: The Case of Egypt, 1962-73” with an important addition. They add that an alliance is “a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more states and involving mutual expectations of some degree of policy coordination on security issues under certain conditions in the future” (Barnett and Levy 370). Drawing from these two definitions while adapting it to apply to terrorist organizations, alliances are defined in this dissertation as formal or informal relationships of security cooperation among two or more terrorist groups involving some degree of ongoing coordination or consultation in the future. The term “alliance” is used inter-changeably with “partnership” and “cooperative relationship” throughout this dissertation.
This definition of an alliance has several components that merit further explanation. First is the *formal or informal nature* of the relationship. In formal alliance arrangements, relationships are governed by explicit agreements, publicly acknowledged, and partners adhere to agreed-upon obligations in areas such as strategy, targets or attacks. In informal relationships, coordination is less structured and expectations are tacitly agreed upon, but not codified. The agreements and obligations are implicitly understood. Terrorist group alliances do not always neatly fall into the dichotomous categories of formal or informal. Instead, the level of formality can vary over the course of a relationship and an alliance can be formal in some realms and more informal in others.

An alliance consists of *security cooperation*, the second part of the alliance definition. Cooperation involves adjustment and a conscious effort to work together, not simply shared interests or uncoordinated behavior that is mutually beneficial (Keohane 12). International relations theorist Robert Keohane elucidated the distinction between cooperation and harmony. Harmony refers to a situation in which a group’s policies and actions automatically facilitate the attainment of others’ goals (12). Harmony can be easily mistaken for cooperation between terrorist groups because cooperation can be covert. For example, when a group conducts an attack that benefits al-Qaida or appears consistent with al-Qaida’s goals, it is mislabeled as an al-Qaida ally. If the attack was undertaken for the group’s own purposes, even if it simultaneously benefited al-Qaida, this is an example of harmony, not cooperation. Even if the group intended to emulate al-Qaida or assist al-Qaida’s agenda, this is not cooperation or an indication of an alliance. If the group consciously adjusted its attack plans in coordination with al-Qaida, this is an example of cooperation. Cooperation thus consists of intentional and deliberate collaboration designed to reduce the danger to or increase security of the partnering organizations.

The next component of this alliance definition—*terrorist organizations*—is perhaps the most problematic. Terrorism is a notoriously difficult concept to define and some academic work
eschews its use, preferring less value-laden terms such as “non-state violent actors.” In an elusive quest for consensus, terrorism scholar Alex Schmid catalogued hundreds of definitions of the term (Schmid and Longman 5). The international community has not had any more success agreeing on a definition of the term. Efforts at the United Nations to define terrorism have gotten bogged down in political machinations for decades. Most groups reject being labeled as terrorist and frequently declare themselves as “freedom fighters” who oppose the real “terrorists”—their enemies—while accusing those that use the term of being unfairly selective and politically motivated.

This dissertation cannot resolve this debate, nor does its endeavor to do so. Terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman has offered a rigorous definition which captures the essential elements of terrorism; it is “fundamentally and inherently political” and “it is a planned, calculated, and indeed systematic act” (Inside Terrorism 2006 3). He outlined five components of terrorism: 1) political aims and motives; 2) violence or threats of violence; 3) psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; 4) perpetrators who are part of an organization with an identifiable chain of command, cell or ideologically motivated collection of individuals; and 5) perpetrators who are part of a subnational group or non-state entity (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 40). This definition contains no judgment about the justness of the cause and the validity of violence; rather it focuses on terrorism as a tactic employed in pursuit of any political aim. This dissertation adopts Hoffman’s definition of terrorism and seeks to investigate why organizations that rely on this tactic form alliances.

Lastly, the alliances being examined here are only between organizations. In this respect, by looking only at organizations that use terrorism, this dissertation is even more narrow than Hoffman’s definition, which also includes cells and ideologically motivated collections of individuals. Organizations are entities with some defined membership, chain of command, command and control mechanisms, and in-group identity. They can be quite small. As the definition
suggests, an alliance requires a recurring, organizational-level relationship that incurs obligations on both parties, not *ad hoc* or one-time cooperation between groups or individuals.

Terrorist groups also ally with other types of actors, including states, criminal organizations, non-violent non-state actors such as political parties or charities, and even individuals. While the focus of this dissertation is only on alliances involving dyads of non-competitor terrorist organizations, other relationships may influence whether a groups seeks or accepts an alliance with another terrorist organization. They may also affect partners’ ability to sustain their relationships. States sponsors in particular have the potential to impact inter-terrorist group alliances, even if states do not manage or control these partnerships. This dissertation does not theorize or test hypotheses about what precipitated these other relationships, but they are included to the extent that they impact the alliances of interest.

With this definition of terrorist group alliances and caveats in mind, five dimensions of the dependent variable are examined in this dissertation:

- the presence or absence of a relationship;
- the onset of an alliance;
- the parameters of cooperation;
- the fluctuation in the level of cooperation over time;
- the duration of the relationship.

First, for every dyad, there is either some kind of relationship or the absence of a partnership. Adhering to the possibility principle, negative cases, i.e. non-alliances, are considered if an alliance had a real possibility of occurring—an issue discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 (Goertz and Mahoney 214). The second condition, the timing of the relationship, refers to the point when the alliance is created and the state of the allying organizations at the initiation of the relationship. For example, is the alliance formed shortly after the groups’ formation or later in their lifespan? The third component is the realms within which the allies collaborate, and conversely, the areas off limits to cooperation. The fluctuation in the amount and level of cooperation and
frequency of cooperation over the course of the relationship is the fourth element of a coalition. The last aspect of an alliance is the length of the relationship. Altogether, these five factors encompass the components of an alliance.

1.5 Alliance Hubs

A small subset of groups—alliances hubs—have demonstrated an ability to more readily overcome the obstacles to cooperation and forge relationships with multiple groups simultaneously and/or over time. When alliances occur, terrorist groups tend to form closely-knit clusters or cliques of cooperating organizations (Asal, Park, and Rethmeyer 31). An alliance hub is an organization at the center of a cluster of relationships. It allies with numerous other groups in the cluster. Some groups in the cluster are connected to one another via the hub, and the hub may act as an interlocutor between other organizations. This concept is comparable to the idea in business literature of a “strategic block,” which are firms which “are tied to each other more densely” than most businesses and that are embedded at the center of networks (Parkhe 3). It is also analogous to what Michael Horowitz termed “critical nodes” in his work on military innovation, meaning entities that are central to the diffusion of innovations (Horowitz 59). Major state powers often act as alliance hubs in the inter-state realm. For example, during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union both engaged extensively in alliances and operated at the center of broader alliance networks.

This phenomenon—alliance hubs—has also been observed among terrorist organizations, though it has not previously been explicitly identified and studied as such. Following the internationalization of terrorism in 1968, cooperation between terrorist actors across national boundaries flourished to previously unseen levels (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63-80). This collaboration was viewed by some as a state-driven phenomenon, a conspiracy by the Soviet Union
and the allied Communist bloc to coordinate terrorist groups’ efforts against the West (Sterling 13). While the Soviet Union did sponsor some groups, including one of the most influential alliance hubs of the period, it did not direct or manage their relationships (Andrew and Mitrokhin 247-9). Instead, alliance hubs were critical to this enhanced cooperation. In his quantitative examination of terrorist relationships in 1979, the distribution of terrorist relationships led scholar Kent Layne Oots to conclude that there were groups acting as “major powers.” —A small number of groups provided aid and resources to others, primarily those of “similar ideological orientation” (114). Similarly, in his examination of al-Qaida, journalist Jason Burke likened the group’s alliance behavior to a great power. He argued that al-Qaida acted similarly to the United States or Soviet Union during the Cold War in terms of its alliance behavior within the Sunni Islamic militant milieu. It created alliances with groups which had their origins in local conditions, but that also saw the value in partnering with a major terrorist organization (Burke 16). Alliance hubs are essentially the non-state equivalent of a “major power” and are the alliance movers and shakers among terrorist groups. They act as the focal point organizations around which numerous alliances orbit and to which other terrorist groups are drawn. They demonstrate an exceptional ability to work closely with numerous partners and to maintain those relationships.

The distinction being made in this dissertation is analogous to differentiation between great powers, major powers, and weak states’ alliances in some of the international relations literature. Inter-state alliance and conflict theory has been both developed and extensively tested using case studies involving great powers, particularly World War I, World War II, and the Cold War. The alliance choices of great powers, mid- or minor-powers, and weak states have been examined separately as some hypothesize that alliance patterns and decisions differ based on a state’s relative power and position in the international system (for example, see Levy 1981 or Walt Origins of
Alliances 1985 on major power alliances; Handel 1981 on alliances involving weak states). This work takes a similar approach, albeit on a different type of international actor.

The very existence of alliance hubs poses a puzzle in light of the obstacles to cooperative relationships discussed earlier. This is the puzzle that this dissertation seeks to address. Alliances are the exceptions. Generally, terrorist groups struggle to form enduring cooperative relationships due to structural, organizational, and ideological hurdles. Hubs are, in essence, an anomaly of an anomaly; their alliance success defies expectations about the rarity of such partnerships. They are deviant cases and their existence raises a host of questions. How do alliance hubs overcome the hurdles to forging these relationships more readily than most organizations? What motivates them to do so? Why do numerous other organizations accept them or seek them as alliance partners?

From a policy standpoint, alliance hubs have a disproportionate impact on the environment. Alliance hubs' partnerships with other groups increase the overall threat. Alliance ties increase the lethality of the partnering organizations. Organizations with numerous alliance connections, i.e. alliance hubs, are disproportionately lethal, probably in part because these ties provide access to
more knowledge and skills (Asal and Rethmeyer 445). These groups pose a greater and more resilient threat to their adversaries. Alliance hubs share their resources, such as money, expertise, haven, or reputation with multiple other groups, which then have these assets at their disposal and can even share them with other organizations as well. Therefore, in addition to posing a compelling puzzle, understanding this phenomenon has important policy ramifications.

Alliance hubs can operate on a regional level or an international level. A regional-level hub's relationships are primarily with fellow terrorist groups that are concentrated in a geographically contiguous area or grouping of countries with some overarching shared historical, cultural or linguistic qualities. For example, Hizballah has acted as a regional alliance hub in the Middle East, more specifically in the Levant. A regional-level alliance hub often has the advantage of proximity, a common language or shared ethnic identity. A regional hub may have relationships outside of the region, but it serves as a focal point of a regionally-based cluster. An international-level hub's relationships are not centered around any particular region; instead they are transnational, drawing in groups from various states and regions. International hubs are thus seemingly the most difficult to create. Fewer bases for a common identity exist as do linguistic and cultural barriers as well as informational and access hurdles. International hubs are, not surprisingly, quite rare and extremely influential, when they do occur.

Alliances hubs are, by definition, not typical or representative of all terrorist organizations. They are a relatively small population. It is their exceptionality—and impact—that makes them theoretically difficult to explain and an important phenomenon. The factors that stimulate a partnership involving an alliance hub may differ from those that motivate non-hub alliances. Likewise, the factors that perpetuate relationships involving alliance hubs may not be the same as those that determine sustainment in alliances that do not include a hub. Alliance hubs are unique and relatively rare, which may limit the generalizability of their experiences and thus also this
dissertation. Simultaneously, a significant number of relationships have involved at least one alliance hub, so explaining this subset of terrorist relationships is important to understanding a theoretically under-explored and often misunderstood phenomenon. The partnerships cultivated by hubs have been among the most destructive and long-lasting; therefore, gaining a better understanding of what drives them is critical to diminishing the threat and preventing future hubs from emerging.

Ultimately, this dissertation seeks to answer three related research questions involving alliance hubs: first, what drives the presence or absence of an alliance in cases involving an alliance hub? Second, what explains the sustainment and fluctuation over time within a relationship with an alliance hub? Third, what characteristics are common to alliance hubs?

1.6 Moving Beyond Intra-Conflict Relations—International Terrorist Alliances

Within the population of relationships involving alliance hubs, this dissertation examines a subset of cases that are rarely studied in isolation: relationships between terrorist organizations interacting in the international realm where the participating groups are not direct competitors or adversaries within the same conflict. A robust literature examines the behavior of non-state actors within civil wars or operating within a single conflict within state boundaries. The perpetually jockeying of various Afghan factions after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the shifting alliances between Palestinian factions, and the clashes between the Republicans and the Loyalists are well-known examples of competitive or adversarial non-state actor interactions within a conflict. These types of relationships have received both theoretical and empirical attention elsewhere. Instead, this dissertation focuses on a related, but separate dynamic—dyads of terrorist organizations that are not the product of the same conflict, political market, and/or resource base.

*Alliances Among Non-Competitors and Non-Adversaries, i.e. “Distant Dyads”*
Resources among groups that are not competitors or adversaries have a positive-sum value. Because they do not operate in the same political market, non-competitors/non-adversaries can share assets, even members, funds, and safe haven, without the same concerns that doing so will negatively impact their position relative to one another. Gains in prestige or legitimacy benefit a group’s partners in a positive-sum dynamic. Allies can be the representative of their respective causes without threatening one another’s position. To the extent that they share a cause, it is a broader and more general one. For example, non-competitor left-wing groups in the 1970s and 1980s often concentrated their efforts on opposing different states, though they shared the broader cause of “anti-imperialism.” Some element of competition may exist between these groups, especially if they transition from being a distant dyad to a co-located dyad, but overall, non-competitors are not primarily concerned about their position vis-à-vis one another.

This dissertation will examine the alliance behavior of groups operating only in non-competitive dynamics. This distinction is not without precedent. In inter-state relations, states sometimes ally—and go to war—with other states that are not geographically contiguous. These more distant allies are not geographically positioned to threaten as readily as a proximate neighbor; a distant ally’s relative and absolute power gains are less likely to pose a future threat to its partners. Therefore, for “distant dyads,” cooperation is less inhibited by those concerns. Likewise, terrorist organizations can ally with “distant” organizations that are not competitors. The idea of “distant” must be adapted for terrorist groups because, unlike states, these organizations are not geographically fixed so they can move and operate outside of their originating territory.

Alliances Among Competitors

What is the distinction between a competitor and non-competitor? In general, competitor terrorist organizations operate within the same territory and strive to garner resources and support largely from the same constituency and sources. They operate in opposition to the same
adversary government and are sometimes in conflict with one another. In contrast, non-competitors are created in opposition to different foes and/or as part of different conflicts. They do not share the same primary sources of support, recruits, and money and are rarely in conflict with one another.

Alliances between competitors within a common conflict fluctuate based on assessments of a shared landscape. The relationship terrain is constantly shifting due to the fluidity of commitments, defections, betrayals, relationship configuration, and group fracturing. In this environment, one prominent theory predicts that alliances between competitors are tactical and temporary, governed by a desire to capture the maximum spoils with the smallest-winning coalition (Russett 286; Christia 1). In his theory of political coalitions, political scientist William H. Riker argued:

Players will form that grouping which is the smallest winning coalition, that contains just enough power to gain the decision, but no more than is necessary for the purpose... This is attributed to a desire on the part of the potential winners not to spread the winnings out among superfluous partners—the fewer the actors who must be rewarded, the greater the payoff to those who are rewarded (qtd. in Russett 286).

However, the notion of creating alliances to establish the smallest-winning coalitions does not readily apply to non-competitive, international conditions. Riker’s theory provides no insight on how to weigh the relative importance of different partners in creating a minimum-winning coalition in international politics (Russett 286). This theoretical limitation is particularly evident when analyzing the alliance behavior of non-state actors that operate in the anarchical international system, rather than in the hierarchical national realm.

Within a conflict, competition dominates the interaction among participating terrorist groups. As terrorist expert David Rapoport generalized, “(a)rguments about the effectiveness of atrocities are common within a terrorist or revolutionary movement, leading from an original nucleus to a proliferation of competitor organizations” (Inside Terrorist Organizations 15). An
abundance of examples exist of competition between terrorist groups involved in the same primary conflict, such as the historic rivalries between various Tamil factions in Sri Lanka, Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, elements within the Basque nationalist movement in Spain like ETA/M and ETA/PM, and the Shining Path and the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement in Peru (McCormick 488). In these situations, terrorism is not only a tactic to challenge the government; it is also an effort to crowd out one’s political rivals.

In the absence of a monopoly over the “resistance,” rival terrorist organizations maneuver for primacy—sometimes by forming coalitions with a competitor against the adversary government or a fellow rival—and attempt to outbid each other in an ongoing power struggle. Naval postgraduate professor Gordon McCormick explained that “[t]hey frequently compete with each other in radical rivalries for political market share. The currency of this competition is violence, as rival groups jockey for media time and the attention of a more or less fixed base of potential constituents” (488; emphasis added). It is these factors—a common political market share and a mostly fixed base—that create a competitive dynamic among groups. Competition also influences the tactics that groups employ, including the use of suicide attacks (Hoffman The Logic 291). In intensely competitively situations, groups may increase the pace or broaden the scope of their attacks in an effort to gain ascendancy over the movement. This phenomenon was perhaps most clearly demonstrated by the various Palestinian militant groups that conducted suicide attacks beginning in 2000 as a way to not only strike Israel, but also to gain position over rivals and garner recruits in an environment where Palestinian public opinion was supportive of these types of attacks (Bloom Dying to Kill 61).

Competitors seek to acquire their share of resources at the expense one another, thus engaging in cooperation selectively, carefully, and usually temporarily. They treat resources as mutually exclusive because they vie for the same recruits, funds, and territory as well as public
attention and popularity within a finite political market. Each seeks to improve its status vis-à-vis competitors in less tangible realms such as prestige, credibility, legitimacy, and leadership of the community—a struggle to win the hearts and minds of their constituency (Bloom Dying to Kill 27). Competitors strive to be the “true” representative of their population and the cause that they profess to fight for at the expense of one another (Bloom Dying to Kill 19).

*Interactions Between Adversaries*

In addition to the competition-cooperation dynamics that govern relations within a conflict between *rival* organizations, terrorist groups may be *adversaries* with one another within a conflict. Adversary groups do not operate in the same manner as the competition dynamic already discussed. Adversary groups, while part of the same conflict, do not recruit from the same pool, share resource bases, or strive to influence the same constituency. An increase in a group’s power still poses a threat to an adversary organization because they jockey for power advantage and position. Adversary groups typically represent opposite sides of the conflict. One side is usually a vigilante or an unofficial “paramilitary force” that sides with the government and protects the status quo, while the other is a status quo challenger. For example, Protestant Loyalists groups in Northern Ireland, like the Ulster Defense Association, battled the Catholic Republican groups, such as the Irish Republican Army. The two represented different sides in the same conflict. Thus they were not competitors; they were adversaries.

Intra-conflict adversary relationships are not governed by the same positive-sum dynamics experienced by non-competitors in the international realm, so this population is not included in this dissertation. The conditions under which adversary groups would ally—perhaps in the face of a common, external threat—is an interesting theoretical and empirical question, but it is not the focus of this dissertation.
Non-competitor, non-adversarial relations among terrorist groups in the international realm have been insufficiently studied to date. Some quantitative analysis has observed that cooperation among competitors and adversaries has different features, even when there is a shared enemy (Asal, Park, and Rethmeyer 34). This dissertation proceeds under the assumption that alliances between “distant dyads” merit separate examination because these groups do not operate in a zero-sum competition vis-à-vis one another. Instead, there is a positive-sum dynamic as one group can benefit from—or, at a minimum, is not harmed by—a distant ally’s gains without the same exploitation fears that govern a zero-sum relationship. Of the work that has been done on terrorist group cooperation, few have looked exclusively at this set of non-competitor, non-adversary relationships, i.e. “distant dyads” or international terrorist alliances (see Karmon Coalition for a notable exception). Yet these relationships are theoretically challenging to explain and are of significant policy interest.

1.7 Existing Theoretical Frameworks

The factors that motivate the formation and continuation of terrorist groups’ alliances remain simultaneously under theorized and over generalized. The existing literature and prevailing wisdom frequently assume that common enemies or shared ideologies motivate relationships, yet are silent on the many instances when these factors exist, but do not produce an alliance. For example, in a monograph examining technology transfers between terrorist organizations, in the RAND study “Sharing the Dragon’s Teeth,” Cragin et al. justified their selection of three dyadic cases: 1) Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and other Sunni Islamist groups in Southeast Asia; 2) Hizballah and Palestinian militant organizations; and 3) the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC)—as follows:

JI shares an ideological worldview and overarching objective with other Islamist militant groups in Southeast Asia. We therefore expected that JI’s rationale for engaging in
technology exchanges would be ideologically driven. Hizballah and most Palestinian militants, however, derive from different, albeit Islamic, ideologies. With regard to Hizballah’s rationale, we therefore estimated that it would be driven more by its enmity toward Israel than by religious ideology. Finally, we expected that PIRA and FARC would represent the most disparate ideological worldviews, exchanging technologies exclusively for profit.

Their goal was to select relationships that stemmed from different motives to test their theory on technology transfers, but the relationship drivers were assumed post hoc based on certain characteristics, rather than tested or examined. This example is not intended as a criticism of these authors or their work, which was not focused on explaining alliances, but to illustrate the tendency even for scholars to assign the reasons for these relationships, rather than to explore them. Moreover, the processes by which these hypothesized variables produce and sustain an alliance are rarely articulated or posited. What constitutes shared ideologies or enemies is frequently applied in an elastic way, fitted to explain the presence or absence of a partnership on a case-by-case basis with little consistency or predictive accuracy. It is unclear how common enemies should be weighed or what level of ideological compatibility is necessary for organizations to ally. Therefore, in this section, hypothetical processes underlying these theoretical frameworks are outlined in order to elucidate how common enemies and shared ideologies may stimulate and perpetuate alliances as well as produce an alliance hub. For each theoretical framework, corresponding hypotheses about alliance formation, sustainment, and alliance hubs are offered, so that these variables can be tested in the subsequent case studies.

*Balancing against Threat: Is the Enemy of My Enemy My Friend?*

The adage that terrorist organizations work together to fight a common enemy is oft-repeated, but the actual mechanisms operating to produce such an outcome remain underspecified. For example, commenting on the prospects for a relationship between terrorist group heavy weights al-Qaida and Hizbollah, former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East, Paul Pillar, remarked that he “would expect, even with all the distrust and rivalry, they would see ways
in which they could cooperate” (qtd. in Kaplan). Similarly, the FBI concluded that the two groups’
motive to work together briefly in the mid-1990s was a common enemy. An FBI affidavit from the
investigation of the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania reported that “bin
Laden... and other ranking members stated privately that al-Qaida should put aside its differences
with the Shiite Muslim terrorist organizations, including the Government of Iran and its affiliated
terrorist group, Hizballah, to cooperate against the perceived common enemy, the United States and
its allies” (U.S. District Court Southern District of New York 7; emphasis added). Indeed groups with
a shared target have a higher probably of working together (Asal, Park, and Rethmeyer 33). The
assumption implied in this argument is that the common interests derived from a shared enemy
produce an alliance.

In his seminal work on international relations, realist Kenneth Waltz contended that
“[b]alance of power politics will prevail wherever two, and only two, requirements are met: that the
order be anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive” (121). Terrorist groups,
especially the distant dyads examined in this dissertation, operate in an anarchic realm without
central authority, and these organizations desperately seek to survive. Therefore, from a realist
perspective, terrorist organizations, like states, will ally in response to balancing imperatives: the
pursuit of power and security as a means to survive in an anarchic international system. As scholar
Kanisha Bond summed it up in her dissertation on violent non-state actors’ cooperative
arrangements, they “form and join alliances in order to change relative and absolute power
distributions vis-à-vis some common opponent, thereby changing also their probabilities of
survival and/or success in amassing even more security” (13).

Even more than states, terrorist groups’ survival is constantly threatened—or, at a
minimum, they perceive it to be—and they almost always operate at a power deficit compared to
their state enemies. Terrorist groups, therefore, should constantly wish to acquire more power.
They seek ways to compensate for their materiel disadvantage and increase their power relative to their adversaries. Alliances provide a way for groups to increase both their relative and absolute power as a means to achieve their strategic objective—the overthrow of a status quo and defeat of an adversary—and thereby secure their survival (Telhami and Barnett 170; Bond 13). Unlike states, terrorist groups cannot bandwagon with the source of the danger; therefore, they form coalitions with other similarly-situated groups in order to balance against their common foes, aggregate their capabilities, and narrow the power disparity.

Terrorist groups themselves have invoked balancing needs in their statements about alliance decisions, though these are usually couched in ideological language. Underlying bin Laden’s numerous exhortations to Sunni groups to ally with al-Qaida is the argument that it is necessary to do, given the threat from the “Crusader-Zionist” alliance. Al-Qaida has, in this sense, sought to position itself at the center of a countervailing terrorist group alliance to balance against the United States. In its declaration announcing the merger with al-Qaida, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) invoked a balancing rationale to explain its new alliance.

We are glad to inform our Islamic nation and our Muslim brothers around the world about the great news which the mujahedeen have been waiting for… the news of the merging of the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat in Algeria with Al-Qaida, and swearing bayat to the Mujahid Shaykh Abu Abdullah Usama Bin Laden, may Allah protect him... The destruction of war, the difficulty of the present situation, and the unified coalition of our enemies against us make it necessary for us to confront this coalition with our own coalition, their alliance with our alliance, face their unified forces against our unified forces... The United States of America will only be defeated by a United States of Islam... After a long period of careful observation, it became clear to us that our brothers in Al-Qaida organization under the lead of Mujahid Shaykh Usama Bin Laden—may Allah protect him—are the best ones in this era to unify the scattered Muslims against their enemies and to lead them in their present war (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades” 21; emphasis added)

One problem with the general common enemy and balance of power argument is that while many groups share an adversary, most of them do not ally. It is most often invoked to explain alliance behavior post hoc, but it is not a good predictor of partnerships prior to alliance initiation, and it provides little insight into the type of cooperation that allied groups engage in. In the
example of al-Qaida and the GSPC, the conditions invoked by the GSPC existed for many years prior to the alliance formation. Therefore, common enemies alone do not create sufficient interest for groups to initiate an alliance. More specifically, a shared greatest threat may serve as the primary impetus for alliances.

Arguing that Kenneth Waltz' structural account of balance of power was insufficient to explain state alliance behavior, Stephen Walt proposed balance of threat theory to predict state alliance formation in *Origins of Alliances*. Waltz argued that states react to imbalances of power and ally against the most powerful state in the system. In contrast, Walt contended that states create alliances in response to imbalances of threat, when one state is significantly more dangerous than the next most threatening state (*The Origins* 17). Walt asserted that his theory subsumes balance of power theory because he includes power while adding other factors of threat. Threat, according to Walt, is comprised of four components: aggregate power, offensive power, geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions. Aggregate power refers to the total resources of the threatening entity. Offensive power is an entity's capacity to “threaten the vital interests or sovereignty of another at an acceptable cost” (*Walt The Origins* 24). Geographic proximity means that entities that are physically close pose a greater threat than those that are far away. Lastly, entities that are viewed as aggressive will provoke others to balance against them. He theorized that coalitions are formed as an expedient response to a mutual danger (*Walt The Origins* 33).

Walt did not craft his theory with terrorist groups’ or other non-state actors’ alliance behavior in mind, but he and other scholars have applied balance of threat theory in several different domains. In one of a handful of works that has looked specifically at non-competitor terrorist group alliances, Israeli terrorism expert Ely Karmon conducted comparative case study research on the relationships between militant Palestinian organizations and left-wing, nationalist, and right-wing organizations. Using balance of threat theory as his point of departure, Karmon
argued that threat is the predominant cause of these alliances and tested twelve hypotheses across four levels of analysis—international distributions of power, regional alignments, organizational variables, and individual decision-makers. He found support for his overall thesis that terrorist organizations tend to ally in response to a perception of threat (Coalitions 1-20).

Walt noted that “the ability to attract allies is a valuable asset in any competitive system” (The Origins ix). Terrorist organizations operate in a highly competitive system, jockeying with rivals and combating adversary governments. When groups that are not competitors face the same greatest threat, they will form a partnership against it. Terrorist organizations will ally with others that are similarly threatened in order to more effectively balance against the source of the threat and compensate for their relative weakness. In essence, the greater the threat, the higher the probability that threatened entities will seek an alliance against it.

Alliance hubs act as a central force confronting a threat that also concerns numerous other organizations. They are at the core of a coalition formed in response to that threat. However, Walt acknowledges that it is difficult to determine a priori which sources of threat will be most important in any given case.

Balance of Threat Hypotheses:

H_{(Alliance Formation: Threat)} 1.A: Terrorist organizations are motivated to ally with a hub when they face a common, greatest threat.

H_{(Alliance Perpetuation: Threat)} 1.B: Alliances will endure until the threat subsides.

H_{(Alliance Hub: Threat)} 1.C: An alliance hub seeks numerous partners to improve its balancing position vis-à-vis a common threat.

Brothers-in-Arms: Building Ideological Communities

In contrast to the power-based motives posited by common enemy explanations of alliance behavior, the theory that alliances are a function of shared ideology posits a very different driver. Like a common enemy, ideological solidarity is another oft-cited explanation typically offered after
an alliance between two groups of the same ideological disposition occurs. Indeed, many alliances occur between groups with a shared ideology, regardless of ideological orientation (Asal, Park and Rethmeyer 32). From this perspective, alliances are a product of shared belief systems. In essence, terrorist groups with common ideological platforms will be attracted to one another due to their similarities. They will both seek allies and be receptive to allies of the same ideological orientation. Allyng with a group of the same ideological disposition offers a way to validate an organization’s identity, bolster its legitimacy, and may even be prescribed by the ideology (Walt The Origins 35).

As birds of a feather flock together, likeminded groups ally to develop ideologically-based communities and defend their shared principles and ideals (Walt The Origins 34). As Kanisha Bond argued in her work, “[t]his explanation concentrates less on alliance formation in response to a threat, and more on alliance formation as a means for communicating and fostering trust... establishing in-group/out-group identities and codifying stable social neighborhoods” (15).

Ideology is frequently invoked by the terrorist groups’ to explain their alliance decisions. Groups from across the ideological spectrum have framed their alliances in ideological terms, using the language of their ideology. For example, in a joint communiqué, the leftist groups Red Army Faction (RAF) and Action Directe declared that:

the strategy of the Western European guerilla is, by its purpose, a section and function of the international class struggle; and by its practice, the political unity of the communists in Western Europe, the organization of the attack on the totality of the imperialist system, it is the material manifestation of proletarian internationalism required by today’s situation (qtd. in Alexander and Pluchinsky 67).

Similarly, when asked why the GSPC decided to ally with al-Qaida, the GSPC’s leader rejected the idea that balance of power or threat motivated the relationship and responded that:

[j]oining was a legitimate necessity by the book of our God and the sunnah of our prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. It was a mindful necessity imposed by the actual reality and the international system that is full with injustice against the Muslims. Many analysts and observers are mistaken when they think that our joining was a result of secular accounts and self-interests. We are a jihadi ancestral community. We rely on legitimacy
(from religion) before anything else as a base of our decisions (qtd. in “An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal”).

The idea that likeminded units gravitate together is not unique to terrorist organizations. Affiliation theorists have long posited that nations choose allies based on common institutions, cultural and intellectual values, and economic interests, and that alliances between like states are more stable (Holsti et al. 3-5). Democratic peace theory is rooted in part in the notion that similar institutions and shared norms draw democratic countries together, creating a greater propensity to ally, and reducing the likelihood that democratic nations will go to war with one another. Along the same lines, terrorist organizations—which assert that their actions are motivated primarily, if not solely, by ideology—may find a common ideology to be a basis to ally.

Alliance hubs are those groups that hail from an ideology that is shared with multiple other terrorist organizations. They seek likeminded groups as allies. Their formulation of the ideology appeals to and is similar to other organizations. They chooses partners with which they share the most ideological characteristics.

**Ideological Solidarity Hypotheses:**

\[H_{(Alliance\ \text{Formation: Ideology})}\] 2.A: Terrorist groups are drawn together based on the degree of shared ideological tenets.

\[H_{(Alliance\ \text{Perpetuation: Ideology})}\] 2.B: Alliances last as long as the high degree of ideological compatibility endures.

\[H_{(Alliance\ \text{Hub: Ideology})}\] 2.C: An alliance hub seeks partners that share its ideological orientation and many tenets of their ideology.

The idea that common enemies and ideology solidarity predict alliance formation and perpetuation or produce alliance hubs faces a number of shortcomings. First, both suggest that alliances should occur more frequently than they do, as groups seemingly often share ideologies and enemies. They also predict that relationships should form where none exist. Neither can account for the variation in the amount of cooperation among different dyads that share either an
enemy or ideology or why the level of cooperation fluctuates over the course of a relationship. Enemies and ideology do not often shift significantly during most groups’ lifespan, so neither can readily explain the timing or duration of an alliance. Therefore, alternative theories that may supplant these ideas are offered in Chapter Two.

1.8 Conclusion: Policy Implications of this Research

A 2007 RAND study concluded that emerging alliances will increase the terrorist threat to the United States for the next decade (Cragin et al. xiii). Indeed, groups with multiple allies tend to conduct more lethal attacks (Asal and Rethmeyer 445). Attacks conducted by two or more organizations are more likely to result in a higher number of fatalities and injuries to both victims and attackers alike. They are also less likely to end in a negotiated settlement (Oots 92).

Despite the counter-terrorism emphasis placed on these relationships, the United States has had little success severing al-Qaida’s relationships to date. In order to divide these terrorist organizations and prevent future alliances, one must understand what makes alliance hubs such compelling alliance partners. While al-Qaida is often viewed as a unique case, other terrorist organizations have benefitted from extensive alliance networks. Militant Palestinian organizations—especially the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Fatah—cultivated extensive ties with other terrorist organizations in the late 1960s and 1970s, essentially serving as the pioneers of international terrorist organizations’ partnerships (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 71). During this period, relationships flourished to the point that some speculated that an international terrorist organization network must exist under the direction, or at least support, of the Soviet Union (Sterling 13). By 1992, terrorism experts Yonah Alexander and Dennis Pluchinsky asserted that the “[e]xperience over the past two decades has shown that terrorist groups thrive on collaboration across national boundaries...The informal and formal relationships
among various terrorist groups and state sponsors results in a machinery for terror on a national, regional and global framework” (8). Therefore, clearly conditions exist that cross time, geography, and international conditions to produce constellations of relationships revolving around hubs. Having set the groundwork of the puzzle to be explored and the existing theoretical frameworks, the next chapter will offer alternative theoretical frameworks and independent variables that may function as part of the causal pathways leading to an alliance.
CHAPTER 2:

ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Introduction

The existing theories discussed in Chapter 1 that ideological solidarity or common enemies motivate terrorist group alliances are, at best, incomplete and underspecified, and at worst, incorrect and misleading. This strongly suggests that there are unidentified causal factors at work or that the existing theories do not fully capture how these variables operate. The most glaring deficiency of these theories is their failure to account for the organizations themselves. While committed to a political purpose, terrorist groups, like other organizations, seek their own survival and organizational health. Organizational prerogatives often dictate a significant amount of many groups’ behavior and thus may influence alliance decisions. In particular, organizational learning needs and adaptation requirements that cannot be addressed through self-reform may precipitate alliance formation and influence alliance sustainment. Alliance hubs would be those organizations well positioned to fill other groups’ organizational learning and adaptation needs, but which also have needs that can be addressed through alliances.

This hypothesized role of organizational needs does not preclude the possibility that ideology and enemies are factors as well. The conventional wisdom that ideological solidarity and common enemies motivate alliances may mis-specify how these variables function. An alternative, drawn from the constructivist literature on state alliance behavior, is that both ideology and enemies play a role in alliances through identity; groups’ ideologies and their enemy narratives act as identity features that condition and shape groups’ alliance choices and decisions throughout the process. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that allied groups frequently share an ideology and/or an enemy, but these variables are not the causal factors driving the alliance process. In addition to these two theoretical frameworks, trust may act as a critical intervening variable in alliance
relationships. Trust alone is not sufficient to produce alliances, but it is necessary in order for alliances both to form and to sustain.

This dissertation will test and compare the influence of four variables—common threat, shared ideology, as discussed in Chapter 1, as well as organizational needs and identity compatibility theories, which are the subject of this chapter—on alliance creation, alliance sustainment, and alliance hubs’ position. Terrorist groups function in complex environments where many of these variables operate simultaneously, interact, and may exert influence at different points in the alliance process. Therefore, these independent variables are not necessarily narrowly competing explanations of what drive terrorists’ partnerships. Mono-causal explanations quickly run into problems accounting for the diverse empirical record and the varied phases these partnerships undergo. Some sequence of variables may produce certain types of alliances of a specific duration, while another may cause another type of a different duration. Because of the complexity of determining causality, qualitative methods are best suited to examine this phenomenon.

This theoretical chapter consists of five sections. The first section highlights how organizational dynamics, particularly learning and adaptation requirements, shape terrorist groups’ alliance behavior and provides hypotheses about how those forces influence alliance initiation and perpetuation. Then the influence of identity and affinity on alliance hubs’ relationships are examined along with an alternative theoretical explanation to the idea that shared ideologies and enemies motivates partnerships. The third section discusses the importance of trust as an intervening variable that is essential for coalitions to both form and endure. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the qualitative methodology to be used; in-depth case studies and process tracing, which are the most appropriate methods to elucidate the dynamic pathways and
relative influence of the variables that lead to alliance creation and perpetuation in this theory-building dissertation.

2.2 Alliances as a Response to Organizational Needs

Arguments that attribute terrorist groups’ alliances primarily to a common enemy or threat assume that groups seek partners in order to fulfill broader strategic aims. However, they do not account for the fact that terrorist groups see themselves as the essential engine to achieving their objectives. As a result, groups’ behavior, including their alliances, may not be solely, or even primarily, motivated by their political or ideological goals, but by internal organizational considerations. Terrorist groups may seek alliances in order to respond to changes either in the environment or within the organization, sometimes in ways that are not tied to their ultimate aims, but are deemed necessary for organizational survival or prosperity. Alliances are thus primarily a response to real or perceived organizational weakness and vulnerabilities. When groups are unable to fulfill the emerging organizational needs on their own or believe they can do so more expediently through an alliance, they look for partners that they believe have the knowledge, skills or assets they seek. Hubs are such organizations.

Terrorist Groups are Organizations Too

Juxtaposing an organizational perspective with an instrumental approach, Martha Crenshaw explained that from an organizational theory perspective, “[t]errorism is the outcome of the internal dynamics of the organization, a decision-making process that links collectively held values and goals to perceptions of the environment” (“An Organizational Approach” 473). Gordon McCormick similarly argued that:

An organizational model suggests that much of what terrorists do on the outside can only be understood by looking inside the group itself. A terrorist organization is not a black box but a living system, subject to a range of influences that may be only tangentially related to its stated strategic objectives.... What is of particular interest in this case is that terrorist
groups, as violent underground organizations, possess certain structural features that make the organizational line of analysis especially productive (486).

All organizations have the same general goals: health in terms of size, wealth, and power (Perrow 369). At a fundamental level, organizations want to secure their own existence and to maintain themselves. Terrorist groups, like other organizations, seek to survive, but their ambitions far exceed such modest aspirations (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 473). They wish to precipitate radical transformation in society and rely on violence as an essential tool to achieve that change (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 466). Their survival is always threatened by implacable foes, so they must constantly remain vigilant.

By their very nature, terrorist groups are forced to negotiate a constant tension: a bias towards action and a need to preserve their existence (McCormick 487). This perpetual desire for action, especially when it becomes necessary for internal satisfaction, often devolves into an organizational pathology, known as “goal displacement” (Sagan 72). A group’s activities and attacks become less connected to its political aims and more about affirming the organization’s viability in order to satisfy existing members and draw in new ones. Essentially, the means by which the group seeks to achieve change and the perpetuation of the group become an end onto itself, irrespective of their actual efficacy in achieving broader strategic aims (as cited in Crenshaw ”Theories of Terrorism” 18). The need to preserve the group thereby becomes the primary determinant of an organization’s choices and behavior (McCormick 490; Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 480). Crenshaw argued that “[t]he longer a terrorist organization exists, the more likely that group solidarity will replace political purpose as the dominant incentive for members” (“An Organizational Approach” 473). This also explains why groups persist even after many of their goals have ostensibly been accomplished or when their demands are no longer relevant to the environment (“An Organizational Approach” 480). Only ten percent of groups end because they
actually achieve their goals, even fairly circumscribed versions of their objectives (Zartman and Touval 57).

In addition, despite terrorist groups’ tendency to emphasize ideology and strategic considerations, not all members join or stay in the organization solely, or even primarily, for ideological reasons (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 474). They are also attracted to the group for incentives like the desire for status, a sense of belonging, existing friendships, excitement or even the prospect of material gain (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 473). Members are committed to their charismatic leader who commands their loyalty. Leaders’ grandiose ambitions are inextricably linked to the viability of the groups they lead (Crenshaw “Theories of Terrorism” 19). Followers’ sense of accomplishment comes to depend more on the organization's well-being than the group's success in achieving its political goals. Moreover, terrorist organizations foster a strong sense of intra-group dependency—an organizational bond that is solidified over time by the isolation, hazards, and liabilities of being a clandestine and violent entity (McCormick 489). The value of group membership and the centrality of intra-group relationships increase over time, especially when groups have gone underground and members have severed their ties with the outside world (McCormick 486).

Like all organizations, in response to persistent uncertainty, terrorist groups employ simplifying decision-making mechanisms; but as clandestine, insular, and violent entities at a distinct disadvantage to their enemies, terrorist organizations sometimes take this process to the extreme (McCormick 487). They rely on existing filters and satisficing mechanisms, which can become outdated or inapplicable if they are not consistently re-evaluated. Solutions that have worked in the past can be applied uncritically to present problems. Organizational knowledge is translated into rules and routines, which are the product of efforts to translate past experience into methods that will accomplish goals, resolve inconsistencies, and interpret their environment. These
are then converted into an organizational memory that current members draw from and pass on to future members (Jackson 3).

These tendencies then become ingrained in groups’ organizational culture. In her study of French military doctrine before World War II, Elizabeth Kier defined organizational culture as “the set of basic assumptions, values, norms, beliefs and formal knowledge that shape collective understanding” (202). Organizational culture “shapes its members’ perceptions and affects what they notice and how they interpret it; its screens out some parts of reality while magnifying others” (Kier 202). Organizational culture shapes decision-making processes, making certain courses of actions more or less likely. Kier observed that organizational culture is carefully cultivated in military organizations, which devote significant resources to the assimilation of their members (203). In this respect, terrorist organizations are similar to military organizations; both place a premium on loyalty and obedience.

Alliances thus must be seen as advantageous to organizational survival and health, incorporated into rules, routines, and memories, and organizations’ cultures. These tendencies do not explain what would precipitate alliances so that groups can develop the requisite routines, culture, and openness. If organizational dynamics are central to groups’ behavior, what stimulates an alliance? One prominent business management textbook cited over a dozen reasons that companies form alliances (Koza and Lewin 146). A comparable number of reasons exist to explain terrorist group relationships. What these reasons often have in common is that they stem from organizational needs. The overarching driver motivating inter-firm alliances was a need to facilitate organizational learning and development by acquiring or accessing knowledge and resources from another company in order to remain competitive in both the prevailing and the anticipated market conditions (Grant and Baden-Fuller 62). Similarly, terrorist organizations must maintain a knowledge, skill, and resource base appropriate to operate in their environment in order to survive
and remain competitive. Survival is necessary in order to achieve their strategic goals, but it often becomes an end onto itself for terrorist organizations. Therefore, organizational learning needs and organizational adaption requirements may instigate an alliance, particularly when they cannot be readily addressed through self-reform.

*Organizational Learning and Adaptation*

Organizations must continually question, verify, and re-define how they interact with their environments. An organization’s failure to align itself with its environmental conditions is a major source of instability and decline (Miles, Snow, Meyer, and Coleman 558). Conversely, the ability to learn, anticipate, and adapt to changes is essential to organizational longevity and prosperity. Organizations that are appropriately aligned with their environment are able to be more competitive, effective, and innovative (Fiol and Lyles 804).

Organizational learning and adaptation occur throughout a group’s lifespan as it continuously interacts with its environment. What constitutes organizational learning? In their article on the topic, organizational theorists Marlene Fiol and Marjorie Lyles defined it as “[t]he development of insights, knowledge, and association between past actions, the effectiveness of those actions, and future actions” (811). Terrorism scholar Brian Jackson described organizational learning as “a process through which members of a group acquire new knowledge that can be applied in strategic decision-making, tactical planning or design, and operational activities” (Jackson 3). As Jackson’s definition suggests, terrorist groups have a collective knowledge base that ranges from their strategic and philosophical understanding of the problems that gave rise to their struggle to tactical requirements for operations and day-to-day conduct (Jackson 7). The closely-related process of organizational adaptation refers to groups’ “ability to make adjustments as a result of environmental changes, goal structure changes, or other changes” (Fiol and Lyles 811).
Discrepancies between a group's knowledge and resource base and its environment generate a need for organizational learning and adaptation. This disconnect can occur at any point along the knowledge and resource spectrum. Alliances are a way for groups to bridge these gaps. For example, perhaps the most damaging to an organization’s health is a discrepancy between a group’s rationale for violence and its current environment. An ally can sometimes offer a related cause with greater resonance for a group to pursue to justify its continued existence. Incongruities between a group’s tactics and the counter-measures used by an adversary government are another frequent, and potentially serious, situation that requires organizational learning and adaptation. A partner can train a group in a new skill or technique to employ. Something as simple as the inability to acquire and use weapons that will be effective against the adversary requires organizational adaptation. An allied group can assist in the acquisition of the appropriate weapons. Left unaddressed, deficiencies lead to decline. At these junctures, groups have a choice about whether to continue without addressing these shortfalls, undertake self-reform, or seek an alliance. Therefore, organizational needs stimulate alliances; in particular alliances are apt to occur in response to organizational and environmental changes that render a group’s existing knowledge and resources inadequate.

**Organizational Needs During Periods of Change**

Learning and adaptive needs are most pronounced during periods of intense change, namely when: 1) a group is relatively young; 2) recovering from a major crisis; and 3) the environment is changing swiftly or in unanticipated ways (Miles et al. 549). Therefore, these are also times when learning and adaptation challenges may spur a group to seek an alliance for two reasons. First, a group may recognize that the gap between its knowledge and its environment is significant and growing, to the point that the group cannot address it on its own. Second, a group
may acknowledge that the need to adapt and learn is particularly acute or urgent and, therefore, the process must be accelerated through cooperation.

**Organizational Age**

First, organizational age affects organizational learning and adaptation processes and, by extension, alliance propensity at various points. The impact is particularly significant early in a group’s existence because it is both a time of intense learning and adaptation and a formative period for a group's development of problem-solving routines that will be applied later on. The discrepancy between a group's knowledge and its environment is likely to be both acute and substantial early in a terrorist group's lifespan.

Organizations often transition to terrorism after attempting non-violent strategies to redress their grievances and have little experience employing violence. Therefore, they may lack the requisite skills and resources needed to simultaneously conduct terrorism, maintain security, and protect themselves from adversaries. At the same time, at a young organizational age, groups tend to be both responsive to their environment and sensitive to their shortfalls, and more receptive to ways to redress those (Crenshaw Theories of Terrorism 21). Thus when they are unable to self-reform, they may seek an alliance.

However, young groups’ ability to forge relationships will be inhibited. They need partners with certain skills, experience, and resources, but developing organizations are often unable to reciprocate and fulfill the needs of groups that would consider them as an ally. Therefore, they are not necessarily a desirable ally from another group's perspective, unless they have other attributes that are in demand. This may explain in part why newly-minted groups do not often forge alliances, even though they could benefit from them (Asal, Rethmeyer, and Park 33). This may also contribute to terrorist organizations’ low survival rate in their first year, which is estimated to be around ten percent (Rapoport *Inside 100*).
Conversely, as organizations mature, they tend to become less flexible and more resistant to change (Horowitz “Nonstate Actors” 37). This tendency impacts alliance propensity in two ways. First, older organizations may be slower to recognize their misalignment with the environment. If they do not recognize their deficiencies, it is unlikely they will seek out allies to address them. Second, if groups do not have exposure to alliances early in their lifespan, when routines and frames are being embedded, they will be less likely recognize their utility later on.

On the other hand, groups that forged partnerships early in their lifespan are more apt to incorporate these relationships into their rules and routines as a viable solution to learning and adaptation challenges. These organizations will be more likely to pursue further cooperation or create new alliances in the future. This is one reason, for example, that many groups that participated in the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan during their formative period continued to cooperate with other organizations in the Sunni jihadist milieu. Due to their early exposure to alliances and cooperation, they recognized the utility of these relationships and included such partnerships in their organizational frames.

Recovering from a Crisis

Groups that survive over the long term must be resilient and have the ability to recover from setbacks and disruptions. They must cope with personnel loss and turnover. For example, adversary governments inflict severe blows through arrests and targeted killings, sometimes in quick succession. As a result, organizational age is not simply the tally of the number of years a group has existed; rather it is re-set by major changes to the group. This idea is not exclusive to terrorist organizations. In his study of the diffusion of military power, Michael Horowitz calculated militaries’ organizational age based on the number of years that had lapsed since a regime change or a major war in which the state lost (“Nonstate Actors” 39). Similarly, terrorist organizations’ ages can be effectively “re-set” by significant defeats, particularly those that involve either the sizeable
loss of organizational knowledge, memory, and resources or those that discredit existing organizational routines and frames. During rebuilding phases, organizational routines, frames, processes, and cultures are re-invented, or at least re-evaluated. Therefore, terrorist groups are more likely to pursue alliances during periods when they are repairing the loss of knowledge, skills, and resources and are once again, effectively a young organization. Groups may be better positioned to create partnerships at this point than at their initial inception because they are more likely to have established a reputation, assets, and connections.

One of the more serious disruptions a terrorist group can experience is the loss of its leader. Organizations are limited in their adaptive behavior to those options that leaders believe will allow the effective direction and control of personnel (Miles et al. 547). This tendency is perhaps even more pronounced in terrorist groups, where leaders are often charismatic entrepreneurs who engender high levels of loyalty from their followers (Crenshaw “Theories of Terrorism” 21). New leaders come into the position with their own problem-solving techniques and decision-making processes. Therefore, groups that have recently experienced a leadership change and are grappling with the corresponding learning and adaptation challenges may be receptive to alliances to assist in this process, even if they were not in the past.

Changes to the Environment

Thus far, the changes discussed focused largely on shocks within the organization: its formation and recovery. However, exogenous factors in the environment can render a group’s knowledge base irrelevant or seriously deficient. Generally, this occurs when the environment is changing rapidly or in unanticipated ways. An adversary government’s capability can increase or it can enact new measures that stymie a group’s existing procedures. For example, adversary governments can acquire new technologies that significantly improve their detection, denial, and disruption capabilities. Changes in governments’ policies can have a similar effect. An escalation of
government pressure or new offensive can degrade a group’s operational space to the point that it is unsafe to remain in country and the group is forced to find an external haven or risk defeat. This compulsory adaptation can stimulate outreach to potential allies. Other alterations to the environment can involve a change in regime, unanticipated revolutions or other political developments that have a bearing on the groups’ grievances and ultimately bring into question the legitimacy and relevancy of the group. High levels of uncertainty about future requirements may stimulate alliances as a means to access and acquire knowledge to adapt the environment (Grant and Baden-Fuller 75).

Recognizing the Need for an Alliance

In the case of all of these challenges, a group must first identify the deficiencies that exist and then determine what is required to effectively respond to these changes. In some cases, groups will fail to recognize the need for adjustments or incorrectly diagnose its ailments. The organization’s efficacy, health, and viability will suffer, which may even precipitate the group’s demise. When a group does recognize the need for change, it has leeway and choice about how to respond. Self-reform is often more desirable than a new alliance because it poses fewer risks. However, a group may not have the ability to undertake the requisite reforms on its own, which can instigate the search for an ally. Or a group may recognize that it can more effectively and expediently make adjustments through cooperation with another organization that possesses the desired skills, resources or knowledge than to undertake the effort on its own. These two scenarios create openings for alliances. Even then, it is also possible that the searching group will not identify an appropriate ally to fulfill its need.

The Role of Organizational Needs in Alliance Sustainment
Once an alliance is initiated, the perpetuation of the alliance is related to two organizational factors. The first is the type of need that the partnering groups seek to address. The second is the degree of fit between their respective organizational needs.

First, the type of learning need is important because knowledge and resources vary in their transferability (Grant and Baden-Fuller 66). Organizational learning and adaptation needs can be broken down generally into two categories: discrete and continuous. A discrete need can be fulfilled through relatively straightforward exchanges. It usually involves the transfer of fairly simple knowledge, skills, or resources. Adapting RAND scholars Kim Cragin, Peter Chalk, Sara Daly, and Brian Jackson’s typology of technology transfers between terrorist organizations, discrete learning needs involve explicit knowledge or simple skills that are: 1) easily teachable and observable; 2) general in purpose; and 3) easily aggregated (14). Continuous organizational needs are those that deal with tacit knowledge and complex skills that require: 1) in-depth instruction that is not easily observable; 2) specialized knowledge; 3) integration into a broader system; and 4) idiosyncratic adoption (14). Absent other factors, alliances designed to fulfill discrete needs will produce lower levels of inter-dependence and thus relationships of shorter duration, whereas alliances that are addressing continuous needs will have a longer life span and foster greater levels of inter-dependence.

The second factor that impacts the type of alliance created is the degree of fit between the partnering groups’ organizational needs and expectations (Grant and Baden-Fuller 70). If an ally is unable to fulfill the learning requirement of its partner or cannot meaningfully reciprocate for the assistance it has received, the alliance will probably not be sustainable or create significant inter-dependence. In addition, if the partners have incompatible expectations for what the alliance will produce, the relationship will suffer accordingly (Koza and Lewin 148). There are other reasons why groups may not be a good fit for one another, including cultural or personality clashes,
ideological disagreements, and mistrust. These are important facets of the overall "fit" of the relationship. From a narrow organizational perspective, the extent to which allying groups' have complementary knowledge, skills, resources, as well as shared expectations are the primarily determinants of fit.

Organizational theory offers an alternative explanation for the cooperation between al-Qaida and Hizballah during the 1990s. Rather than the relationship being a product of a shared enemy, it was the result of organizational needs. At the time when al-Qaida went to train with Hizballah in Lebanon, it had not yet conducted any of its own operations. Hizballah, recognized as a highly accomplished and experienced organization and an alliance hub in its own right, had a haven that it could use to conduct training in operational skills. The learning need that al-Qaida sought to fill through cooperation with Hizballah—how to conduct suicide attacks—was a discrete skill that was easily teachable, general in purpose, and readily aggregated. Once this need was fulfilled, the relationship did not sustain as there were no further needs that the two groups were readily positioned to fulfill for one another. In contrast, a common enemy offers no insight into why the cooperation ceased relatively quickly. The common enemy persisted, yet the two groups have not worked together since al-Qaida was a young organization with a specific need.

*Alliance Hubs as a Product and Provider of Organizational Needs*

From an organizational perspective, alliance hubs are groups that are well positioned to help fulfill other organizations’ needs and have ongoing needs that are filled through alliances. They have knowledge, skills, and assets that are in demand by other organizations in the prevailing conditions, so they are regularly sought out for partnerships. Alliance hubs integrate these relationships into their organizational frames, routines, memories, and culture as a critical part of their organizational processes. Alliance hubs have ongoing or regular organizational requirements that they use allies to fulfill and when new needs arise, they use alliances to address them. These
groups are also adept at anticipating how allies can assist with their organizational learning or adaption needs.

**Organizational Needs Hypotheses:**

H (Alliance Formation: Organization) 3.A: Groups seek alliances to address organizational learning and adaptation requirements; they look for partners that they believe can fulfill these needs.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Organization) 3.B: The duration of the relationship is based on the type of organizational needs being addressed and the ability of the allying groups to fulfill each other’s respective needs.

H (Alliance Hub: Organization) 3.C: An alliance hub has both the ability to fulfill other groups’ organizational learning and adaptation needs as well as its own organizational needs that are fulfilled by alliances.

### 2.3 Ideational Factors and Identity: Brothers-in-Arms

The conventional wisdom that terrorist groups ally together when they share a common ideology posits that ideational factors exert not only independent influence, but are the central motive for the relationship. Alliances between groups that share ideological features are often attributed to “ideological solidarity.” This stands in contrast to instrumental theories, which tend to subordinate ideational factors to material interests. However, instead of acting as the primary casual factor or being relegated to a tertiary role, ideational factors, particularly identity, may shape alliances throughout the process. Constructivist scholars have argued that ideational factors play such a role in state alliance behavior. They maintain that identity plays a critical—and frequently overlooked—role in alliance formation and continuation. Constructivist scholar Michael Barnett argued that “a ‘natural’ security partner cannot be derived from material forces alone, for the degree of naturalness is highly dependent on familiarity and identity” (410).

For terrorist organizations in particular, identity plays a vital role in ensuring organizational loyalty and cohesion as well as defining the group’s mission. Identity refers to “the understanding of oneself in relationship to others” (Telhami and Barnett183). Collective identity
has both an internal and an external component; it is both what binds the group together and what situates it with respect to others. Collective identity provides a “set of norms and narratives that sustain “we-ness” through time” (Snow 3; Banchoff 268). Such a shared identity is the lifeblood of terrorist groups. Psychologist Jerrold Post argued that, for terrorist organizations, “the importance of collective identity and the process of forming and transforming collective identities cannot be overemphasized” (8).

Moreover, identity conditions both what options leaders can entertain and what their followers will accept, including alliances and alliance partners (Telhami and Barnett 7). Once again, drawing on the example of the al-Qaida’s cooperation with Hizballah cooperation in the 1990s, one reason that the groups did not maintain a relationship after the stimulating need was fulfilled may be that there was insufficient identity affinity. Such ideational factors influence decisions throughout the alliance process, including partner selection, and alliance maintenance.

**Components of Identity for Terrorist Groups**

Identities are multi-dimensional, and thus there are several components of terrorist organizations’ identities shape their alliance behavior. The most obvious and, arguably, the most important is ideology. Other facets of identity, including ethnicity and enemy and victim narratives, may also impact the level of affinity between two groups. This is not a comprehensive list of the factors that constitute an identity, but these are salient identity features that may impact alliances.

**Ideology**

Ideology provides both the historical narrative and future vision that binds terrorist organizations together. It shapes their collective beliefs, values, principals, and objectives (Drake 54). Terrorism expert Daniel Byman described the role of ideology in terrorist organizations as explaining “the world’s conditions and offering a blueprint for action. Ideology helps individuals formulate, consider and respond to political problems” (*Deadly Connections* 41). In her analysis of
left-wing terrorism in Italy, Donatella della Porta similarly found that "[i]deologies operate as facilitating factors, resources or constraints in the formation of actors and in their definition of strategies" (122). Ideology serves as a lens through which groups view and interpret their environment. Moreover, terrorism scholar Mark Sedgwick argued that ideology is what differentiates terrorists from many other criminals or violent actors:

A radical ideology is indisputably an essential ingredient in producing terrorism. To state the obvious, a terrorist without ideological motivation would, by most definitions, be either an ordinary criminal or mentally ill.... Ideology is more important as a determinant of what a group stands for than as a determinant of what a group stands against (99).

Terrorist organizations' ideologies are generally classified as anarchic, left-wing, right-wing, religious, single issue, and ethno-nationalist/separatist. However, these ideological categories are not mutually exclusive. While groups are often identified as one of these types based on their primary orientation, they may also have other ideological characteristics. An ethno-nationalist organization can, for example, be left-wing or right-wing in its vision of how its sought-after independent state would be governed. Alternatively, an ethno-nationalist organization may be primarily comprised of members of a certain religious orientation. Conversely, religiously-motivated groups can have nationalist or separatist aspirations. The emphasis on one aspect of the ideology can give way to another over time. Consequently, there are second- and sometimes third-level political, religious or cultural characteristics that shape terrorist organizations' ideologies, and by extension, also their identities.

Terrorist groups use their ideology to reduce the information required to act and to simplify the environment (della Porta 122). An ideological platform helps groups to readily divide the world into dichotomous categories of “us” versus “them.” These binary categories reinforce in-group solidarity and identities (Borum 41). They also inform friend-enemy distinctions, including determinations of who is a potential ally and who is an unacceptable partner (della Porta 149).
However, the way ideology tangibly impacts groups’ behavior and decisions is less clear. In his examination of terrorist groups’ targeting choices, C.J.M. Drake assessed that ideology played a central role in groups’ operational decisions and their definitions of acceptable targets (76). Ideology supplied the “motive for action and... allows terrorists to justify their violence by displacing the responsibility onto either their victims or other actors, whom in ideological terms they hold responsible for the state of affairs which the terrorists claim led them to adopt violence” (53). While ideology was an important consideration, Drake found that it was difficult to concretely predict how groups’ ideologies would translate into attacks because groups weighed other factors in addition to their ideologies. For example, some groups refrained from striking targets that could provoke the disapproval of key constituencies, even though their ideology theoretically permitted—or even encouraged—such actions. Other groups stretched the limits of their ideology in order to adjust to their security environment. Groups even used ideological justifications to explain attacks post facto even when the result differed significantly from the intended outcome. Organizations with seemingly common ideological viewpoints exhibited different targeting preferences and restrictions (76). Overall, Drake argued that ideology set the parameters of groups’ violence. However, organizations define those parameters differently—even when they shared an overarching ideology—and they sometimes violate their own ideological tenets and then revised them in order to accommodate those acts.

This variation in ideological parameters is a consequence of the fact that ideologies do not come neatly pre-packaged to fit all circumstances. Instead, groups act as the interpreter and filter of their ideologies and adapt them to their conditions (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 471). Even groups with the same overarching ideology will not agree on all facets of their beliefs. They may, in fact, take great exception to differences that seem trivial to outsiders. Therefore, this hypothesized identity affinity criterion is influenced by three factors.
First, each group remains the final arbiter of its ideology and the ideological affinity judgment. It is not a hard and fast standard neatly and uniformly applied by all groups, i.e. left-wing groups do not neatly categorize other groups as left-wing, right-wing or religious and then ally only with other left-wing groups. Terrorist groups sometimes exhibit an idiosyncratic approach to their determinations of ideological affinity, as they do with their ideological platforms. They demonstrate an eclectic approach to crafting their ideology, selecting ideological tenets from various sources and then adapting them to their circumstances (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 471). Therefore, their notions of ideological affinity will reflect these tendencies.

The rigidity of a group’s ideological disposition is the second factor that impacts its propensity to find partners that meet the threshold for ideological affinity. Groups with more flexible or vaguely-defined ideological principles will have less stringent thresholds than those with narrow, rigorous viewpoints (Crenshaw “An Organizational Approach” 471). Crenshaw credited the Montenero’s success in creating alliances to its nimble ideological stance (“An Organizational Approach” 471). Groups with more elastic ideological platforms will emphasize different facets of their ideology over time and, therefore, their ideological affinity criteria will shift to reflect these changes. Groups with highly rigid ideological views are more likely to experience irreconcilable differences with prospective allies.

The final factor that influences the potential for a group to find partners of sufficient ideological affinity to be considered as an ally is the composition of the overall ideological landscape. Terrorist groups’ ideologies tend to coincide with the “prevailing radical ideologies of the time” (Sedgwick 99). Groups adhering to the salient ideologies of the day will have more potential alliance options that could satisfy an identity affinity criterion. Those groups will have the luxury of setting a higher threshold for what qualifies as sufficient ideological affinity or select among more options. Organizations with few ideological brethren will be harder pressed to find
sufficient commonalities to initiate an alliance or may rely on a facet of their ideology with greater resonance as a main determinant of ideological affinity. For example, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda adheres to a highly idiosyncratic and rigid interpretation of Christianity. No other groups share its core ideological beliefs, which may be one of the reasons why the Lord's Resistance Army has not forged relationships with other terrorist groups.

While ideology is a central feature of a terrorist group's identity, other characteristics shape terrorist group's identity that can also contribute to a sense of or lack of identity affinity between two groups. Depending on the context, these identity traits can be vital to groups' sense of identity affinity or they can play a more supplemental role. While this list is not exhaustive, other characteristics that can exert influence over perceptions of affinity and the ability to construct a shared identity include ethnicity and enemy and victim narratives.

**Ethnicity**

Ethnicity has often been examined as a source of tension and conflict. Ethnicity refers to “a group of people bound together by a belief of common heritage and group distinctiveness, often reinforced by religion, perceived kinship ties, language and history” (Byman “Immoral Majorities” 1). Scholars have argued that strong ethnic identities are a likely source of rebellion and tend to make conflicts more intractable (see for example, Connor 1994). Some terrorist groups are motivated by ethnic-based grievances or claims. Others have downplayed the importance of ethnicity in conflict. James Fearon and David Laitin maintain that once income is accounted for, ethnic diversity and fractionalization are no longer a significant cause of conflict (75). Irrespective of its role in spurring conflict, ethnicity can be a source of cooperation and identity affinity among terrorist groups.

Overarching ethnic identities that transcend national boundaries may serve as a basis for a sense of ethnic affinity. Examples include identities such as Arab, European, Latin, Asian, and
African. These are not often the primary identity for a group. Groups that have a strong ethnic basis or are motivated by ethnic-based grievances are less likely to experience affinity based on ethnic identities. Organizations with the same narrowly-defined, localized ethnic group are often competitors. Therefore, ethnic affinity is more likely to play a reinforcing role than a primary one in creating a sense of overall identity affinity or crafting a subsequent shared identity. The importance of ethnic affinity increases when it is accompanied by a common language, which eliminates an important barrier to developing shared understandings. Byman argued that “[t]hrough language such vital identity components as history, national myths and politics are formulated, maintained and crafted” (Byman “The Logic” 154).

The role of ethnic affinity is potentially discernible in some of al-Qaida’s current alliances. For example, while ethnic affinity is not the primary basis for shared identity, it is probably not a coincidence that of al-Qaida’s dozens of allies, the ones that have publicly proclaimed an alliance and adopted the al-Qaida moniker have an Arab ethnic identity. While al-Qaida may have closer relationships and more frequent cooperation with Pakistan groups with which it is co-located in Pakistan, only its Arab partners have subordinated themselves publicly to al-Qaida. Overall, a shared ethnicity can bolster the sense of affinity between partnering organizations at the point of alliance initiation and then be part of a foundation of a shared identity that supports alliance perpetuation.

**Enemy and Victim Narratives**

Another facet of a group’s identity is its narrative that constructs its enemy and identifies the victims. The enemy and victim narrative explains why the enemy is the enemy, who the victims are, and the plight of the people the group purports to represent. The same enemy can be described in different terms at various times in order for the narrative to remain salient in the current environment and accord with the perceived disposition of groups’ constituencies. For example,
Italian leftists conceived their enemy as “fascists” in the early 1970s, but shifted to describing its nemesis as “social democracy” as the decade wore on (della Porta 133).

Significant overlap in groups’ narratives can create a sense of identity affinity between two groups. It is not, therefore, the materiel interests derived from having a common enemy that stimulate the partnership; the affinity that is produced when a shared construction of that enemy or a common narrative of victimization exists plays an important role in enabling the alliance. For example, some attribute the close ties between the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia and the PFLP to not only their shared Marxist ideology, but also to a sense of affinity that was rooted in a common narratives that they were representatives of people who shared the plight of forced exile from their homeland and neglect by the international community (Corsun 2011; Kurz and Merari 16-8). When there is a common construction of the enemy and the sources of victimization, there is a corresponding shared interpretation of the other—“them”—which also engenders a corresponding sense of “us.”

However, this can also be a source of tension, if important disagreements about these interpretations occur. Embedded within these narratives are general parameters of who constitutes an acceptable target. Therefore, groups that share many identity traits can differ in their assessments of who constitutes the enemy in ways that can derail a relationship. For example, if one group designates a government as an enemy—and thus a valid target—while a potential ally views that same government as a friend or ally, this divergence in the construction of the enemy can impede an alliance.

Identity and Alliance Formation

When seeking an alliance, identity influences partner preferences, though identity alone is not the impetus for an alliance. Identity affinity is a criteria used to determine the worthiness and desirability of a prospective partner. Groups with shared identity qualities tend to view one another
as more desirable partner choices. Identity conditions thinking such that a group seeking an alliance will limit its search to other organizations with which it shares identity affinity. Identity delineates the boundaries of acceptable alliance partners and provides a standard to evaluate potential partners (Barnett 410). Affinity refers to a sense of mutual identification among groups based on shared identity traits. Affinity is weighed, either consciously or unconsciously, by both groups when they are deciding whether to enter into an alliance. In essence, in order to enter into a partnership, prospective allies must satisfy an “identity threshold.”

Identity affinity also serves as a cue that it is safe to attempt to build trust—another critical step in the alliance creation process, which will be discussed further below. In environments where information is limited and simplifying decision-making processes must be employed, identity affinity signals trustworthiness. Alliances do not work without trust, and yet it is exceptionally difficult for terrorist groups to develop trust. Identity affinity may act as an early indicator to both groups that it is safe to try to build trust, especially when personal ties have not yet formed or reputations are not well established. Affinity cannot substitute for trust, yet without it, opportunities to build trust and personal relationships are less likely to be capitalized upon by prospective allies.

The Role of Identity in Alliance Perpetuation

Alliance perpetuation depends on the partnering groups’ ability to maintain or build on the identity qualities that provided the initial basis for a sense of identity affinity to produce a commonly-held shared identity (Barnett 411). In other words, allying organizations must be able to craft, internalize, and preserve a narrative that is stable and binds them together in the face of perpetual change. Over the course of the relationship, allies develop constitutive norms—norms that shape how their shared identity is enacted and delineate the parameters of acceptable behavior (Barnett 409). Relationship stability can be achieved through shared norms and
expectations as well as the adoption of agreed-upon practices (Culpan 49). These norms guide allies' behavior both within the relationship and outside the partnership. The depth and breadth of the shared identity and constitutive norms influence the type of relationship that partners form and the durability of the relationship. The allying groups’ ability to construct these norms and identities may be an important determinant of sustainability of the relationship. A shared identity can provide the basis for an alliance to outlive the other factors that provoked its initial creation (Barnett 434). Continuing mutual identification is thus important to the perpetuation of the alliance, even though it is not the primary motive for continuing cooperation. As realist George Liska argued, a "sense of community may consolidate alliances; it rarely brings them about" (qtd. in Russett 286).

Conversely, identity changes may undermine an existing alliance. Terrorist organizations, like other groups, states, and even people, have multifaceted identities. The emphasis on certain facets of that identity can heighten and wane over time, which can commensurately affect the viability of an alliance. For example, a number of ethno-nationalist and separatist groups adopted leftist tenets as part of their ideology during the 1960s and 1970s. But when the resonance of leftism diminished, these beliefs were gradually de-emphasized or discarded from their identities and their alliances reflected that shift. As the centrality and cohesion of a shared identity varies, so may the propensity for organizations within that identity community to form and continue alliances.

A group may renounce the values or cease to adhere to the norms and principles that were part of its shared identity with its ally, which can lead to the cessation of the relationship. One partner can undertake actions that violate the tenets of the shared identity. This can include, for example, conducting an attack against an “unacceptable” target or making a peace deal with the enemy. Less dramatically, over time, the basis for the shared identity can erode and lose resonance
for one or both of the parties. The level of identification will thereby also decrease. A shared identity that was highly salient under a certain set of conditions may not be adaptable enough to survive if the environment changes significantly.

Identity and Alliance Hubs

From an identity standpoint, alliance hubs are the purveyors of an identity that has strong resonance and saliency. They usually hail from the predominant ideological current of the day, have flexibility in their ideological interpretation, and propagate an enemy and victim narrative that holds sway with other groups. They do not define the identity, but they are considered credible authorities on their identity. They seek allies that adhere to their interpretation of their identity. Such alliances bolster their position and credibility and allow them to further shape the construction of that identity.

Identity Affinity Hypotheses:

H\textsubscript{4A} \text{ (Alliance Formation: Affinity)}: Identity affinity sets the parameters of acceptable alliance partners. Organizations must satisfy an identity affinity threshold in order to forge an alliance with one another.

H\textsubscript{4B} \text{ (Alliance Perpetuation: Affinity)}: Identity affinity that evolves into a shared identity and the construction of constitutive norms supports the sustainment of an alliance.

H\textsubscript{4C} \text{ (Alliance Hub: Affinity)}: An alliance hub seeks allies with which it shares identity affinity, while simultaneously meeting that threshold for numerous other organizations.

3.5 Trust—Intervening Variable

Trust is an intervening variable that is necessary for all alliances to form and persevere, irrespective of the motives driving the relationship. Trust is the lifeblood of cooperation and a "lubricant" for relationships (Parkhe 3). Trust refers to the subjective belief of the reliability of another, which leads to expectations that the terms of the collaboration will be honored (Ackerman and Bale 22). Trust is consistently cited as an essential ingredient to all kinds of relationships: interstate alliances, alliances among competitors or rival ethnic groups, inter-firm alliances, as well as
terrorist group alliances. Trust mitigates the uncertainty and risk inherent in these partnerships. In a study of inter-firm alliances, managers cited a lack of trust as the most common reason that relationships with other companies failed (Parkhe 219). Trust is perhaps even more essential for terrorist groups’ relationships than many other types because of the lack of an outside guarantor or other enforcement mechanisms. Thus, no effective substitute for trust exists.

Research on alliances consistently points to the importance of trust in all facets of the relationship: choice of partners, initiation attempts, as well as sustainability. When firms are looking for an ally, they first approach businesses with which they had existing relationships in order to explore re-engaging or expanding cooperation with these partners or to get recommendations and referrals for other possible allies (Gulati 294). In other words, they turn to those they trust first when seeking an ally. In their research on terrorist collaboration, Mincheva and Gurr argue that a common basis of trust is required for collaboration to begin and to become stable (3). Without this underlying foundation to maintain mutual expectations of predictability and reliability in behavior, cooperation is ephemeral.

Trust subsumes three factors: interaction, personal relationships, and reputation. First, trust is produced through interactions. An accessible group will have more opportunities to interact with others and thereby also have a greater ability to develop trust. Opportunities for interaction come in various forms—some are deliberately arranged with the intent of cultivating trust, while others occur more coincidentally. As one might suspect, groups that operate in closer geographic proximity to one another usually have more chances to interact than those that are separated by oceans or other geographic hurdles. Groups that can access modes of transportation and are able to readily cross borders are generally better positioned to interact with other organizations. Both active and passive state sponsors can offer venues for interactions and trust building to occur, especially when these come in the form of commodities like unregulated safe haven and training
facilities. Similarly, terrorist groups that control territory often have a greater ability to be accessible to prospective partners. Conflict zones are another site where groups’ interactions can build trust. Groups may have unexpected opportunities to interact when members are imprisoned together. Opportunities for interaction, no matter what the forum, are essential to building trust.

Second, inter-personal relationships among individuals in the allying organizations foster organizational trust. These relationships can provide entrée to further cooperation that then blossoms into an alliance. It is difficult for trust to form at the organizational level without personal relationships between members of the allying groups. Personal relationships among key individuals, especially those that are tasked with implementing cooperation, are particularly valuable for organizational trust building. The inverse is not necessarily true though—personal ties between members do not, on their own, produce an alliance between organizations.

Reputation is the third component of trust. Reputation factors into groups’ assessments of prospective allies’ trustworthiness and plays a role in alliance creation and sustainment. Studies of business relations consistently demonstrate that reputation is an important determinant of alliance formation and alliance performance among firms (Dollinger, Golden, and Saxton 128). A similar consensus exists in the literature on state alliances, although there is a robust discussion of what facets of reputation matter and how much. Terrorist organizations must also consider reputation when making alliance decisions. The most prominent consideration is a group’s reputation regarding security matters. Groups that are reputed to be infiltrated by government services will struggle to form or sustain alliances. For example, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) had a reputation for being infiltrated by Algerian security services during the 1990s, which was one of the reasons that it became a pariah among other Sunni jihadist groups (Hafez 575). Likewise, the PFLP believed that Red Brigades were infiltrated by the Italian services and therefore avoided cooperation with that potentially powerful ally (Charbel 72). Organizations known for security lapses or inattention
to security will not be considered trustworthy alliance partners. A reputation for other indiscretions, such as stealing money, failing to honor commitments, and cheating will also harm a group's ability to forge or maintain alliances.

However, access, interaction opportunities, reputation, and even personal relationships do not ipso facto produce the trust necessary to create and sustain an alliance. Trust is facilitated in part by social cohesion—both how much exists and how much can be developed (Cragin et al. 18). Personality conflicts, misunderstandings, and differences of opinions can scuttle even the most promising prospective relationships. No amount of interaction may be able to overcome animosities that can develop for a variety of unanticipated reasons. While trust is an essential intervening variable in the process of creating a partnership, a lack of trust can derail a relationship, even when all of the other variables predict that an alliance should succeed.

**Loci of Trust and Alliance Sustainment**

The locus of trust can exist in four places within the allied groups. First, it can be institutionalized and embedded into the organizational cultures, frames, and memories of both
organizations. This is the most effective type of trust for alliance perpetuation and sustainment. It occurs over time when a high degree of trust has been carefully nurtured and cultivated by both groups. The second type is leadership trust. In these relationships, trust is vested primarily in the leaders of the allying groups. They largely direct their respective organizations’ adherence to the alliance. When trust is largely centered on leaders, it is jeopardized when either or both of the leaders are removed, unless their successors also quickly create trust. The third potential locus of trust rests between key nodes and interlocutors. This is when trust is felt most keenly by a core of individuals responsible for managing the interactions and exchanges between the allied organizations. They are the primary trust promoters and cultivators. As in the case of leadership trust, the loss of these individuals is detrimental to the relationship unless they are replaced with individuals who share their preferences. The fourth type of trust occurs primarily within the rank and file of the allied organizations. This type is most common in organizations with decentralized structures or when the leaders are separated from their followers for an extended period of time.

Trust Hypotheses

H (Alliance Formation: Trust) 5.A: In order for alliances to form, groups must have a willingness to build trust with one another or pre-existing reasons to trust one another.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Trust) 5.B: Trust is necessary for an alliance to endure.

H (Alliance Hub: Trust) 5.C: An alliance hub is adept at building trust with other organizations through its reputation, accessibility, and ability to create supporting personal relationships.

2.6 Methodology and Case Selection

Qualitative methods are best suited to address the research questions posed in this theory-building dissertation. These questions almost certainly have causally complex answers. Quantitative research demonstrates, for example, a strong correlation between alliances and ideology, but does not illuminate the causal process by which ideology produces an alliance. Rather
than determining the statistical significance or frequency of such correlations, this work is primarily concerned with determining how ideology and other variables operate in the alliance process (George and Bennett 31). Case studies are a particularly appropriate method for this theory-developing dissertation due to their ability to accommodate causal relationships such as equifinality, complex interaction effect, and path dependency, which are likely to be relevant for this dissertation (George and Bennett 12; 209). In-depth case studies and process tracing can elucidate the dynamic pathways and relative influence that different variables exert in both the creation and perpetuation of an alliance. Multiple in-depth case studies and processing tracing can illuminate how the independent variables function both within and across cases. Case studies also permit the arbitration of claims of necessary, but not sufficient, conditions required for terrorist organizations to form and sustain a relationship.

George and Bennett argue that process tracing is invaluable for theory development and testing because it generates numerous observations within a case and links observations in the particular ways that constitute an explanation of the case (12). Through process tracing, the intervening causal processes between the posited independent variables and dependent variable will be illuminate and contribute to the development of an alliance theory. In projects like this dissertation, when the independent variables may operate simultaneously or sequentially, process tracing is an indispensable tool (George and Bennett 212). This research will be “structured” in that it will employ a data collection approach for each case that asks a set of standardized research questions developed to illuminate the alliance process. The use of a question set ensures the acquisition of comparable data across cases and the accumulation of knowledge.

Establishing the Population

Within a bounded conflict, it is usually fairly straightforward to establish the universe of potential dyads. In the international realm, this task becomes much more problematic. Scholars
who study inter-state conflict, particularly democratic peace, have long grappled with how to define the appropriate universe of cases. Of interest to those investigating the causes of war are those dyads where there is an actual risk of conflict. Given that war is a rare event, the population of interest does not include all possible pairs of states in the international system, most of which have no opportunity for conflict (Lemke and Reed 127). To address this problem, the concept of politically relevant dyads was introduced in order to narrow the population to those dyads of analytic consequence.

This dissertation investigates a comparably rare phenomenon. The most expansive definition of the population would include all potential dyads involving all terrorist groups. However, many of these dyads would be irrelevant. One prominent way of defining politically relevant dyads in conflict and war studies is to limit it to contiguous states or pairs of states involving major powers, as these are the strongest correlates of war (Lemke and Reed 126, Quackenbush 39). Likewise, terrorist groups are perhaps most likely to ally with “contiguous” counterparts (Bapat and Bond 814). Little precedent exists to establish the population of politically relevant “distant dyads” of non-state actors being examined in this research, so this model will serve as a basis. As a starting point, since alliance hubs bear similarities to major powers and alliance hubs’ relationships are the focus of this dissertation, the population of politically relevant dyads includes those pairs that involve an alliance hub and the variables that are known to be most strongly correlated with alliances, common ideology and enemies. The phenomenon of alliance hubs dates from the internationalization of terrorism in 1968, so cases from that year until 2009 were considered. This narrows the population of analytic interest for this dissertation to dyads involving alliances hubs and other organizations with which it shares an enemy and/or an ideology in the period from 1968 to 2009.
**Alliance Hub Case Selection**

International hubs are simultaneously the rarest and the most difficult to explain theoretically, given the obstacles to cooperation and the propensity for relationships to form based on national or regional boundaries (Asal, Rethmeyer, and Park, 34). A most-different case selection was employed to select which alliance hubs to compare. Alliance hubs are by definition deviant cases in that they show a surprising propensity to form alliances (Gerring 105). Comparative case studies examining international alliance hubs—the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and al-Qaida—that differ in the three main independent variables offers an opportunity to determine what commonalities motivated groups to ally with these hubs. The two groups held alliance hub positions during different time periods. The PFLP was an alliance hub from roughly 1969 until 1979, while al-Qaida was an alliance hub from approximately 1993 until present. Therefore, these cases are independent from one another. The two groups also operated under different international systems as the PFLP/PFLP-SOG was a hub during the Cold War bi-polar system while al-Qaida’s tenure as an alliance hub has been under a unipolar, United States-dominated system; therefore their balancing requirements likely differed. The faced different threats and defined their threats differently, as al-Qaida insisted that the U.S. posed the greatest threat, while the PFLP was primarily threatened by Israel. However, both defined their overall enemies broadly. They hailed from different ideologies. The PFLP was a leftist, nationalist organization and al-Qaida is an internationally-oriented, religious group. Lastly, their organizational structure differed as al-Qaida had differentiated functions, but only operated as a terrorist group; while the PFLP’s organizational structure included a political party and non-terrorist functions. Thus, the two select hubs exhibited variation on each of the independent variables.
Table 2.1

**Alliance Hub Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine</th>
<th>Al-Qaida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Duration</strong></td>
<td>1969-1978</td>
<td>1993-Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideology</strong></td>
<td>Left-Wing with Ethno-Nationalist Leanings</td>
<td>Transnational, Sunni Islamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Structure</strong></td>
<td>Complex</td>
<td>Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Enemy/Threat</strong></td>
<td>Israel &amp; “Imperial” World Order</td>
<td>&quot;Crusader-Zionist&quot; Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International Conditions</strong></td>
<td>Bipolar</td>
<td>Unipolar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This dissertation involved multiple selection processes. First is the selection of the two hubs, as discussed. Next there is the selection of dyads cases involving each alliance hub. The research questions on the alliance process are two-pronged: alliance creation and alliance sustainment.

In order to qualify as a potential case study, the non-alliance hub group had to meet several criteria. First, as discussed in Chapter 1, it had to be a non-competitor and non-adversary organization. Next, it had to overlap with either of the alliance hubs for at least one year. This criterion was employed for several reasons. It ensures that the group had the minimum viability necessary to establish a relationship with a hub during this timeframe. Few groups that are operational for less than a year are in a position to create and sustain a relationship with an outside organization. If a group’s existence did not correspond with the hub for at least one year, it would probably not have adequate time to engage in alliances.

**The PFLP Hub: Case Selection**

The University of Maryland’s START Center’s terrorist organization profiles were used to establish the baseline population of potential alliance partners of the PFLP. START has one of the few databases available that provides the necessary information *and* covers the requisite time span for this dissertation. The information in START’s organizational profiles is based on research.
conducted by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, in conjunction with Detica, with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security. It is current through March 1, 2008. It is worth noting that the START terrorist organization database uses a fairly low threshold for inclusion in its database. For a number of groups, the legitimacy of applying the “terrorist” label would be hotly, and validly, contested. Although robust disagreements exist about whether a given group should be deemed a terrorist organization, for purposes of this study, START's criteria was to determine the initial population of potential allies. Only cases which adhered to the definition of a terrorist organization provided in Chapter 1 were considered for a case study. Based on START's terrorist organization profiles, the initial population of cases was established.

In order to be included as one of the PFLP's potential allies, the organization had to overlap the PFLP-SOG for at least one year. In order to ensure that all viable cases were considered, this included the entire ten-year timeframe: 1968 to 1978. In order to meet this one year standard, the group had to be operational, i.e. engaging in armed violence, for at least one year from 1968 to 1978. Next front and cover organizations that were not independent entities were eliminated. Various groups, including the PFLP, used aliases to claim attacks. This created confusion about whether the pseudonym was an actual group and who was responsible for a given action. Any group described in START's profiles as a suspected alias for another organization was disqualified.

Competitor organizations were then eliminated. All Palestinian groups operating during this period were jockeying with the PFLP for recruits, support in the Palestinian community, and resources. Therefore, all Palestinian groups, regardless of ideological orientation, were struck from the list. After undertaking these steps, the population of potential PFLP allies consisted of 113 groups.
Cases were then selected with variation on the independent variables. Groups that did not share any ideological commonality or enemies were then eliminated, and indeed further research indicated that none of these groups allied with the PFLP. A shared ideology meant that a group adhered to a leftist ideology\(^a\) organization, which was the most salient feature of the PFLP’s ideological platform. The PFLP had an expansive list of enemies, as evidenced by its attacks, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. This included Israel, the United States, Western European Governments, and Arab Governments labeled as “reactionary,” which included Jordan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia in particular. This criterion left 99 organizations that could be considered politically relevant and further research determined that, as expected, none of the organizations removed from consideration allied with the PFLP.

The first case was selected to maximize shared threat. When threat was narrowly defined as Israel, an examination of the 99 potential allies revealed that it was absent from all dyads involving the PFLP, once competitors are removed. Thus the case selected had to maximize threat values another way. The PFLP viewed the “imperialist” world order that supported Israel as a key facet of threat. The United States was the great power responsible for this threatening international system, so a group that faced a threat from the United States served to maximize the threat variable. Admittedly, most leftist groups viewed the United States as an adversary, though this was typically a distant second priority for most groups. Thus a group that viewed the United States as its main and highest priority enemy was selected. Numerous groups operated in the United States during this time. Many of the leftist groups in the United States were transient, lacked organizational command and control or staying power, and thus were not well suited for the purposes of this research. Of the left-wing groups in United States, the Weathermen overlapped for the entire period, demonstrated cohesion as an organization, and was acutely threatened by the U.S.

\(^a\) Including anarchist
Thus the Weathermen were selected as a case study that demonstrated the highest possible sense of shared threat with the PFLP.

A group with high levels of ideological solidarity was selected for the next case. From the list, 90 organizations shared some ideological quality with the PFLP. From that list, a group that professed a strong sense of solidarity with the Palestinian cause was selected, in order to maximize the potential causal force of this variable. Outside of the Middle East, the Israel-Palestinian conflict was most salient in West Germany. Support for the Palestinian cause was a “revolutionary requirement” for West German leftists (Varon 69). Therefore, if a sense of ideological solidarity produces an alliance, this causal process should be illustrated by examining a West German leftist group, the Red Army Faction.

Three main West German groups operated during this time: Red Army Faction, the Revolutionary Cells, and 2nd June of Movement. All three were small, solely terrorist, left-wing groups with an entirely West German membership that professed a strong sense of ideological solidarity with the Palestinian cause. These conditions offer an opportunity to examine the role of organizational dynamics to determine their explanatory power in these cases, while holding ideology and threat largely constant. Thus, in the addition to the PFLP-RAF case study, mini-case studies will be conducted on the two other West German groups.

For the third case, the values of shared threat and ideology were minimized, while still present. In other words, a group was selected that shared an ideology and some sense of threat, but at low levels. In particular, a case was selected where the group shared an overarching ideology, but its cause was unrelated—to the extent possible, while still sharing an ideology—to the Palestinian cause. Groups in the Middle East and the Europe were excluded as both of these regions were heavily engaged in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, especially the Palestinian militant groups’ attacks during this period. Groups hailing from South America and Asia were least likely to be invested in
the Middle East conflict. A group that shared other characteristics, namely organizational type and size, was selected in order to mitigate the impact of other variation and isolate the impact of threat and ideology. Many of the Latin American groups were larger in size and more complex organizations. But the Japanese Red Army hailed from a country with no direct role or stake in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and, like the RAF and Weathermen, was a small, single nationality group dedicated solely to violence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The PFLP Case Studies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximizing Shared Threat/Enemy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximizing Ideological Solidarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimizing Shared Threat &amp; Ideology</td>
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Table 2.2

A number of organizational characteristics will be held relatively constant in this set of case studies. All of the potential partner groups operated as small, single nationality, solely terrorist groups, and were formed at roughly the same time. They thus should have comparable organizational needs and self-reform ability. By holding organizational factors constant and maximizing variation on ideology and enemies, these cases will highlight the impact of those independent variables. In addition, by selecting groups with similar organizational structures and sizes, the impact of the internal organizational processes discussed earlier in this chapter will be illuminated.

**Al-Qaida Case Studies**

For the al-Qaida cases, a matched, most similar case design was used, which resulted in six cases. Each chapter examines two matched, most similar cases that exhibited common values on the independent variables, except one.

For the first al-Qaida case, the matched groups are Egyptian Islamic Jihad (ElJ) and Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG). They demonstrate common values on ideology, identity, and enemies, but had different organizational characteristics. The two groups operate during the same period and were
competitors. As their names suggest, both groups are entirely composed of Egyptians. Both are Sunni—even more specifically, both were Salafist—terrorist groups, so they have a common ideological platform with one another and with al-Qaida. Both formed and operate primarily in opposition to the same enemy, the Egyptian regime. They had the same goal based on their ideology and enemy. Both sought the overthrow the Egyptian Government and the creation of an Islamic state in Egypt based on their interpretation of sharia law. Al-Qaida also considers the Egyptian Government an enemy, though not its main threat or primary adversary. Both groups have the same identity affinity features with al-Qaida, which included a shared ideological identity, an Arab ethnic identity and overlap in their enemy and victim narratives. Yet the Egyptian groups differed markedly in their organizational needs. This serves as a means to test the influence of organizational learning and adaptation needs in their respective relationships with al-Qaida.

The second matched case is the Algerian Islamic Armed Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). These two groups are also Salafist terrorist organizations with largely single nationality membership, Algerians. Both groups’ primary enemy was the Algerian Government and their goal was the imposition of an Islamic state based on their interpretation of sharia law in Algeria. The GSPC even possessed a similar organizational structure to its predecessor. Both groups have same basis for identity affinity with al-Qaida, namely a shared ideology, an overarching Arab ethnicity and some overlap in their enemy and victim narratives. One key difference between the two groups is the periods in which they operated and the difference in the threat environment during these two periods. The GIA was the prominent organization in the Algerian Islamist insurgency from 1992 to approximately 1999. The GSPC is an offshoot of the GIA that broke away in 1998. By 1999, the GSPC had eclipsed its parent organization and has remained the dominant group in Algeria to date. There was a competition dynamic between the two groups in the GSPC’s early years, but by 2001, the GIA was nearly defunct and not a clear competitor (United...
States Department of State *2001 Patterns of Global Terrorism* 89: 109). Their differing threat environments are consequential for testing their relationships with al-Qaida. The 9/11 attacks and the corresponding change in the threat that came with the U.S. Global War on Terrorism in 2001 significantly changed the threat environment. The United States had virtually no involvement in the brutal Algerian conflict during the 1990s (Arieff 15-17). After 2001, the U.S. took an intense interest in events in the region and actively targeted the GSPC. Thus the GSPC shared a threat with al-Qaida, whereas the GIA did not, which serves as an opportunity to test the role of threat in the two groups’ relationships with al-Qaida. Like the Egyptian cases, these two alliances have extensive within case variation that will offer additional opportunities to test hypotheses.

The third matched case selected is Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) and the Deobandi, Pakistani militant groups in Pakistan, particularly Jaish-e-Mohamed (JEM). These Pakistani groups seek the annexation of Kashmir and its unification with Pakistan. Closely allied with the Pakistani military establishment, they all view the Hindu-dominated Indian Government as a primary enemy. These groups also seek the expulsion of U.S. forces from Afghanistan (United States Department of State *2009 Country Reports on Terrorism*). In terms of identity features, as Pakistani groups, none share an ethnic identity with al-Qaida. The Pakistani groups’ enemy and victim narratives have both overlap and conflict with al-Qaida’s narrative, particularly post-9/11 disagreements about whether the Pakistani Government is an enemy. Ideologically, LT is closer to al-Qaida in terms of its Ahl-e-Hadith, religious orientation, which is essentially a South Asian version of Salafism, whereas JEM and other Pakistani militant groups hail from the Deobandi school of Sunni jurisprudence (Abou Zahab “Deobandi” 1-4). This case thus provides a good test of the theory that the more similar groups’ ideologies are, the more likely it is that they will ally.
Table 2.3

For each set of case studies, cases that offer good tests of the different independent variables or combinations of the independent variables were selected. Within and across these nine case studies, there is variation on all the independent variables as well as variation in the dependent variable status. This offers a way to examine the causal processes that lead to alliances in a way that has not been done in the literature to date.

**Data Collection and Information Sources**

Although most of selected terrorist organizations have been studied extensively, the specific information available about their cooperation with the alliance hubs and the independent variables differed significantly. Exhaustive and credible information about when an alliance began as well as complete information about the duration of the alliance was difficult to obtain in some instances. These gaps were expected, given the nature of research on illicit and secretive groups, and the fact that alliance behavior has not been the focus of research on these groups to date.

To mitigate these hurdles, this research utilized multiple types of information. Primary sources, such as groups’ public statements, publications, interviews conducted with group members or leaders, and trial transcripts were used, when possible. Extensive archival research was conducted, so this research is derived in part from declassified government and intelligence material from multiple governments. Media reports, existing accounts, and secondary source histories of these groups were also used extensively. Numerous interviews were conducted with
experts, former and current government officials, journalists, and scholars. Field research was conducted in Israel, India, Pakistan, and Algeria. Field research was planned for Egypt, but had to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

While the goal was always to utilize a breadth and diversity of sources for each case, in some instances, certain materials had rich detail on cooperation or internal decision making process that was critical to piece together an account of the relationship. In those instances, the work of specific scholars was relied upon heavily and follow up interviews were conducted with them to gain additional clarification. These scholars’ works were largely based on primary sources, including interviews with group members, that were not plausible for this work. While reliance on specific scholars was not ideal, their accounts proved essential to understanding the alliance dynamics and were incredibly valuable.

2. 7 The Way Forward: Organization of the Dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is divided into three sections. Section II begins with an examination of the alliance behavior of the first alliance hub, the PFLP. The subsequent three chapters—Chapters 4 through 6—are case studies examining the selected organizations, the Japanese Red Army, the Red Army Faction, and the Weathermen, and their interactions, or lack thereof, with the PFLP. Section II concludes with Chapter 7 analyzing the findings of the PFLP cases. Section III follows the same structure. It begins with a background chapter, Chapter 8, investigating al-Qaeda’s alliance history from the early 1980s until 2011 and then delves into the three case studies—the Egyptian groups, the Algerian groups, and the Pakistani organizations—in Chapters 9 through 11. Chapter 12 offers an analysis of the findings of the al-Qaeda cases. The final section, Section IV, consists of one final chapter. Chapter 13 compares the two sets of case studies and their
implications for the various theoretical frameworks, draws tentatively observations about alliance hubs, and then offers policy recommendations and suggestions for areas of future research.

Section II: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and its Allies, Friends, and Acquaintances
“For decades world opinion has been neither for nor against the Palestinians. It simply ignored us. At least the world is talking about us now”—George Habash, founding leader of the PFLP

3.1 Introduction

At the end of the 1960s, terrorist cooperation flourished to previously unseen levels. Significant hurdles to partnerships remained, but four developments prompted greater overall transnational collaboration between militant organizations. First, an overarching sense of solidarity and shared struggle against imperialism and capitalism was embedded in and fostered by the prevailing ideologies that opposed the status quo (Klimke The Other Alliance 5). With the proliferation of leftist groups as well as ethno-nationalist groups that were at least nominally leftist, organizations viewed themselves as part of a broader revolution of liberation from imperialist powers, although they maintained different parochial priorities. Second, advances in transportation and communication facilitated greater interaction and awareness among terrorist groups operating in various conflicts (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 68). This enabled organizations to garner international, including other terrorist groups’, attention for their causes through attacks, and to learn of one another’s acts. These developments were coupled with greater active and passive state sponsorship of militant groups, which was relatively rare during the previous era’s self-determination, anti-colonial struggles (Rapoport “The Four Waves” 59). Most importantly in terms of alliances, this sponsorship sometimes included the provision of safe haven. Therefore, accessible venues were available where groups had opportunities to build trust as well as personal relationships. For the first time on this scale, groups could turn to their similarly-situated comrades to fulfill organizational needs for training, sanctuary, combat experience, weapons, and other forms
of assistance. At the center of all of these currents were the Palestinians—long-suffering and neglected victims of “imperialism,” a national liberation movement par excellence, the recipients of various states’ tutelage, cooperative partners, and ready service providers. Fittingly, Palestinian militant groups broke new ground in alliances during this period.

Not all Palestinian militant groups exploited their venerated status and position within the revolutionary milieu to forge relationships with outside organizations. The groups within the perpetually fragmented, fractious, and divided Palestinian radical movement pursued different approaches to alliances with non-Palestinian militant groups. Many engaged in some cooperation with non-Palestinian groups. Competition between Palestinian groups impacted alliance decisions as alliances were another realm where groups could differentiate themselves or improve their position in the crowded field. The ethno-nationalist organization Fatah—consistently the largest, most capable, and wealthiest, i.e. the most powerful, of the Palestinian groups—was one of the first to cultivate outside allies, but it subsequently reduced the visibility and emphasis on these relationships when it sought greater mainstream international legitimacy. Its primary leftist rival, the PFLP—always smaller and less well funded—initially developed into an alliance hub as part of its strategy to offset its relative weaknesses vis-à-vis Fatah as well as to oppose Israel.

This chapter examines the PFLP and its special operations unit, the PFLP-SOG’s emergence and tenure as an alliance hub. It thereby lays the groundwork for the subsequent case studies that will trace the independent variables that motivated or hindered its relationship with specific groups. This chapter begins with a scene setter of the terrorist landscape during the 1960s and 1970s, which differs in key respects from the contemporary era examined in Section III. Central to the international revolutionary milieu of the time was the Palestinian cause; therefore, this chapter discusses both the PFLP’s chief rival and the most significant Palestinian militant group of this
period, Fatah, before delving into the PFLP and its offshoot, the PFLP-SOG. The succeeding sections outline the PFLP and the PFLP-SOG’s organizational dynamics, identity, and its state sponsors—all of which may theoretically factor into its ability to forge and sustain alliances. The chapter then provides a chronology of the PFLP and the PFLP-SOG’s activities, situating its alliances with in the context of the group’s activities, before offering some preliminary conclusions on the PFLP-SOG’s alliance behavior.

3.2 The Overall Terrorist Landscape During the 1970s—the Influence of the “New Left”

As the 1960s drew to a close, international terrorism, dominated by the “New Left,” began its rise (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63; Rapoport “The Four Waves” 56). High-profile anti-colonial campaigns, most notably Algeria’s independence from France, had recently been resolved in favor of those seeking self-determination. Their success fed hope to other irredentist “liberation” struggles that lacked important commonalities and would not enjoy the same fate, including the Palestinian campaign for statehood (Rapoport “The Four Waves” 56). Ethno-nationalist groups—some of which adopted leftist trappings, at least temporarily, in keeping with the intellectual currents of the day—and a panoply of leftist revolutionary organizations were further galvanized by the ferocity of the Viet Cong’s resistance against the United States. They rebelled against the domestic and international conditions fostered by the U.S-led “imperialist” and capitalist world order, particularly the socio-economic and political disparity between the haves and the have-nots that emerged following the economic boom in the 1950s (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 80; Klimke The Other Alliance 3).

Militant leftist organizations were active in every hemisphere during this period, identified as the third wave of modern terrorism by terrorism scholar David Rapoport (“The Four Waves” 56).
The world was divided into the “First World” and the “Third World,” a distinction layered on top of the Cold War allegiances in a bi-polar world order that had implications for terrorist groups as well. Terrorist organizations proliferated in many countries allied with the United States, and militant groups operating in the First World identified strongly with their Third World brethren’s struggles for liberation. While the intensity of that bond was not often reciprocated, an overarching revolutionary ethos created a sense of identity affinity among many groups. However, in practice, organizations generally focused their activities on more parochial, national-level goals and only a subset of them formed alliances.

The theatrical imperative of terrorism was readily apparent in the hostage takings, hijackings, kidnappings, and assassinations employed by militant groups during the late 1960s and 1970s (Rapoport “The Four Waves” 56). Many groups recognized the pivotal role international opinion played in the self-determination struggles in the 1950s and attempted to foster similar sympathy and awareness for their causes. Moreover, developments in communication meant that international attention could be seized and shaped through the media. Thus attacks were generally calibrated acts against targets likely to garner attention and press coverage, but not intended to cause mass causalities, especially against civilians (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 158). Such deliberate tailoring of violence is an “overriding tactical—and indeed ethical—imperative for left-wing terrorists,” according to terrorism expert Bruce Hoffman (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 158). Leftists’ self-identification with the masses and ethno-nationalists’ need to avoid alienating their constituencies constrained the scope and lethality of violence used by most groups during this era. It was in this environment that terrorism expert Brian Jenkins famously concluded, in 1974, that “[t]errorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead”—a conclusion that one would be hard-pressed to apply to contemporary religiously-motivated terrorist groups (Jenkins 15).
3.3 The Palestinian Landscape

The Palestinian cause gained stature among revolutionary causes following the ignominious defeat of the Arab armies by Israel in the Six Day War in June 1967 and the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) (Rapoport “The Four Waves” 56). This loss forced the three million Palestinians dispersed throughout the Middle East to realize that their aspirations for a homeland would not be realized through the collective action of Arab armies (Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Middle East”3). Arab solidarity was exposed, at a minimum, as insufficient. As the famous female PFLP operative Leila Khaled succinctly summed up the sentiment, “[i]n 1967, after the June tornado, Nasserism lay in shambles” (Khaled 97). The fedayeen, as Palestinian guerillas were collectively called, were the one force untainted by the defeat, so some decided to pursue their own asymmetric campaign against Israel (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 2). Their audacious raids won them respect from Arab publics, materiel support from Arab governments keen to find a way to recover from their recent humiliation, and an influx of new volunteers (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli”).

Alliances were soon another component of the overall strategy. At that early juncture, alliances were mainly a mechanism to spread sympathy for the Palestinian cause, which was seen as essential, based on the Algeria model of liberation from France. When a burgeoning group of West German radical leftists were trained by an unidentified Palestinian group as early as 1969, perhaps the first known instance of such training, they received instruction in explosives and shooting. After the provision of this training, the Palestinians only asked that the West Germans generate propaganda for the Palestinians back in West Germany. They did not even offer weapons or ask them to undertake acts on the Palestinians' behalf (Baumann and Ellenbogen 55).
The PLO, the primary umbrella organization of Palestinian factions, is often credited with breaking early ground in fostering international relationships with fellow “revolutionaries.” Collectively, this is true; though within the PLO fierce rivalries persisted. The PLO’s member groups’ ability to make transnational contacts was bolstered by the international recognition it received. By the end of the 1970s, more countries recognized the PLO than the state of Israel (as cited in Byman A High Price 74). Even in some places that did not recognize the PLO in the 1970s, such as West Germany, the PLO had a de facto representative whose presence was “unofficial,” but widely known and tolerated. The PLO representative in Berlin, Said Dudin, played an important role in brokering Palestinian contacts for West German militants (German Democratic Republic Ministerium für Staatssicherheit 1-2). This recognition and accessibility contributed to the PLO member groups’ capacity to forge new ties.

However, the PLO’s alliances with outside groups were not the product of a cooperative effort among Palestinian factions to foster relationships. Each faction had its own policy towards alliances and cultivated partners—or opted not to—for its own ends, even at the expense of one another (Rapoport “Inside” 59). All sought to garner support for the Palestinian cause, as they constructed it, but they also wanted to gain advantage over one another. For the subset of Palestinian groups that engaged in alliances, the nature, breadth, and scope of these relationships varied across in important respects, such as whether a group was willing to conduct joint attacks with an outside partner or if its association was based on covert cooperation.

Therefore, the PLO’s alliances cannot be explained as if it pursued a unified policy towards prospective allies, though the fluidity and complexity of intra-Palestinian relationships admittedly made it difficult to concretely pinpoint which actors were involved in a given activity or relationship. At times, fedayeen training facilities were co-located, in close proximity or even
cooperatively operated by a few factions (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli” 3). Adding to the confusion was the fact that alliances with Palestinian groups were not mutually exclusive so the same outside organization could have a relationship with multiple Palestinian entities. Still, referring to the PLO’s relationships writ large obscures important differences in the alliance behavior of the Palestinian groups and their partners.

The predominant player in the PLO was the late Yasir Arafat’s Fatah (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli” 3). Arguably the most important militant organization of this era, Fatah was not a member of the New Left, though it was readily embraced by New Left groups. Nor was Fatah truly comparable to the successful anti-colonial movements that preceded it, particularly the National Liberation Front in Algeria—Fatah’s primary model—which was now the governing Algeria and providing assistance to Fatah (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Palestinian Arabs” 27). The key difference between them was, unlike France’s role in Algeria, Israel was not a colonial power with a land to withdraw to if it acceded to the Palestinians’ demand for self-determination. Unlike the colonial powers, Israel was fighting for its very survival and existence (Byman A High Price 36). Moreover, as the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Analysis (INR) pointed out at the time, in contrast to the Palestinians’ anti-colonial role models, “[h]aving no land of their own, the fedayeen command no independent resources” (“Middle East” 2). Thus they were reliant on states and allies for places to operate.

Fatah emerged as the leading group in the fractious Palestinian landscape soon after the 1967 war. Fatah won support among the Arab and Palestinian masses with its doctrine of armed struggle against Israel and nationalist orientation (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Palestinian Arabs” 27). But Palestinian unity proved elusive as a slew of competitors emerged to challenge Fatah, though none truly rivaled its power during the 1970s (United States Central
Intelligence Agency “The Palestinian Arabs” 27). This intra-Palestinian competition escalated the scale and frequency of violence and created spoilers who were prepared to scuttle negotiations when they deemed their interests—or those of their state sponsors—were not sufficiently represented.

Chief among Fatah’s rivals during this period was the PFLP. It declared its formation in December 1967 following an appeal for “Palestinian unity”—which was also a thinly-veiled call to offset the rising power of Fatah and to abandon hope in the “bourgeois” Arab Governments and their armies—by the now-deceased Dr. George Habash. He advocated the “Vietnamese model: a strong political party, complete mobilization of the people, and the principal of not depending on any regime or government” (qtd. in Cooley 139). Led by the charismatic Christian physician, the leftist PFLP was initially created through an uneasy alliance of several existing groups: factions from the Movement of Arab Nationalists (ANM) made up the bulk of the “new” organization; another contingent hailed from the Palestinian Liberation Front led by a Palestinian officer in the Syrian army; and its ranks were filled out with others who sought to counterbalance Fatah’s for an array of other reasons (AbuKhalil 362). The PFLP joined the PLO in 1968 to become the PLO’s second largest member organization, yet it remained consistently outflanked by Fatah in numbers and influence (Alexander 33).

But forces that brought this PFLP coalition together did not have staying power, and the underlying fault lines soon became permanent, public, and sometimes bitter breaks (Cubert 155). The military officer who led the Palestinian Liberation Front, Ahmed Jibril, left and created his own group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command. Then another sizeable clique, the left-wing ANM bloc, broke away to form the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) under Nayef Hawatmeh (Cooley 140). These departures provoked further intra-
Palestinian conflict; the rivalry between the PFLP and DFLP even escalated into armed confrontations between members of the two groups to the point that Fatah stepped in to mediate by Fatah (Cooley 142). Disagreements over ideology, strategy, priorities, and tactics were cited as the primary reasons for the splits, although personal ambitions and personality conflicts undoubtedly played an important role as well. This was by no means the end of the PFLP’s unity woes.

3.4 Organizational Dynamics: The PFLP and Emergence of the Special Operations Group

As Secretary General until 2000, Habash presided over the PFLP’s governing bodies: the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the National Congress. The group’s organizational structure appeared complex with multiple committees, such as the education committee and various other bodies charged with special tasks (Sayigh 232; 306). A number of reorganizations were intended to address internal dissatisfaction, though they were often cast in ideological terms, like the “Communist re-structuring,” which had little impact on the group’s actual operations (Schweitzer and Ophir 13). A divide existed between the group’s de jure and de facto modes of operating. While committed to achieving its goals of a Palestinian state and the eradication of Israel through guerilla and paramilitary action, the group still described itself as a political party with a military wing. But it never really succeeded at modeling itself after the Vietnamese and becoming a “people’s party,” in large part because lacked widespread appeal among the masses. Despite its goal of “building a working class leadership in the Palestinian movement,” the PFLP’s leaders were largely middle-class intellectuals (AbuKhalil 362-5; Cobban 145). Key leadership figures, including Habash and his confidant Wadi Haddad, were Christian, which further limited the extent of the PFLP’s appeal among the predominantly Muslim Palestinian population. This elite composition had its
advantages. Perhaps most importantly, the group’s professional composition and training regiments made it more difficult for hostile services to infiltrate the group (Byman *A High Price* 41).

While the PFLP had a fairly complex organizational structure, to the point of becoming unduly bureaucratic, in reality, personalities superseded position. After the slew of initial defections, those who remained were deeply loyal to Habash personally (AbuKhalil 364). But due to health problems as well as his imprisonment in Syria right after the PFLP’s formation, Habash was incapacitated at several pivotal junctures. In his absence, intense internecine power struggles beset the organization. The groups operations soon emerged as an important point of tension.

Lacking viable forces in Israel, the PFLP’s initial tactic was to launch cross-border raids into Israel from neighboring countries. It soon realized that such operations were both fruitless and inordinately costly as Israel grew adept at intercepting invading fighters. In addition, while the raids did not threaten Israel’s overall security, they provoke harsh Israeli retaliation (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli” 2). Israeli reprisal raids took a toll on the fedayeen, including the PFLP, as well as their hosts in Jordan and Lebanon, which triggered neighboring countries to suppress cross-border operations originating from their territory. Though terrorism had long been a tactic in the conflict, by the late 1960s, it became a primary tactic for Palestinian groups “through a process of elimination... as the only means to pursue the military option to which they are committed” (Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Middle East” 2; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli” 2). For its part, in order to adapt, the PFLP created a unit charged with conducting “external” operations, known later the Special Operations Group, to strike Israel elsewhere (referred to hereafter as the PFLP-SOG).

The PFLP’s status as the second largest and most influential Palestinian group prompted its early adoption of international terrorist tactics. It saw such operations as a way to improve its
position vis-a-vis Fatah, garner greater attention and resources, and strike Israel where it was vulnerable. The unit charged with implementing this strategy, the PFLP-SOG, was the brainchild of Wadi’ Haddad, a longtime close friend of Habash, former ANM leader, and member of the PFLP Politburo (Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi 60). This school teacher turned physician turned terrorist conceived of and implemented nearly every aspect of the international operations strategy. It was dramatically inaugurated in 1968 when a PFLP-SOG team hijacked an El Al flight, demanding the release of Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the passengers. This operation succeeded in seizing international attention and drawing in new recruits and resources (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63-6). While not the primary intention of the international operations, these attacks also captured the attention of outside organizations and contributed to the PFLP’s appeal as an alliance partner.

But before long, Haddad’s operations became increasingly controversial within the PFLP. Several of Haddad’s attacks, including the 1968 hijacking, were conducted in the midst of escalating internal disputes, leading detractors to accuse him of using these operations to shore up his unit’s position within the organization and marginalize his critics and challengers (Sayigh 214). Others resented the PFLP-SOG’s preferential access to promising recruits—a function of the unit’s elite mission, Haddad argued—and other resources. In addition, it was not always clear what Haddad did with the exorbitant ransoms and protection money he obtained, leading to charges that he was siphoning off money or at least dispersing it in accordance with his personal preferences (Sayigh 301). Haddad’s insistence that his unit’s activities be kept secret from all but Habash further exacerbated the growing internal friction. The PFLP “officially” decided to expel Haddad at its third conference, but his status and connections to the PFLP would remain nebulous for the years to come (Sayigh 305).
Haddad continued to pursue international operations with little regard for the PFLP’s official position, but neither he nor the PFLP publicly announced the split until five years later ("Terrorist Leader Expelled" A25). This stood in marked contrast to the other PFLP splinter groups, breaks which were usually both public and acrimonious. For its part, the PFLP continued to be blamed for—or credited with, depending on one’s point of view—the PFLP-SOG’s operations and it selectively claimed some PFLP-SOG operations, while publicly disavowing others. Conversely, the PFLP-SOG still benefitted from the PFLP’s well-known reputation as a pioneer in international operations against imperialism, which attracted allies that the PFLP-SOG could use to conduct its attacks. The PFLP-SOG did not dispute any of the PFLP’s claims or respond to its disavowals. Adding to the confusion, the PFLP-SOG did not claim attacks in its own name; instead it used a bewildering array of different aliases, which obscured its responsibility and created uncertainty about the culprit of its operations.

Unlike other Palestinian groups’ leaders, Haddad was content to let his operations speak for themselves and did not present himself as a contender for leadership of the Palestinian resistance movement or as a rival to his comrade, George Habash. Over the years, Haddad maintained a line of communication to Habash, including the provision of funds and advanced warning of some pending operations (Sayigh 305). After all, it was Haddad who directed a daring ambush to rescue Habash from Syrian prison in 1968. The two men shared a long history together, including working together at a medical clinic for the indigent (Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi 62). Investigative reporter David Yallop explained the two men’s complementary existence, “[i]f Dr. Habash gave his organization the intellectual rationale, his fellow doctor Wadi Haddad was the man who by his activities gave Habash a world stage for his oratory” (To the Ends of the Earth 45). Following Habash’s death in 2008, The Independent juxtaposed Haddad with his friend:
So strong was his (Habash’s) personality, so great his charm, that many an impressionable young man or woman would have been quite ready to plant bombs on his behalf if he had asked. But, for all his reputation, Habash was not the mastermind of terror that he was made out to be. Wadi Haddad, who died mysteriously in 1978, was as self-effacing and publicity-shy as Habash was keen to be seen and to explain. It was Haddad who was the brains behind the terrorism, with his own group within the organisation (sic), and his own friends and backers (Bulloch 36).

Unlike the PFLP, which boasted a weekly newspaper, *al-Hadaf*, and sought publicity, Haddad’s organization existed entirely in the shadows with no public profile, though its attacks frequently grabbed the headlines. Unlike its parent organization, PFLP-SOG did not have multiple wings dedicated to different functions, an annual conference, thousands of members, a spokesman or a media outlet. The PFLP-SOG was small with only a few dozen members. Singularly focused on operations, the PFLP-SOG was a completely clandestine organization. Haddad firmly believed in the efficacy of violence as the only way to harm—and ultimately eradicate—Israel and rejected any political compromises or negotiated solutions (Cobban 146).

The group was highly centralized around Haddad’s leadership and those he personally trusted. Some PFLP-SOG members hailed from the PFLP, while others were recruited separately by Haddad. But all members had a personal relationship with Haddad (Charbel 70). Nicknamed “the Master,” Haddad directed and oversaw every attack, conducted post mortems following each operation, and vetted all recruits and prospective allies (Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi 60). He sought politically, militarily, and technically sophisticated operatives, such as chemistry students, engineers, and other skilled professionals for his elite organization (Schweitzer and Ophir 32; Charbel 44). These needs stimulated PFLP-SOG’s receptivity to alliances, as the Palestinian pool for such skills was limited.

While the PFLP initially began the process of forging alliances by welcoming groups to its training facilities in Jordan and Lebanon, it was the PFLP-SOG that made alliances a central feature
of its international terrorism campaign against Israel and the imperialist powers that supported the
Jewish state. For this reason, throughout the paper, the PFLP and the PFLP-SOG are distinguished
from one another, when possible. After 1972, the PFLP-SOG is referred to as its own organization,
albeit with some continuing ties to the PFLP. Prior to the break, the PFLP-SOG is referred to as the
unit within the context of the broader PFLP. A number of its parent organization’s characteristics,
particularly its reputation and ideological platform, impacted the PFLP-SOG’s alliances, so both
groups are discussed at various points in this chapter and throughout Section II.

3.5 The Facets of the PFLP and PFLP-SOG’s Identity

*Ideological Identity*

From an identity standpoint, the PFLP differentiated itself from its rival, Fatah, by
embracing a leftist orientation as opposed to Fatah’s strictly nationalist platform. The PFLP initially
traced its thinking to Maoism—even sending a delegation to Peking in 1970—and its early
manifesto, “The Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine,” drew heavily from Mao’s *Analysis of the
Classes in Chinese Society* (AbuKhalil 375). China was initially a source of both ideological
inspiration and materiel support, but Peking later distanced itself from the PFLP, expressing
discomfort with the group’s international terrorist operations (United States Central Intelligence
Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 4-5).

That, coupled with the ideological challenge posed by the DFLP, prompted the PFLP’s move
towards Moscow and adoption of Marxism, a “transformation” that did not have much practical
effect on the group’s thinking, operations or alliance behavior (AbuKhalil 365; Sayigh 232). Former
PFLP spokesmen Bassam Abu-Sharif described Habash as insisting that the PFLP remain “tinged
with red” for a mixture of ideological and pragmatic reasons, but he downplayed the strength of the group’s commitment to Marxism (61). Palestinian expert Yezid Sayigh agreed, characterizing the PFLP’s embrace of Marxism as only running “skin deep” (232).

The PFLP-SOG, particularly Haddad, was not enamored with the PFLP’s Marxist “conversion” and was decidedly uninterested in the intricacies of Maoism, Marxism or any other ‘ism (Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi 61). A “man of action,” by all accounts, Haddad was “restless and irritable, with no patience for theory or ideology of any sort, especially the Marxist turn of his leftist colleagues” (Sayigh 80). Privileging action above philosophy, Haddad’s unit eschewed abstract ideological considerations and chaffed against attempts to interject a more “Marxist agenda” into its operations (Sayigh 232).

At its core, the PFLP-SOG’s ideology was, above all, a commitment to an uncompromising violent struggle against Israel and the international forces aligned with it (Schweitzer 2012; AbuKhalil 362). His splinter group never renounced or rejected its parent organization’s Marxist philosophy. Therefore, it continued to be associated with the PFLP’s identity, particularly its ideological platform, by outside groups. Its claims of responsibility for attacks were replete with anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist rhetoric, but in practice, high-brow ideology played a limited role in the PFLP-SOG’s calculations of its actions. This helped to foster its flexible sense of ideological affinity with an array of leftist groups without concern for the particular school or interpretation of leftist thought that others adhered to, which, due to the prevalence of leftist organizations in this environment, created numerous ally options.

The centrality of the group’s self-determination objective—a desire for the total liberation of Palestine, which would be the essential catalyst to changes in the Middle East and the rest of the world—imbued it with an ethno-nationalist ideological identity as well (Becker 70; AbuKhalil
As an extension of its self-determination goal, the PFLP-SOG embraced other “national liberation” movements. This created a sense of ideological affinity with another widespread subset of terrorist groups operating during this era.

*Enemy and Victim Narrative*

In its first manifesto, the PFLP laid out its enemy and victim narrative, a feature which would remain constant even when its ideological lineage shifted towards the Soviet Union. It identified four enemies; first and foremost, its main adversary was Israel. The three other enemies were broadly conceptualized—the world Zionist movement, world imperialism, and “Arab reaction represented by Feudalism and Capitalism”—and defined largely by how they enabled the perpetuation and growth of Israel, while suppressing the Palestinians (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Information Department 8). At its core, like Fatah, the PFLP’s enemy and victim narrative emphasized Israel’s oppression of Palestine (Cooley 140). The PFLP’s principal struggle was for a Palestinian homeland, and all other activity was intended to reinforce this effort (Merari and Elad 5).

The PFLP deemed world imperialism to be a core enemy because this global order protected Israel at the expense of the Palestinians (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Information Department 16). The PFLP argued that any strategy to eliminate Israel must contend with these other enemies; otherwise, the Palestinians would underestimate the strength of their adversary (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Information Department 8). In other words, the narrow national liberation strategy advocated by Fatah was not viable because it failed to account for the supporting structures that supported Israel. Thus the PFLP’s, and by extension the PFLP-SOG’s, enemy narrative was much broader than Fatah’s and thus had more potential points of affinity with other organizations than its more powerful rival. In the PFLP’s own words:
[The Palestinian revolution, which is fused together with the Arab revolution and in alliance with world revolution] is alone capable of achieving victory. To confine the Palestinian revolution within the limits of the Palestinian people would mean failure, if we remember the nature of the enemy alliance which we are facing (45; emphasis added).

The PFLP thus portrayed itself as inextricably allied with other revolutionary forces from the outset. Its argument had a balancing logic to it; the Palestinians must ally with others in order to defeat the more powerful Israel and its allies. Alliances were thus identified as an essential component to winning the Palestinian struggle because, in part, the Zionist enemy was in an alliance with fellow imperialists against the Palestinians. Alliances were embedded into the group's construction of its ideological identity and its narrative identity from an early point.

*Ethnic Identity*

While the PFLP-SOG had a central Palestinian identity, it also retained a dose of the Arab nationalism from its ANM origins, which created a broader Arab ethnic identity as well. Other non-Arab ethnicities and nationalities began joining its ranks in the early 1970s, making the PFLP-SOG perhaps the first terrorist organization to be international in both its operations and membership. However, few non-Arabs held senior positions in the organization, in part because of its Palestinian-Arab identity as well as the fact that Haddad was reticent to trust foreigners due to fears that hostile services used them to infiltrate the group (Schweitzer 2012). This identity feature was not as prevalent as its ideological or narrative identities in terms of the group's affinity with other organizations.

### 3.6 The PFLP-SOG’s State Sponsors and Relationships

The PFLP-SOG forged relationships with a number of governments, including several major sponsors, that played a decisive role in its alliance behavior. Over the course of its decade as an...
alliance hub, the group managed fluctuating relationships with numerous minor and major powerbrokers: Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria, Syria, Uganda, Somalia, Libya, and critically, the Soviet Union, South Yemen, and Iraq. The Soviet Union, South Yemen, and, to a lesser extent, Iraq all provided assistance that bolstered its alliance position. The PFLP-SOG derived key resources from these state sponsors that made it a highly desirable partner for other organizations. Aden provided not only sanctuary, but also significant autonomy along with that haven, which allowed the PFLP-SOG to act in a manner akin to a state sponsor with its partners. Through its relationships with Moscow and Baghdad, the PFLP-SOG had access to advanced training, weapons, and materiel. In addition to these active sponsors, the PFLP and PFLP-SOG exploited the passive sponsorship of Lebanon. In return, the group was sometimes subject to the whims and demands of its sponsors and a pawn in inter-Arab state and Cold war competition between states.

Both Jordan and Lebanon were important to the PFLP and PFLP-SOG’s early relationships and its ability to develop into an alliance hub. The group carved out sanctuary in these states, which were, at times, passive and, at other times, outright resistant sponsors. Early on, the PFLP and its burgeoning special operations unit were entrenched in Jordan, where the fedayeen established a state within a state and brazenly challenged the rule of King Hussein, as will be discussed in more detail below ("Down the Landslide" 36, Director of Central Intelligence “Terrorism and Internal Security” 1-5). Until 1970, Jordan was not only the launching site for cross-border operations, and a Palestinian state-within-state, it served as the Palestinian groups’ central training ground for both their own fighters and the first wave of outside groups and volunteers. Emerging leftist and ethno-nationalist groups from all over the world journeyed to Jordan to acquire skills, and the Palestinian groups, including the PFLP, sought to increase international support for their predicament through these foreign visitors (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 76-8).
After being forcibly ousted from Jordan in September 1970, the PFLP and other Palestinian groups settled in Lebanon. Lebanon was a desirable fallback location because it still offered access to neighboring Israel. It quickly became the central hub for Palestinian groups. Beirut was unable to resist or manage the proliferation of armed Palestinian groups on its soil and was then further weakened by Israeli reprisal actions following fedayeen attacks (United States Department of State Embassy Beirut “Lebanese Efforts” 1-2). Lebanon replaced Jordan as the primary location where the PFLP/PFLP-SOG forged alliances with other groups. As will be discussed below, the PFLP-SOG’s time in Jordan and Lebanon corresponded with its development into an alliance hub, particularly in the wake of its high-profile attacks, which attracted partners. Soon, the PFLP-SOG diversified its bases, though Lebanon continued to be a hub for PFLP and, to a lesser extent, PFLP-SOG as well.

While Lebanon was a well-known haunt for Palestinian militant groups, the PFLP-SOG’s most critical base was the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (Charbel 69). The PFLP-SOG established both a haven and training apparatus in the Soviet satellite state in the early 1970s that it subsequently extended to its partners. Aden offered the PFLP-SOG some active assistance, including training, weapons, transit, haven, and forged passports (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Soviet Support” 13). More than that, Aden allowed the group significant latitude, including the ability to bring “guests” to its facilities (Charbel 53). This was the most consequential asset from an alliance perspective; Aden’s liberal sanctuary policies allowed the PFLP-SOG to host, train, and vet potential allies. While Lebanon bustled with Palestinian activity, the PFLP-SOG grew more selective about who gained entry into South Yemen in order to prevent enemy infiltration, and it became the group’s primary alliance asset (Schweitzer).

Unlike Lebanon, South Yemen was not proximate to Israel, which reduced its utility as a launching pad for attacks directly into Israel, but contributed to it being a more secure base.
Moreover, Israel could not conduct retaliatory strikes in South Yemen because Aden was under Soviet protection (Charbel 75). The Soviet Union was thus also essential to the PFLP-SOG’s haven in South Yemen. The relationship was supplemented by personal ties between the government and the PFLP-SOG. Haddad in particular had a close relationship with the National Liberation Front-led government there that dated back to his days in the ANM (Cubert 131-2).

Aden asked very little of the PFLP-SOG in return; it did not request that the PFLP-SOG conduct operations on its behalf. In addition to the safe haven, training facilities, and other aid, it was willing to allow the PFLP-SOG’s hijacked planes arrive at Aden's airport and then quietly release the attackers after the international pressure subsided. Prisoners hailing from terrorist organizations who were released as part of deals in hostage operations elsewhere were frequently received in Aden. Aden was an ideal sponsor, from an alliance hub’s perspective, in its permissiveness and lack of requirements.

The PFLP-SOG’s relationship with Baghdad influenced PFLP-SOG’s alliance hub development, but it functioned quite differently than its relationship with Aden. Baghdad provided the PFLP-SOG with weapons, money, and haven. The PFLP-SOG’s facilities in Iraq were used for sensitive meetings and consultations with allies, though it did not often conduct training there. Overall, Baghdad imposed more restrictions on its activities than Aden (Charbel 67). Hunted by the Israelis, Haddad moved frequently after 1971 and was often in Baghdad after 1975 (Charbel 68). Unlike Aden, Baghdad did sometimes request that its client conduct operations at its behest. The group agreed to conduct a few operations for Baghdad, most notably an attack on an oil ministers meeting in Vienna in 1975. Baghdad also urged the PFLP-SOG to attack an El Al plane in 1974 to derail Arafat’s negotiations initiative (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 95).
For its part, the Soviet Union was engaged in a "double game" vis-à-vis the fedayeen. In addition to Cold War considerations, Moscow's overall calculation was shaped by its desire to maintain influence in the Middle East and gain advantage over China for the hearts and minds of the Communist Left. Moscow simultaneously publically condemned acts of international terrorism, especially hijackings, and expressed support for the Palestinian's “national liberation” efforts. Moscow openly hosted Palestinian leaders, including Arafat in 1972, and provided clandestine support, such as training and weapons to various Palestinian actors (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 4).

Despite its public stance against terrorism and hijackings, the Soviet Union provided significant covert support to the PFLP-SOG, an organization solely dedicated to international terrorist operations. The Soviets were largely successful at hiding their relationship with the PFLP-SOG or at least relegating it to the sphere of speculation (Andrew and Mitrokhin 247). The State Department’s Intelligence and Research Bureau even assessed in 1973 that Moscow preferred George Habash to Wadi Haddad, when, in fact, Haddad had established a relationship with the KGB several years prior (Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Middle East: The Evolution of Fedayeen Strategy” 3; Andrew and Mitrokhin 247).

Haddad was recruited by the KGB in 1970—while he was still part of the PFLP—and he undertook a few missions at its request. For example, Haddad attempted to kidnap the CIA deputy chief of station in Beirut at Moscow’s request (Andrew and Mitrokhin 247). Only Haddad knew of the Soviet connection to that failed operation. Through its relationship to Haddad, the KGB received advanced notice of major PFLP-SOG attacks, but the KGB did not try to interfere with PFLP-SOG's operations (Andrew and Mitrokhin 249). In fact, some of the PFLP-SOG’s attacks against Arab Governments were seemingly not in the Soviets’ interests, which strongly suggests that the Soviets
did not control the PFLP-SOG or Haddad, as some have argued (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Soviet Support” 14; AbuKhalil personal interview).

This behind-the-scenes relationship was a key enabling factor for the PFLP-SOG’s alliance hub position. Moscow provided advanced weapons and training to the PFLP-SOG throughout the group’s existence, which the PFLP-SOG then imparted to its allies. Moscow had more influence over Aden than any other state in the Middle East, so it is no coincidence that South Yemen was the PFLP-SOG’s primary haven ((United States Central Intelligence Agency “Soviet Support” 15). Moscow generally kept an arm’s length distance from the PFLP-SOG’s alliances and did not attempt to influence its alliance decisions. Moscow did use the PFLP-SOG’s contacts to facilitate clandestine interactions with other terrorist groups on occasion (Andrew and Mitrokhin 247).

Haddad’s desire to obtain Soviet arms probably factored heavily into his willingness to work with the KGB. The PFLP-SOG gained extensive arms, and sophisticated equipment rarely available to a terrorist organization. For example, Haddad received five radio-activated SNOP mines, fifteen booby trapped mines fabricated with untraceable foreign materials, and several types of silencers in a large cache of pistols, ammunition, and machine guns. These mines were among the most advanced small arms in the Soviet arsenal and neither the mines nor the silencers had even been shared with other Warsaw Pact countries (Andrew and Mitrokhin 247). Select PFLP-SOG operatives received advanced instruction from the Soviets, but Soviet trainers were not present at PFLP-SOG training facilities. As one PFLP-SOG commander characterized the group’s relationship with Moscow, “[w]e saw ourselves in one trench, but there was not field cooperation” (Charbel 75).

Thus the PFLP-SOG was operating within the context of Cold War allegiances and rivalries of the time. However, to conclude that the Soviets were the puppet master of the PFLP-SOG’s international network—as some have done—is to underestimate the group and Haddad’s
commitment to destroying Israel (AbuKhalil personal interview). It is more aptly characterized as an influential and mutually beneficial relationship. The KGB itself assessed that:

> [t]he nature of our relations with W. Haddad enables us to control the external operations of the PFLP to a certain degree, to exert influence in a manner favourable (sic) to the Soviet Union, and also to carry out active measures in support of our interests through the organization’s assets while observing the necessary conspiratorial secrecy (qtd. in Andrew and Mitrokhin 247).

Other states offered more sporadic assistance that further bolstered the PFLP-SOG’s alliance position. The PFLP-SOG sought to constantly diversify its state sponsors. Its relationships with other Soviet-aligned states during this period were less predictable, and none developed into reliable partners. The group had an uneasy relationship with Damascus, as its arrest of Habash demonstrated. The PFLP-SOG sometimes used Syria as a destination during hijacking operations, much to Damascus’s dismay (United States Department of State “Red Army Terrorists” 1-2). The PFLP-SOG cultivated a relationship with the Ugandan Government, which climaxed in 1976 when Kampala welcomed—and even provided protection for—a plane that the PFLP-SOG hijacked with its West German ally, the Revolutionary Cells. Prior to the hijacking, Haddad sent Ugandan leader Idi Amin a letter appealing for Amin’s assistance:

> We believe that the people of Uganda and their President, famous for his brave positions against Israel and World Zionism Imperialism and President of the O.A.U. will welcome our comrades [sic] the Commando Unit responsible for the operation with their hostages and the plane their have [sic] controlled in Uganda. We also believe that you would welcome our comrades from the prisons of the Enemy when they are freed to your country. We depend on the hospitality of the Ugandan People of Uganda and on the courage [sic] nationalism and revolutionary positions the President of Uganda has taken (qtd. in Charbel 175).

The Somali Government permitted the group to conduct limited training and operate a few facilities. This relationship came to an abrupt end in 1977 when the Siad Barre regime betrayed the PFLP-SOG by allowing the West German Government to conduct a mission to rescue hostages being held in Mogadishu (Charbel 67; United States Department of State “Minutes” 2-3).
The PFLP-SOG received occasional aid, logistical assistance, and transit privileges from the regimes in Algeria and Libya, but neither was a major or consistent source of support for the group (Cubert 132). The PFLP infuriated Algiers soon after its inception by diverting its first hijacked plane to Algeria without prior warning, leading the Algerian regime to accuse the group of trying to embarrass Algiers at Cairo’s behest (Charbel 45). Nonetheless, Algeria was still a place where PFLP-SOG meetings and travel occurred largely unhindered. While Libya was a sponsor of numerous Palestinian groups, the PFLP-SOG was not close with Tripoli nor did Tripoli influence its alliances.

As will be discussed in detail below, the PFLP-SOG’s relationships with state sponsors would prove to be an integral part of its web of alliances. Yet no state dictated the PFLP-SOG’s partners or managed the PFLP-SOG’s relationships. No state policed the group’s alliances or acted as a cooperation enforcer. One of the benefits of multiple sponsors was that the PFLP-SOG was not beholden to any one government; by extension, no individual government could control the PFLP-SOG or use it solely for its own purposes. At the same time, its state sponsors fostered conditions under which the PFLP-SOG could forge and sustain a transnational alliance network.

3.7 A Chronology of the PFLP’s Early Operations, Activities, and the Role of Alliances

The Initiation of an International Campaign

At the outset of its armed campaign after the 1967 War, the PFLP launched cross border attacks into Israel from neighboring Jordan, where the PFLP was primarily based. By the spring of 1968, the PFLP had trained a few thousand fighters, less than Fatah, but was still a respectable force (Cooley 139). Yet it was not long before the PFLP realized that the Israelis were adept at protecting their territory and possessed superior conventional capability. Israeli forces readily repulsed Palestinian cross border attacks and established a robust “anti-infiltration system,” including
fences, mines, infrared and sonic detection devices, and land and air patrols that prevented large-scale infiltrations and made even minor raids very difficult (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Anti-Israeli” 8). Therefore, the Palestinians could not effectively fight from within Israel nor could they penetrate deeply enough from outside to inflict real damage on Israeli territory. While the attacks were a nuisance for Israel, the costs incurred by the Palestinian fighters mounted. In addition, these efforts went largely unnoticed by the world and did not garner international attention for the Palestinians’ predicament (Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi 59-61).

Wadi’ Haddad recommended an alternative way forward (Becker 74; Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi 60). Haddad’s proposal would alter the way the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was fought for the next decade, usher in the era of international terrorism, and position the PFLP to become an alliance hub (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63). Given the Palestinians’ inability to meaningfully strike within Israel, Haddad argued the battlefield should not be confined to Israel, but should span the globe, striking Israeli interests wherever they could be found (Schweitzer and Ophir 9; Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi 59-60). The PFLP could thereby exploit Israel’s relative weakness abroad. Perhaps more importantly, this approach would draw worldwide attention to the Palestinians’ plight and make the Palestinians more than “Israel’s problem.” Haddad presciently predicted that “[t]he world will ask, What the hell is the problem in Palestine? Who are these Palestinians? Why are they doing these things?” (Abu-Sharif and Mahnaimi 60). Habash argued that increasing international awareness of the Palestinian cause was the primary objective of these operations. During an interview in 1998, Habash claimed that:

Wadi’ and I were trying to determine how world opinion could be awakened to the injustice that has been done to the Palestinian people. Wadi’ came up with the hijacking idea, but he repeatedly used to instruct those carrying out the operations not to hurt anyone in any way. We wanted to attract world attention through some action, and that was it (Habash and Soueid 93).
To that end, Haddad formed the select, secretive unit that would become PFLP-SOG. Haddad used his array of contacts from his ANM days to recruit and hire operatives, mostly Arabs, with the requisite skills for such operations, especially aviation skills (Charbel 43). In July 1968, the PFLP baptized Haddad’s strategy. Three armed PFLP operatives hijacked an Israeli El Al commercial plane leaving Rome for Tel Aviv and diverted it to Algiers (United States Department of State “Israeli Plane” 1). In exchange for the hostages on board, the PFLP demanded the release of Palestinian militants detained in Israel (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63). According to one account, the group mistakenly believed that Israeli General and future Prime Minister Ariel Sharon would be on board the plane, which would have given it significant leverage in its demands (Cooley 146). Until this incident, hijackings were a way for hijackers to travel to off-limits, inaccessible destinations, like Cuba. Now, the PFLP had politicized the act in a way previously unseen. It deliberately targeted a symbol of Israel, demanded a prisoner exchange—which forced Israel to recognize and negotiate with the Palestinian attackers—and seized international attention (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 63). The last of the hostages were released a little more than a month later (Cooley 147). While Israel did not agree to a direct prisoner exchange, it subsequently pardoned sixteen Palestinian prisoners who were sentenced to lengthy prison terms as a “humanitarian gesture” (United States Department of State “Fedayeen Attack Against El Al Plane” 1).

In addition to adapting to the challenges of striking Israel and awakening world opinion, the PFLP’s decision to take the fight to the international realm was heavily influenced by three interrelated organizational dynamics. First, as discussed earlier, was the desire to compete with Fatah for recruits and public support. In many respects, this was a harbinger of future outbidding behavior between Palestinian militant groups. Habash was imprisoned in Syria at the time and without its charismatic leader, the recently-formed PFLP feared it was rapidly losing ground to
Fatah. The hijacking was thus a way to counterbalance its larger and more powerful rival. The act indeed got the PFLP greater public support and recognition from Palestinians who were eager to strike a blow at Israel (Charbel 45). Second, such a high-profile operation was a way to shore up loyalty among the sometimes restive rank and file. The group’s internal cohesion had been shaky since its inception, so the hijacking’s success helped reinforce organizational unity. But these operations also strengthened the position of certain factions within the PFLP at the expense of others, thereby sowing the seeds of future disharmony (Sayigh 214). Lastly, these operation attracted new members and recruits. One of the PFLP’s most famous female operatives, Leila Khaled, attributed her defection from Fatah to the PFLP to the 1968 hijacking. She pointed to the 1968 hijacking as “an eye opener for me. It was the beginning of the end of my exile. I was about to be liberated; I had found an alternative to Fatah and I sought to make contacts with the PFLP” (108).

Moreover, the decision to conduct international operations was pivotal for the PFLP-SOG’s development as an alliance hub in at least two ways. First, the unit’s founding mission was to conduct international attacks, which from the outset created organizational needs within the PFLP to have access an array of skills and resources that differed from the cross-border and conventional military tactics that the group had employed to no avail thus far. These needs stimulated the PFLP’s early outreach to other organizations. Haddad’s role in creating and managing these relationships flowed from his central position in devising the external operations strategy. Second, this operation, as the first of its kind, earned the PFLP a reputation internationally as an operationally innovative and capable organization, which vastly improved its desirability as an alliance partner. After the 1968 hijacking, fellow “revolutionary” groups poured into the PFLP’s facilities seeking training and aid (Charbel 61). As one Haddad lieutenant reminisced, “Wadi became a symbol and a sanctuary.” His group’s facilities “became a place for the revolutionaries to be trained [for those
who sought to], and rock the world with violence” (Charbel 61). The PFLP-SOG was now in a position to pick among those who sought training to find the most useful allies.

The PFLP scored an early victory with the hijackings, but the Israelis quickly instituted measures to improve El Al security and to deter future attacks by conducting retaliatory attacks (Cobban 146; Byman A High Price 42). One clear indicator of Israel’s success was the fact that there were further no other successful PFLP hijackings of El Al planes occurred after the 1968 attack, despite numerous attempts. During an attempted PFLP hijacking of an El Al plane in Zurich in early 1969, El Al security killed one operative and injured three others (Mannes 317). These preventative measures were coupled with retaliation, such as Israel’s decision to blow up thirteen planes belonging to Lebanese carriers\(^b\) at the Beirut airport in response to a PFLP shooting of an El Al plane on the tarmac at Athens airport in December 1968. This was a way for Israel to hold the Lebanese Government responsible for the actions of militant groups on its soil. Beirut responded—and the U.S. Embassy in Beirut agreed—that the Lebanese Government was doing what it could to suppress the Palestinian groups without destabilizing the country and that Israeli claims of the centrality of Lebanon as a base for Palestinian activity were exaggerated. Either way, these Israeli counterstrikes did little to damage the PFLP and much more to hurt the already weak Lebanese Government (United States Department of State “El Al Plane” 1-3). Khaled gleefully pointed out that the planes destroyed by Israel were seventy to eighty percent American owned (112). A spate of hijackings followed, including that of an American TWA plane flying from Rome to Tel Aviv by a PFLP team (Cobban 147). A dizzying tit for tat cycle ensued—the hijacked TWA plane was destroyed on the tarmac in Damascus, which the PFLP claimed was in response to the Israeli retaliatory strike on the Beirut airport and the retribution continued (Sayigh 214).

\(^b\) While all were Lebanese carriers, $18 million in U.S. loans were invested in the aircraft destroyed.
With its enhanced security measures in place, El Al planes proved almost impossible to hijack. The PFLP special operations unit continued to probe for weaknesses, but soon adapted its tactics to the changed environment by targeting other airlines. The group had justified its attacks on El Al planes by insisting that the airline was not really a civilian target. Habash argued that “El Al is a military objective because it transports military personnel and material” (qtd. in Cooley 146). Leila Khaled similarly referred to El Al as Israel’s “semi-military, semi-civilian airline” (107). Unable to strike El Al, the PFLP then rationalized broadening its attacks to other airlines by pointing to their role in supporting “imperialist” interests and connecting Israel with the rest of the world (Sayigh 214). The group hoped to disrupt international travel to Israel, which would harm its economy and increase its isolation. This rationalization began the slide down a slippery slope on which the PFLP’s attacks became less clearly related to the Palestinian cause.

These attacks served several goals, but the alliance benefits were tertiary. One was to compel the release of Palestinian prisoners (Public Broadcasting Service “Hijacked”). Although Israel soon refused to acquiesce to these demands, others were detained in European jails by governments that did not have the same resolve as Israel to resist (Abu Iyad 98). The demands for Palestinian prisoners to be released also created a disincentive for governments to detain Palestinians. These operations also served the purpose of punishing Western governments for their relationships with Israel or lack of “adequate” support for the Palestinians (Cobban 147). Perhaps above all, the PFLP-SOG continued to seek publicity for the Palestinian cause by shocking international opinion and imbuing the sense that no one could remain neutral in the conflict (Sayigh 214).

To that end, between December 1968 and September 1969, the PFLP made Europe a central battleground, targeting Israeli businesses and aircraft in Athens, Zurich, London, the Hague,
Brussels, and Bonn (Sayigh 214). It openly and proudly claimed these operations in the PFLP’s name (Schweitzer and Ophir 12). With Haddad at the helm of PFLP's operations, from 1968 to late 1971, the group carried out nearly all of the Palestinian-perpetrated attacks in West Europe (Alexander and Myers 15). Its hostility to the U.S. and “reactionary” Arab regimes continued unabated, as evidenced by two attacks on a U.S.-owned pipeline carrying Saudi oil through the Golan Heights in 1969. Although the group sought to exploit the publicity value of attacking American targets, it did not—or was not able to—conduct any attacks within the United States. The United States did not have Palestinian prisoners, so attacks on U.S. interests were accompanied by demands to exert pressure on other governments to release prisoners. The PFLP used its own operatives, mostly Palestinians or other Arabs, to conduct these early attacks. It attracted intelligent and professional members who were drawn to the group’s ability and willingness to brazenly confront Israel (Charbel 43-4). Moreover, Haddad’s ability to force the world to ask, “Who are these Palestinians? Why are they doing these things?” necessitated the use of Palestinian operatives to execute these early operations.

The PFLP’s relationships with other groups were simultaneously burgeoning, primarily the provision of training in Jordan and other assistance, usually for a price and propaganda, which some other Palestinian groups were doing this period as well. Most of the groups and trainees were either leftists or ethno-nationalist separatists, although there were also sporadic reports of right-wing West Germans training in PFLP facilities (Charbel 69-75). At the time, the CIA assessed “[t]he only philosophical basis required to establish international connections is a common conviction in terrorism and violent revolution as a means to destroy the established order” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 2). Determining precisely who trained at the PFLP’s camps during this period is problematic because Fatah was also engaging in similar training efforts, sometimes in close proximity or even in concert with the PFLP’s facilities.
Therefore, it is impossible to sort through the abundant vague references to training by the 
*fedayeen* or “the PLO” and definitively determine which refer to the PFLP vice Fatah or another 
group altogether. Overall, these connections helped the PFLP-SOG to operate and conduct its 
campaign in Europe, but allies did not participate in its operations. Its ties with other groups 
expanded in scope and number with each high-profile operation.

The PFLP’s relationships were on the cusp of taking on a more prominent role. Its 
willingness to provide training coupled with its audacious international operations drew the 
attention of fellow revolutionaries and hostile governments alike. Consequently, Palestinian 
operatives were experiencing more difficulty penetrating the security measures. Haddad soon 
realized that the group’s foreign allies could provide an important advantage: circumventing 
security procedures that increasingly focused on Palestinians or Arabs.

*1970: Pushing the Envelope with Operations and Allies*

The PFLP’s special operations unit was poised to escalate the scale and scope of its 
operations in 1970, and the role of alliances in its attacks was also changing. However, the PFLP’s 
precarious unity once again began to falter in the face of mounting questions about the wisdom of 
this approach and resentment of Haddad’s autonomy and influence (Schweitzer and Ophir 28-9). 
Undeterred, in September 1970, Haddad orchestrated the simultaneous hijacking of three 
international planes to be diverted to Dawson Field in Jordan—an airstrip under Palestinian 
control, dubbed “Revolution Airport” (Public Broadcasting Service “Hijacked”).

It was an operation on a scale never seen before. But the attempt on one of the three planes, 
an El Al plane, was stymied by the airline’s security. One hijacker, a Nicaraguan-American, was 
killed by an undercover security guard, and the plane made an emergency landing in London where 
the surviving hijacker, the infamous female PFLP operative Leila Khaled, was detained by British 
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authorities. Two operatives who had originally been slated to be part of Khaled’s team, but were
denied boarding by vigilant El Al security, proceeded to hijack a fourth plane—a jumbo jet, which
was diverted to Cairo because it was too large for “Revolution Airport” in Jordan. Three days later
yet another British plane was seized by an enterprising PFLP team that sought to compensate for
the unsuccessful attempt and pressure the British government to release Khaled. Multi-country
negotiations ensued with the International Red Cross serving as the negotiator. Eventually, the
hostages were freed, and the PFLP secured the release of prisoners in European jails, including
Khaled (Cobban 147).

Among its numerous “accomplishments,” this operation would mark the first time that an
ally participated directly in a PFLP operation. In the aftermath of the operation, observers were
puzzled to learn that the hijacker killed in the unsuccessful attempt was an American. His
nationality was initially unclear as he had posed as Khaled’s husband using a false name to avoid
arousing suspicion. Who was this individual and what was his connection to the PFLP?

His name was Patrick Arguello. American-born, he had lived in Nicaragua for part of his
childhood with his Irish American mother and Nicaraguan father before moving back to the United
States as a teenager. Arguello was a bright and successful student. He studied political science—
Latin American studies in particular—at UCLA and was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to study in
Chile. But events in Nicaragua, particularly opposition to the dynasty military dictatorship of
Anastasio Somoza, remained a primary concern for Arguello. He journeyed back to Nicaragua and
joined the Sandinistas, a Marxist group dedicated to the overthrow of the Somoza regime. Arguello
was a part of the contingent of Sandinistas who traveled to Jordan to train with the PFLP during the
spring of 1970 (Public Broadcasting Service “Hijacked”).
Haddad appointed Khaled as the leader of the team tasked with hijacking the El Al plane. As was characteristic of Haddad’s security protocol, only a handful of people in the entire organization knew of the broader plan to hijack three planes, including Khaled and the heads of the other two original teams (Khaled 184). Arguello was not privy to the details or scope of the operation; he only knew of his role as a hijacker. Khaled met him for the first time a few days prior to the operation at the air terminal in Stuttgart, but the relationship between the two groups was already well established by that time (Khaled 180-4; Charbel 66-8).

A State Department paper “The Sandinistas and Middle East Radicals” and a RAND publication “The PLO and Israel in Central America” report that the Cuban Government provided the forum for the initial connection between the Sandinistas and the Palestinians (1; 3). Cuba was not a major sponsor for the PFLP, but Havana sometimes offered a venue for ties to be created. At the Tri-Continental Conference in Havana in 1966, President Fidel Castro gathered delegates from an array of leftist movements hailing from “the global revolutionary movement,” an ideal opportunity for introductions to be made between the attending Palestinians and Nicaraguans.

In 1969, the Sandinistas sent the first of several contingents to train at a PLO camp, probably run by Fatah (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 1). The Sandinistas trainees were disappointed with their training experience. In addition to some physical conditioning, they were taught how to fight in the desert and slit a camel’s belly, skills that were of little use in their environment in South America (Public Broadcasting Service “Hijacked”). The West Germans who subsequently journeyed to Jordan in 1970 lodged similar complaints about their training experience with Fatah (Aust 67-8). Fatah was not overly concerned with building the capability of its partners; rather it continued to focus on generating propaganda through cooperation.
The Sandinistas then approached the Fourth International, a Trotskyite group based in Paris, with a request for help in finding a group that could provide more sophisticated and appropriate training. The PFLP’s international operations had clearly demonstrated the sophistication that the Sandinistas were looking for in their training. The Fourth International facilitated outreach to the PFLP on behalf of the Sandinistas (Public Broadcast Service “Hijacked”). Their common Marxist ideology helped to foster these early interactions, though ideological compatibility was not sufficient for the PFLP to agree to provide training. The PFLP wanted a quid pro quo to fulfill one of its emerging organizational adaptation needs; it would provide training if the Sandinistas would assist the PFLP-SOG with operations. The Sandinistas agreed and a delegation traveled to Lebanon to PFLP’s training facilities (Public Broadcast Service “Hijacked”; Charbel 68). While the Fatah camps were primarily a propaganda tool, the PFLP provided training that would confer useful guerilla and terrorist skills to the participants. The PFLP’s motive went beyond ideological solidarity; the PFLP-SOG used the camps to vet potential operatives for its operations and thus sought to determine which groups were the most promising allies.

Why Patrick Arguello in particular was selected from among the Sandinistas trainees is less clear. Given Haddad’s micro-managing tendencies and the importance of this operation in particular, he certainly made the final decision on Arguello’s participation. Arguello must have demonstrated some aptitude during training. It is unclear if his American citizenship was part of the calculation, but at a minimum it helped that he was non-Palestinian as he could more readily evade security. But Haddad would only have taken Arguello if he was viewed as, above all else, a competent and reliable operative.

Khaled heralded Arguello in her memoir and emphasized his ideological motivation for participating.
What had prompted someone half-way across the world from Palestine to undertake this dangerous mission? Patrick was a revolutionary Communist. His gallant action was a gesture of international solidarity. A flame of life was extinguished; it lit the world for a moment; it blazed a trail on the road back to Palestine. Arguello lives, so do my people, so does the revolution (191).

Arguello, like his counterparts, clearly felt a sense of ideological affinity to his Palestinian hosts. Yet there is little in his background to suggest that Arguello was particularly dedicated to the Palestinian cause or that he demonstrated an exceptional concern for the Palestinians compared to the other trainees. His allegiance to the Palestinian cause was an extension of his commitment to the situation in Nicaragua. Moreover, Haddad's impatience with ideological fervor suggests that this criterion would not have factored heavily into his selection of Arguello, even if it did exist.

Some have questioned whether his participation was a decision by Arguello and thus only indicative of an individual-level relationship, vice an organizational-level alliance (Hoffman “The PLO” 6). In addition to the absence of indications that Arguello was particularly committed to the PFLP-SOG's objectives, an organizational-level relationship had been forged between the PFLP and the Sandinistas at this time, which strongly suggests that Arguello was acting in his capacity as a representative of the Sandinistas. Furthermore, the Sandinistas' spokesman embraced the hijacking operation, telling *al-Watan* newspaper—

A number of Sandinistas took part in the operation to divert four aircraft which the PFLP seized and landed at a deserted airfield in Jordan. One of our comrades was also wounded in a hijack operation in which Leila Khaled was involved. She was in command of the operation and our comrades helped her carry it out (qtd. in United States Department of State "The Sandinistas" 3).

While the spokesman seemingly exaggerated the extent of the Sandinistas' role in the operation, his statement makes it clear that Arguello's participation was not that of a rogue operative, unsanctioned by the group. It was the Sandinistas fulfilling its end of the bargain with the PFLP, and it did not begrudge the PFLP for it, despite Arguello's death. Arguello was memorialized as a martyr by his comrades in the years to come, including a dam named in his honor when the
group took power in Nicaragua (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 2 and Middle Eastern Radicals”). He was celebrated by his Palestinian comrades as well. In a post-mortem letter, Khaled assured Arguello that his act had transcended his life and had “given us a lesson in international solidarity and brotherhood and cemented the bond of affection between the people of Latin American and the people of Palestine... [Y]ou united continents by your all-encompassing spirit” (198).

The Sandinistas and Palestinian groups continued their interactions over the next decade, although the PFLP/PFLP-SOG did not employ Sandinistas operatives in any subsequent attacks. An Israeli military officer claimed that 150 Sandinistas were trained at PLO camps during the 1970s, though it is unclear which of these were PFLP facilities (as cited in Hoffman “The PLO” 5). Similarly, the CIA reported that an effort to recruit Nicaraguans for “fedayeen training” was disrupted by the Nicaraguan Government in 1972 (“Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 4). Through its relationship with the PFLP and other PLO entities, the Sandinistas got access to weapons and other forms of aid (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 6, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 4). The Sandinistas and other Palestinian elements, including the PFLP’s rival, the DFLP, engaged in rhetorical support for one another throughout the decade (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 6). The relationships did not end when the Sandinistas came to power in the late 1970s. It then established “government to government” ties with the PLO and allowed the PLO to open an embassy in Managua (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 7).

Black September

The PFLP-SOG’s multiple hijacking operation was groundbreaking in several respects, including from an alliance perspective. But for the Jordanian Government, it was the final
provocation in a series of flagrant Palestinian violations of Jordanian sovereignty and challenges to King Hussein’s rule. In response, the Jordanian military forcibly expelled the Palestinians.

Thousands were killed in a bloody confrontation that followed, which was dubbed “Black September.” The Sandinistas still present fought alongside their PFLP comrades against Jordanian forces—another act of unity heralded by the Sandinistas’ spokesman—but it was of little consequence for the results (United States Department of State “The Sandinistas” 2; Hoffman “The PLO” 5).

In the aftermath of their Black September defeat, the fedayeen were far from unified. Habash could not ignore the recriminations coming from all sides as his besieged group gathered in Lebanon. Habash himself came under intense criticism for being “conveniently” out of the country on a “friendly visit” to North Korea at the time of the hijackings (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 80). Fatah publicly condemned the hijackings, calling them an act of “extremism of diehard maximalists” (Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Middle East” 3; Abu Iyad and Rouleau 95). The PFLP was suspended from serving on the PLO central committee (Cooley 113). Within the PFLP, the blame landed squarely on Haddad and his operations unit (Schweitzer and Ophir 22). Not only was it his operation, Haddad was de facto in charge of the PFLP during the hijackings and the fallout because Habash was out of the country (Cooley 113). Habash initially defended the hijackings—and by extension, his friend Haddad—arguing that “[w]hen we hijack a plane it has more effect than if we killed one hundred Israelis in battle” (qtd. in Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 66). But the tactic and the fallout fomented schisms the PFLP that he could not leave unaddressed (Cooley 152).

The group already had a presence in Lebanon, but after its expulsion in Jordan, it shifted the more of its infrastructure there, including training facilities. But the PFLP-SOG looked for options to diversify to ensure it was not dependent on any one country again and to acquire protection from
Israeli retaliatory strikes. It opened facilities and training camps in South Yemen in 1970-1971, as well as some offices in Iraq. South Yemen soon grew to become the PFLP-SOG’s most important base; Haddad’s ties with Aden and covert relationship with the KGB provided his group with unfettered freedom of action there (Charbel 69). Foreign trainees from Europe, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere streamed into its camps in even greater numbers following the 1970 hijackings, which garnered substantial media coverage. The PFLP-SOG began to more carefully vet prospective trainees and cultivated ties more selectively with those who demonstrated promise and utility. It initiated cooperation in areas such as sharing documents, provision of weapons, and training, and then gradually built towards an alliance with select groups (Schweitzer; Charbel 58).

With the buildup of training infrastructure in Aden as well as in Lebanon, the PFLP-SOG created an alliance hub system centered on its provision of training and safe haven and the use of allies in operational activities. As one of Haddad’s lieutenants described it, “[t]he camp was for training and certifying with each other. The intention was not military certification by itself, but also ideological, psychological, and political training for the battlefield” (Charbel 71). The PFLP-SOG tailored a training regimen for each group. The duration of the training was based on the needs of each group. It could be conducted in multiple languages, including English, which was used for sessions with the European groups (Charbel 75). The program began with physical fitness and learning discipline and then progressed to military training, including learning topography and working with “every light weapon that men could possibly use in a guerilla war,” including explosives (Charbel 74). Haddad’s trainers—all Arabs with fighting experience—carefully observed the foreign trainees and recommended those who demonstrated promise for further specialized training or missions (Charbel 34, 77). Those that were considered “serious” were introduced to Haddad (Charbel 68). Haddad would de-brief trainees to determine the efficacy of different aspects of the training regimen so that it could be refined for the future (Charbel 77). During the course of a
group’s training, if it demonstrated promise, a specific mission would be proposed. Then, if the group was deemed competent and was willing, it would be trained specifically to conduct that operation (Charbel 66). With this constant feedback and adjustment cycle, the PFLP-SOG created a well-oiled alliance machinery. The infrastructure in South Yemen grew so extensive that it lasted nearly until the country collapsed in 1990 (Charbel 70).

The PFLP-SOG realized that, not only did foreign operatives provide a tactical advantage in that they could penetrate security measures with less scrutiny, but now that the world was indeed asking about Palestinians, the use of foreign operatives were a way for the group to project an international aura and cause people to ask another question: why are these foreigners, with no direct stake in the Arab-Israeli conflict, conducting operations on behalf of the Palestinians? (Merari personal interview) Their participation created a sense that the Palestinian cause transcended the Palestinians or even the Arabs and kept the issue in the international spotlight. This calculation was evolving when, a handful of Japanese leftists arrived in Lebanon in 1971 seeking training and “revolutionary experience” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 4).

*Post-Black September: The PFLP-SOG Adapts*

Despite Habash’s justification of the value of hijackings, he could no longer ignore the costs. The group was divided and having acute money problems. At the PFLP Central Committee meeting in late 1971, the leadership decided to halt airplane hijackings (Sayigh 305). But Haddad’s position as the head of the external operations unit and founding leader of the organization afforded him significant autonomy as well as access to the most promising recruits and considerable financial resources. His hijacking activities were not only attention grabbing, they could be profitable. He extorted airlines and governments, agreeing to refrain from attacks on their property in exchange
for handsome “protection” payments (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 340). Furthermore, Haddad refused to inform the PFLP’s Central Committee of impending operations, citing what he viewed as the more pressing need for operational security (Schweitzer and Ophir 24). This situation became a source of untenable friction within the organization.

By 1972, the PFLP-SOG’s relationship to the PFLP was thoroughly strained, and PFLP’s control over the SOG’s operations was growing more limited. The PFLP adopted an a la carte approach to Haddad’s operations, selectively embracing or condemning them on a case-by-case basis. It distanced itself from the PFLP-SOG’s hijackings, but claimed other PFLP-SOG-perpetrated attacks against “Israeli, Zionist, imperialist and reactionary” targets. The extent of the PFLP’s foreknowledge of many of these actions was often unclear, although Haddad still personally informed Habash of at least some operations (Sayigh 304). When the PFLP was on the verge of bankruptcy in early 1972, organizational dissension once again mounted. The PFLP-SOG came under particular scrutiny because of the costs of its operations, which included additional expenditures like safe houses, and the opaque nature of these expenses (Charbel 54).

The PFLP-SOG opted to hijack a Lufthansa plane and extort a five million dollar ransom from the company (United States Department of State “NATO Consultations” 1-2). While this provided a badly-needed influx of funds, it was in direct contravention of the PFLP decision to cease hijackings. In response, the Central Committee voted to dissolve the special operations unit, but Haddad loyalists maintained that the money garnered prevented a much greater organizational breakdown, and that Haddad did not seek additional power from the move (Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Middle East” 3; Sayigh 304-5; Charbel 57-8). The PFLP-SOG argued that it was acceptable to extort this money from Lufthansa because the West German Government paid reparations to Israel, thus assisting Israel in repressing the Palestinians (Charbel 53-5).
Nonetheless, the PFLP publicly denied responsibility for the Lufthansa ransom operation. For his part, Haddad did not publicly respond or make his group’s status clear. Instead, Haddad used some of the money to send his operatives on an attack spree, killing five Jordanians, attacking an oil pipeline, and blowing up a factory with contracts with Israel in West Germany as well as striking oil tanks in Holland (Yallop *To the Ends of the Earth* 64).

In early May of that year, Fatah’s operational group—the Black September Organization (BSO), named after the Jordanians’ expulsion of the Palestinians—hijacked a Belgian Sabena airliner in Tel Aviv and demanded the release of over 300 prisoners held by Israel. However, at the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv, Israeli commandos stormed the plane and killed two attackers, wounded the other two, and also inadvertently killed a passenger during the raid (Yallop *To the Ends of the Earth* 64; Mannes 318; Byman *A High Price* 46). The Israelis’ message could not have been clearer; hijackings would no longer work to gain concessions. Aviation targets were growing increasingly hardened, especially for Palestinian operatives.

Later that same month, the PFLP-SOG deployed three Japanese operatives trained by PFLP-SOG in the Bekaa Valley to conduct an attack on the Lod Airport. They opened fire in the baggage claim area, killing twenty-seven people, mostly Puerto Ricans on a pilgrimage. As the Fatah operation demonstrated, the Lod Airport had become difficult for Palestinian operatives to penetrate, so the PFLP-SOG used its allies to adapt. This was the second time that the PFLP-SOG used foreign operatives in an operation. But in this case, it went a step further. The entire attack team was comprised of allied operatives, although the operation was planned by the PFLP-SOG and overseen by Haddad. From the PFLP-SOG’s perspective, the operation—even though it did not go according to plan and resulted in the death of two of the attackers—was a tremendous success (Charbel 61-3). It struck in the heart of Israel, caused terror, damaged its economy, and got massive,
worldwide media attention. It reinforced the PFLP-SOG’s “international aura” and demonstrated that revolutionary forces beyond the Middle East were aligned against Israel (Schweitzer personal interview).

The response to the attack provided insight into the state of relations between the PFLP and PFLP-SOG. The PFLP publicly heralded the operation as its own. Haddad had indeed informed Habash of the pending attack, though other PFLP leaders did not know of it, much to their dismay. But the PFLP’s claim of responsibility failed to refer to the most puzzling aspect of the operation, the Japanese perpetrators (Charbel 64). Instead, the PFLP claimed the attack was a response to Israelis’ storming of the Sabena airliner at the airport, though the plan had clearly been in the works prior to the failed Sabena operation (United States Department of State “Terrorism: Singapore Incident” 1-2).

For their part, the Israelis decided it was time to escalate their response to this international onslaught. They began a covert targeted killing campaign against the PFLP and Fatah. They had already attempted to kill Haddad by firing a rocket into his apartment in Beirut in 1970 (Khaled 181-2). Two months after the Lod Airport attack, the Israelis wired explosives to the car of the PFLP’s spokesman and editor of its weekly magazine, Ghassan Kanafani, killing him and his niece. Next, the Israelis badly injured Kanafani’s deputy, Bassam Abu Sharif, by mailing him a hollowed out book rigged with explosives (Abu Sharif and Mahnaimi 96-8). At the same time, the Israeli Government continued to exert pressure on its neighbors, especially Beirut, holding it responsible for the acts of groups operating in its territory (United States Department of State “Terrorism: Singapore Incident” 1-2). One Israel’s top targets, Haddad was constantly on the move, staying one step ahead of his pursuers, while continuing to manage every aspect of his semi-autonomous group, including its alliances.
Not to be outdone, Fatah stunned the world by taking Israeli athletes hostage at the Munich Olympics in 1972, using its “auxiliary” force, BSO (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 98). A rescue mission launched by the West Germans at the airport went awry and ended tragically with the death of all of the hostages as well as the attackers during the shootout (Byman A High Price 46). While lamenting the failure to secure the release of any prisoners in exchange for the hostages and blaming the West German Government for the bloody outcome, a senior Fatah leader reasoned that at least “[w]orld opinion was forced to take note of the Palestinian drama, and the Palestinian people imposed their presence on an international gathering that had sought to exclude them” (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 112). Unlike the PFLP-SOG, BSO was exclusively Arab, and while it had also forged relationships with non-Palestinian militant groups, it did not employ them in an operational capacity. The use of foreign operatives was an adaptation that was not readily available to Fatah, given its narrow ethno-nationalist orientation.

Parochial concerns motivated eight BSO operatives to seize the Saudi Embassy in Khartoum in March 1973 during a dinner party. They took ten hostages, including American diplomats, following the imprisonment of a comrade in Jordan who was charged with plotting an operation against the American Embassy in Amman. The United States, they reasoned, could exert sufficient pressure on the Jordanian Government to compel the operative’s release. However, when their demands for his release, as well as fifteen other prisoners, were rebuffed, the attackers killed the three Western diplomats, including the American Ambassador, the American Deputy Chief of Mission, and the Belgian Charge d’Affairs. The American DCM was a deliberate target of the operation, known to the attackers because he was stationed in Amman in 1970 and was thus seen as partially responsible for the bloodbath of Black September (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 100-2). But the attack in Sudan—which embarrassed a country that had been fairly tolerant and supportive of

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* He had been the acting Charge d’Affairs prior to the Ambassador’s arrival and was slated to leave the country.
Palestinians—was also a reflection of the increasing difficulties that Palestinian operatives had operating in other countries.

Fatah’s creation of the BSO—which it hollowly insisted was not a terrorist organization—was in part a reaction to the PFLP-SOG’s use of international terrorism and the attention and prestige it afforded Fatah’s rival (Abu Iyad and Rouleau 98). While the initial intent of these operations was to garner attention for the Palestinian cause and adapt to their inability to strike Israel directly using conventional methods, by 1973, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research pointed out nine other benefits accrued by Palestinian militants using terrorism: 1) gaining money through extortion; 2) gaining the freedom of prisoners; 3) harassing Israel; 4) subverting Jordan; 5) blocking a negotiated settlement, especially any attempted by Arab Governments without Palestinian representation; 6) nudging the Great Powers to be involved in the conflict; 7) establishing credibility with the Palestinian people; 8) radicalizing the Arab world; and 9) eroding U.S.-Arab relations (“Middle East” 3-5). Given this array of advantages, competitors, such as the BSO and PFLP-SOG, sometimes cooperated with one other (Schweitzer personal interview; Merari personal interview).

The PFLP-SOG not only saw the value of continuing to employ terrorism, but after the Lod Airport attack, it was also convinced of the utility of allies’ involvement in its attacks, both tactically and for publicity purposes. The role of allies thus continued to expand. Japanese operatives’ participated along with their Palestinian comrades in the PFLP-SOG’s next operations. In July 1973, the PFLP-SOG hijacked a Japanese Airline flight using a joint Japanese and Palestinian commando team under the alias “the Palestinian Liberation Movement.” Their demands included, for the first time, the release of a non-Palestinian prisoner, specifically the surviving Japanese attacker from the Lod Airport operation (Time Magazine 1). But Israel refused and this confused operation did not
accomplish any prisoner releases or other objectives. The PFLP, which had proudly heralded the Lod Airport attack, publicly distanced itself from this operation (Sayigh 311).

Haddad deployed a Venezuelan recruit later that year to assassinate Lord Sieff, head of the Marks & Spencer department store and vice president of the British Zionist Federation, in London (Byman A High Price 45; Yallop Tracking the Jackal 70). The use of this foreign operative did not reflect an organizational-level relationship. Attracted by the PFLP’s international attacks, he was a lone operative who joined the PFLP-SOG. The botched operation was the work of Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, aka Carlos the Jackal, and it marked his first operation—an inauspicious beginning—for the PFLP-SOG (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 69-70). Though the PFLP openly embraced the attempt, the use of a foreign operative was not publicly touted, as this was a more test to determine the capability and commitment of the brash young upstart than an effort to generate publicity for using a foreign operative. Carlos became subsequently the most notorious PFLP-SOG operative, though his mystique far surpassed his actual influence in the events to come.

The PFLP-SOG then sought ways adapt to the environment and capitalize on a shift in the regional dynamics in 1973. In October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces, with reinforcements from Iraq, Algeria, Morocco, Jordan, Kuwait, and a modest contribution of Palestinian fighters, launched a surprise attack against Israeli forces along the Suez Canal and Golan Heights. In order to pressure Israel to relinquish the territories it held since the 1967 War and to punish the United States for its support for Israel, the Arab oil-producing countries cut production by five percent and embargoed sales to the United States. The embargo lasted until March 1974 and precipitated a world energy crisis (Sayigh 319).

Sensing an ideal opportunity to exploit the situation, a joint PFLP-SOG and JRA team conducted a sabotage attack on Shell oil facilities in Singapore in January 1974. This was not the
first time the PFLP-SOG had targeted oil-related targets. The group had previously attacked an Israeli oil tanker moving Iranian oil—with guidance and materiel provided by the Soviet Union and South Yemen—and a pipeline carrying Saudi oil through the Golan Heights (Charbel 82). Haddad had become convinced that oil was the lifeblood for the imperial economy, particularly for reactionary Arab regimes (Charbel 82). Destroying the facilities in Singapore, the group calculated, would reduce the strategic oil reserve available for the American military operating in Southeast Asia, including naval vessels and airplanes participating in bombing Vietnam—a rationale only indirectly related to its central goal (Charbel 82). After inflicting minimal damage on the oil facility, the attackers were intercepted and surrounded by Singaporean naval forces while trying to flee.

Strategic rationales aside, Haddad was committed, perhaps above all, to the security of his operatives. So when the standoff between the JRA and PFLP-SOG attack team and Singaporean naval forces appeared to be at a stalemate, a PFLP-SOG team seized the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait and demanded their comrades be given safe passage (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 3). Eventually, both sets of attackers were transported to Libya and the hostages were freed. The PFLP embraced the Singapore attack, condemning the “monopolistic, exploitative oil companies” and taking the opportunity to highlight its objections to the peace conference in Geneva (United States Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 2; United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 3). This position on the Geneva conference signaled the impending PFLP withdrawal from the PLO. Later that year, the PFLP left the PLO and became a leader of the Rejectionist Front, a constellation of Palestinian groups opposed to negotiations or peace talks.

For its part, after the 1973 War, the PLO was granted observer status at the United Nations. Fatah then officially renounced international terrorism and sought greater international legitimacy
Like the PFLP, Fatah faced resistance from its terrorism wing, the BSO, when it sought to curb its activities. Fatah’s international operations campaign was more short-lived than the PFLP-SOG’s because, unlike the PFLP, Arafat was able to reign in those within the group who favored such attacks when the leadership decided to cease using the tactic (Byman *A High Price* 48). Fatah’s approach to alliances with other terrorist organizations also correspondingly shifted and it downgraded its relationships, though it retained some covert ties. This change would become evident in the coming years when at least one militant group that had worked with Fatah in the past—the West German Red Army Faction (RAF)—would find Fatah unwilling to provide further assistance when approached (Aust 269). The evolution of the Fatah and the PFLP-SOG’s relationship with the RAF and other West German organizations will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

### 3.8 The PFLP-SOG’s Peak as an Alliance Hub

The PFLP-SOG’s Europe-based network—headed by a Lebanese Christian, Michael Moukharbal, always under Haddad’s watchful eye—was well developed by 1974. By this point, the PFLP-SOG had a robust web of connections, particularly in Europe. The PFLP-SOG took its position as an alliance hub seriously, making an effort to learn more about the circumstances of its allies so it could tailor its training and assistance to those conditions. Conversely, it expected its allies to learn about its situation (Charbel 71). It was always not particularly impressed with some of its First World comrades. Leila Khaled derided some of the West Europeans who came to the PFLP’s camps proffering such slogans as “Let chaos reign.”

I exclaimed that the Palestinian people were an example of a society in chaos and without leadership, which as a result, was left at the mercy of the Zionist oppressor. I asked them what they could prescribe for us in order to overcome our kind of ‘alienation’—beards, long
hair, and toy guns? They merely paused, they smiled, they reflected, they inhaled and passed their joints on in universal wonder (122).

Nonetheless, the PFLP-SOG had created a network of alliances that spanned the globe. The group’s roster of allies and associates read like a who’s who of terrorists, militants, and revolutionaries of the time and future figures and groups of note. It trained members from the French leftist group Action Directe, the Spanish Basque ethno-nationalist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), as well as small, lesser known leftist groups from Holland, Turkey, and Spain. Relations with these groups were more limited and did not include joint operations (Charbel 71-2). It cooperated with the Tupamaros representatives located in Europe, though it did not provide training or haven for the group, which was primarily based in Uruguay (Charbel 68). Individuals from other Latin American countries came to its camp, including Chile and El Salvador, but these relationships did not reach full-fledged alliances (Charbel 72). The PFLP-SOG worked with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Turkey, funding its operations and providing weapons and passports in exchange for information and intelligence. It even fostered active ties with the anti-Shah Iranian group, Mujahidin-e-Khalq, which had a presence in Europe (Charbel 65).

A then-young Kurdish leftist named Jalal Talibani performed various tasks for Haddad in Europe as well (Charbel 13). The PFLP-SOG’s simultaneous relationships with Kurdish leftists and the Iraqi regime was a reflection of its adroit ability to manage relations even with conflicting entities. Haddad was able to work with them both for the Palestinian cause. He did not allow antagonism between entities to prevent cooperation with his group.

The PFLP-SOG had relatively few Arab groups that were allies. It worked with the Lebanese Revolutionary Brigade (Charbel 70). It also trained the Popular Front for the Liberation of Dhofar, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Eritrea, and a group from the Syrian Social Nationalist Party
A group of Libyans came to the camp in Aden, but this experience was “unsuccessful” for unspecified reasons, according to a Haddad lieutenant (Charbel 77). The PFLP-SOG was more apt to recruit Arabs to join the group than ally with fellow Arab organizations.

Some notable groups were missing from the PFLP-SOG’s extensive roster of allies. Despite the centrality of Europe as an operational theatre, unlike Fatah, the PFLP-SOG did not forge a relationship with the largest leftist group in Europe at the time, the Italian Red Brigades. It trained other Italian groups but steered clear of the Red Brigades. The PFLP-SOG believed the Red Brigades had been penetrated by security services, so it refused to cooperate with the group (Charbel 72).

The PFLP-SOG’s relationships positioned it to conduct another campaign in Europe, where it was particularly active in 1974 and 1975. West German leftist groups arrived at the camps in Aden in 1974 and 1975, where they soon “distinguished themselves with their seriousness and commitment,” as well as their “cohesion” according to a former Haddad lieutenant (Charbel 67). The PFLP-SOG was at the center of a network of groups and connections, and it now used them to its full advantage. In an effort to punish “those who supported Zionism,” the PFLP-SOG planted explosive devices at the offices of four French newspapers sympathetic to Israel, although one was discovered prior to detonating (Schweitzer and Ophir 38; Follain 44).

Prisoner releases of PFLP-SOG operatives and its close allies were accorded precedence, as was demonstrated in September 1974, when the PFLP-SOG made it a priority to assist with the JRA’s seizure of the French Embassy at the Hague after a joint JRA/PFLP-SOG operative was arrested in France. Haddad directed Carlos to support the Japanese group’s effort to free its imprisoned comrade, even at the expense of other ongoing operational planning. As Haddad instructed, Carlos assisted the JRA with the preparations for the Embassy attack and then threw a grenade into a crowded café at Le Drugstore shopping complex in Paris when negotiations with the
French Government stalled (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 85). The French eventually agreed to release the JRA operative and allowed the JRA attackers safe passage to Damascus.

Then at the beginning of 1975, a PFLP-SOG team\(^d\) tried unsuccessfully to shoot down an El Al plane taking off from Orly Airport in Paris. A PFLP-SOG ally provided support for this operation as the West German Revolutionary Cells leader provided logistical assistance and the Iraqi Government provided the weapons (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 98; United States Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 4). The attackers fled after two shots missed the plane. One week later, the attackers were sent back to try to shoot another El Al plane. When this attempt also failed, in large part due to the enhanced security measures enacted by the French after the previous attempt, the attack team seized several hostages and holed up in the restroom. Less than twenty-four hours later, the attackers exchanged their hostages for an Air France flight to a destination of their choosing (Yallop *To the Ends of the Earth* 103).

A shift in the PFLP-SOG’s alliances over the course of these events in 1974 through 1975 foreshadowed a change ahead. Foreign subunits within the PFLP-SOG emerged to create their own groups, while maintaining an alliance with the PFLP-SOG. The PFLP-SOG welcomed foreign leftist elements that came to it with or without an organization structure. Some went on to subsequently form their own organizations when they had sufficient capability and manpower. The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) was one such group. It was a direct descendant of the PFLP-SOG as well as a partner of Fatah and the PFLP-GC (Hoffman *Inside Terrorism* 2006 72). Discouraged by the lack of tangible results from non-violent political action and inspired by the Palestinian example, particularly the PFLP-SOG’s international campaign, ASALA was created in 1975 by a group of Armenians exiled in Beirut. They sought revenge for the Turkish genocide of

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\(^d\) The attack was claimed by the “Mohamed Boudia Commandos” after the PFLP-SOG commander for Europe who was killed by Mossad in Paris in 1973.
Armenians during World War I and an independent state for the Armenian people (Kurz and Merari 16). The burgeoning Marxist group received extensive military training and assistance from the Palestinians. ASALA leader Hagop Hagopian, originally from Iraq, was trained by the PFLP-SOG in Lebanon and was a member for several years before he decided to form his own group focused on the Armenian cause (Charbel 69). According to an ASALA defector, Hagopian “found himself within the ranks of Wadi Haddad’s splinter PFLP. It was during his activity with Wadi Haddad that he [Hagopian] gained most of his experience, developed many personal friendships with Palestinian leaders, and began to mimic the organizational and military tactics of Wadi Haddad” (qtd. in Gunter 111). Hagopian’s organization maintained an alliance with the PFLP-SOG and the PFLP-SOG provided assistance even after ASALA became independent, although the PFLP-SOG was leery of some of the relationships ASALA created with governments (Charbel 69). The cooperation between ASALA and the PFLP-SOG was bolstered by not only ideological affinity, but also a shared narrative identity—both fought on behalf of a people forced into exile and denied their homeland while their grievances were not sufficiently recognized by the international community (Corsun 2012).

While still allied with the PFLP-SOG, the JRA was also in the process of transitioning from being a subordinate element within the PFLP-SOG to an independent group, a dynamic that will be examined in more depth in Chapter 4. The JRA began planning and conducting operations for its own objectives rather than solely on behalf of the PFLP-SOG (Steinhoff personal interview). As the JRA’s alliance with the PFLP-SOG waned, West German leftists stepped in to fill the void. This was particularly advantageous given the centrality of Europe of a theatre for operations and logistics for the PFLP-SOG. Like ASALA, the JRA was able to maintain an alliance with the PFLP-SOG after becoming independent.
The PFLP-SOG’s Europe network was delivered a blow in 1975 when Michael Moukharbal—one of Haddad’s most trusted lieutenants—was killed in June. Moukharbal was detained while returning to Paris from travel in the Middle East. He then led French intelligence officers to Carlos’s apartment in Paris. When Moukharbal arrived there with two unarmed French intelligence officers, Carlos, believing him to be an informer, shot and killed him and the two French officers and then fled the country. This incident caused a media firestorm surrounding “the Jackal,” who overnight became the world’s most notorious terrorist. However, back in Aden, Haddad was irate about what Carlos had done. Carlos was interrogated at length about the incident, but was not expelled from the organization (Schweitzer and Ophir 40). Moukharbal’s death was even more problematic because his predecessor had been killed by Mossad two years earlier. For a group as small, secretive, and elite as the PFLP-SOG, it was difficult to replace these experienced and trusted individuals. With Moukharbal’s death and Carlos being sought by French authorities, the PFLP-SOG lost significant capacity in France, which had been the group’s hub in Europe. The PFLP-SOG’s relationships with leftist groups in West Germany became more important with these losses.

1975 to 1977: The PFLP-SOG Runs into Roadblocks

Baghdad was actively involved in the 1974 creation of the “Rejectionist Front” of Palestinian groups—a coalition of groups, including the PFLP, opposed to the PLO’s willingness to commence negotiations. The Iraqi regime was an avid supporter and manipulator of several Palestinian militant factions (Cobban 149). Haddad’s PFLP-SOG was among the regime’s favorite clients, but as a covert entity, the PFLP-SOG did not officially belong to the Rejection Front. When Baghdad’s attempt to improve its bargaining position in the Organization of Petroleum Countries (OPEC) and raise oil prices was blocked by the Saudis and the Iranians, it enlisted the PFLP-SOG to conduct an attack to punish them. The instructions were explicit. The PFLP-SOG was charged with taking over
OPEC headquarters in Vienna during a meeting of the oil ministers. The plan was to assassinate the Iranian and Saudi oil ministers. The remaining ministers were to be kidnapped and used as bargaining chips in exchange for safe passage to a friendly Arab country. They were to be released after denouncing any dialogue with Israel (Schweitzer and Ophir 41). Iraq's role, on the other hand, was not known to any beyond Haddad and his closest confidants, not even the attackers themselves. Striking the oil powers that did the Americans' bidding rather than providing for their people and assisting the Palestinians was consistent with the PFLP-SOG's strategy. As previous operations demonstrated, Haddad was convinced about the corrupting influence of this natural resource and imperialists' ability to harness the wealth derived from it (Charbel 82).

The multi-national team assigned to conduct the operation consisted of Palestinians, West Germans, and the Venezuelan. As always, Haddad was intimately involved in selecting and approving the operatives. In this case, Baghdad—enamored with Carlos’ newfound notoriety—insisted that he head the team. Despite Haddad’s displeasure with Carlos over Moukharbal’s death, he agreed to have Carlos lead the operation (Yallop To the Ends of the Earth 375). Because the operation was in Austria, Haddad needed operatives who could inconspicuously operate in that country and speak German, so he approached his West German allies. The West German operatives who agreed to participate hailed from the loosely organized leftist groups, the Revolutionary Cells and the 2nd of June Movement—relationships discussed in depth in Chapter 5 (Schweitzer and Ophir 41; Yallop Tracking the Jackal 392; “A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 1; Sterling 145).

The team successfully stormed the OPEC meeting in December 1975, though one of the German operatives was injured and an Iraqi guard was killed during the seizure. It claimed the action using the alias, “The Arm of the Arab Revolution” (Schweitzer and Ophir 42). But the
operation soon diverted from the script. Instead of conducting the assassinations and getting the necessary declarations from the remaining oil ministers, Carlos ran into trouble getting a plane that could make the flight to Baghdad from Algiers and then came under intense pressure from the Algerian Government not to kill any hostages. The Algerian Government eventually persuaded Carlos to accept several million dollars from the Saudi and Iranian governments in exchange for their oil ministers’ lives (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 420). While Carlos justified the decision to his subordinates by saying that the money would pay for future PFLP-SOG operations, he tried to privately arrange for the money to go directly to him (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 421). However, the Algerian Government took its cut first, and it is unclear how much money made it to Carlos. Haddad lieutenant insisted that none made it to the group (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 426; Charbel 84).

The post mortem—conducted personally by Haddad after all operations—when the team gathered in Aden was brutal, as Haddad’s fury with an unrepentant Carlos had reached dangerous levels. The entire team was rebuked, but the bulk of the blame fell on Carlos. The PFLP-SOG even considered executing Carlos. Eventually it decided that Carlos’s international notoriety had its benefits, and his life was spared. But Haddad had no use for operatives that did not obey orders, no matter how famous they were, and Carlos was unceremoniously expelled from the PFLP-SOG. He went on to create his own organization and recruited operatives allied with the PFLP-SOG to create the nucleus of the new group (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 428; Schweitzer and Ophir 43). In this case, the PFLP-SOG did not retain a partnership with its offshoot, primarily because Haddad did not trust Carlos.

For its part, the PFLP publicly denounced the attack, and it came at a time when the relations between the two entities were particularly tenuous (Charbel 83). Given its origin and purpose, it is unlikely that Haddad consulted with the PFLP, even Habash, about this operation.
Despite its justifications, the PFLP-SOG's cause was losing its clarity and morphing from a campaign against Israel to the pursuit of organizational aims, like securing operatives' release or appeasing state sponsors' vendettas (Karmon 2012).

By 1976, of the Palestinian organizations active internationally, the PFLP-SOG remained the best positioned, most capable, and still actively conducting attacks (United States Department of State "Minutes" 2-3). If the OPEC attack was a failure, albeit a high-profile and possibly lucrative one, the PFLP-SOG's final operations were unequivocal disasters. The group explored several different plots and operational innovations, such as liquid explosives that appeared to be red wine (Schweitzer and Ophir 33). In January 1976, a PFLP-SOG team attempt to shoot down an El Al plane using portable anti-aircraft missiles at the Nairobi airport was disrupted when the three Palestinian operatives and two West German accomplices were arrested by Kenyan officials and secretly rendered to Israel (Schweitzer and Ophir 45; Greenway). But even Haddad had his limits and, in early 1976, he nixed a Revolutionary Cells' proposal to kidnap the Pope in exchange for the release of the RAF leadership imprisoned in West Germany over concerns that the backlash would be too great ("A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police" 2). But the freedom of the RAF leaders—a cause that attracted widespread international publicity—was a growing priority for the PFLP-SOG and its West German allies. In addition to the ongoing assistance to the RAF, this prisoner release and the PFLP’s ties with West German leftists prominently featured in its final two attacks. At this point, the once-operationally innovative PFLP-SOG refused to recognize the changed environment and adapt its tactics and instead, returned to its favorite modus operandi, hijackings (Schweitzer and Ophir 44).

In July 1976, a PFLP-SOG team of West Germans and Palestinians hijacked an Air France flight departing Tel Aviv enroute to Paris via Athens and diverted it to Entebbe. The team was, as
always, decided by Haddad. The two West German operatives hailed from the loosely-organized Revolutionary Cells. The hijackers were warmly welcomed by the brutal Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Amin had been formally asked in a letter from Haddad—who represented himself as being from the PFLP, which was not privy to this operational plan—to accept the hijackers and the anticipated prisoners to be released (Charbel 175). In an act that invoked particular horror with its Holocaust connotations, the German attackers separated the Jewish passengers and then released all the others. In exchange for the remaining 106 hostages, the attackers demanded the release of fifty-three prisoners in five countries: mostly Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, RAF and 2nd of June Movement members imprisoned in West Germany, a German imprisoned in Switzerland, a JRA member held in Israel, and the would-be Palestinian and West German attackers who had been caught in Nairobi and secretly handed over to Israel several months earlier (Karmon 69; Byman 2011 55; Schweitzer and Ophir 45). But the Israelis were well beyond making these kinds of bargains and instead they prepared a special operations mission to free the hostages. The Israelis’ daring rescue mission saved all the passengers still on board and killed all the attackers, earning it a place in the annals of history (Byman A High Price 55-60).

Still, the PFLP-SOG would not abandon hijackings. Despite Haddad’s innovative reputation and willingness to take risks, he continued to believe in the efficacy of this tactic after governments grew more resistant to acquiescing to terrorists’ demands. In 1977, the RAF kidnapped a powerful West German industrialist, Hanns-Martin Schleyer and demanded the release of its imprisoned leaders. Haddad, who had been consulted extensively about the kidnapping in advance, offered to conduct a hijacking operation to increase the pressure on the reticent West German government (Aust 351).
Six weeks after Schleyer’s kidnapping, a PFLP-SOG team of Palestinian and Lebanese operatives using false Iranian passports and calling itself the “Organization of the Struggle against World Imperialism” hijacked a Lufthansa plane full of German vacationers (Aust 373). The operatives had been selected and briefed personally by Haddad, who once again managed all aspects of the operation (Aust 353). But the plane ran into unexpected problems finding a country to accept the plane when Aden unexpectedly refused to allow it to land. This gaffe with Aden, which had been so permissive with the PFLP-SOG to date, was a harbinger of the disaster to come. The plane was eventually diverted to Mogadishu, Somalia. Using a special operations unit created after the bungled rescue attempt during the 1972 Munich Olympics, the West German Government launched a mission to free the hostages. The Special Forces team rescued all the hostages and killed three of the four hostage takers (Ropelewski 14-8; Getler A16). None of the RAF or PFLP-SOG demands were met. It was yet another costly debacle for the PFLP-SOG.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location(s)</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Ally</th>
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<tr>
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<td>London/Frankfurt/Zurich/Amsterdam/Bahrain/Dawsons Airfield/Cairo</td>
<td>Multiple Airlines</td>
<td>Hijacking</td>
<td>Sandinistas</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/1972</td>
<td>Tel Aviv</td>
<td>Airport</td>
<td>Armed Assault</td>
<td>Japanese Red Army</td>
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<td>1/1974</td>
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<td>5/1975</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>El Al Plane</td>
<td>Unsuccessful Rocket Attacks</td>
<td>Revolutionary Cells</td>
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<td>12/1975</td>
<td>Vienna</td>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Hostage Taking</td>
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<td>Air France</td>
<td>Hijacking</td>
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<td>Lufthansa Plane</td>
<td>Hijacking</td>
<td>Red Army Faction</td>
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Table 3.1

* With the exception of the pilot who had been killed during a stopover in Yemen
1978: The "Godfather of International Terrorism" is Dead

The PFLP-SOG did not have another opportunity to recover from this series of setbacks. In April 1978, Wadi' Haddad—dubbed “the godfather of international terrorism” by the Economist—died in an East German hospital (“Look both ways” 66). The cause of his death remains something of a mystery. The media and several Palestinian officials attributed his death to cancer, (“Dr. Wadi Haddad, Palestinian Mastermind of Hijackings” B4; “Look both ways” 66) but experts in Israel’s counterterrorism efforts believe that he was poisoned by Israeli intelligence (Byman A High Price 56). Even his son was not sure, saying “I cannot be positive... There is not conclusive evidence. I cannot confirm or deny” (Charbel 26). At his funeral in Baghdad, George Habash gave an emotional tribute to his enigmatic friend, although he reportedly refused to travel to East Berlin when Haddad was near death (“Yet Another Lot?” 50). Haddad’s demise created a void that could not be filled, especially given his micro-management of all aspects of the group and with the death of several of his most highly-valued deputies in recent years. He loomed so large while remaining so secretive that some initially did not believe reports of his death. A member of an allied West German group who worked closely with Haddad and participated in the OPEC operation summed it up by saying, “[w]ithout Haddad, nothing works” (“A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 5). Haddad’s group splintered into several smaller offshoots, though none lived up to its predecessor operationally or as an alliance hub. In his absence, the alliance hub Haddad cultivated became more ad hoc and tactical, but did not completely dissolve.
3.9 The PFLP-SOG’s Threat: Consistently Israel

As the chronology demonstrated, Israel consistently posed the greatest threat to the PFLP-SOG throughout its tenure as an alliance hub. Other governments sometimes posed minor or short-lived threats in the midst of specific PFLP-SOG attacks or when they imprisoned the PFLP-SOG’s members. The PFLP-SOG spent a great deal of its time and resources responding to these individual threats from other governments. It simultaneously provoked these threats from governments it perceived as supporting Israel or the current world order by targeting them or their citizens. But Israel consistently hunted the PFLP-SOG and posed an ongoing existential threat. From the death of the PFLP-SOG’s commander for Europe, the raid in Entebbe, the extra-legal rendition of operatives from Kenya, to Haddad’s mysterious death, Israel was the adversary that most threatened the PFLP-SOG and may have delivered the blow that finally destroyed the group. The only exception was during Black September in Jordan in 1970, when the Jordanian offensive to expel the Palestinians threatened all resident groups. But with the re-location to Lebanon and then South Yemen and Iraq, Jordan ceased to pose a serious threat to the PFLP-SOG.

The PFLP-SOG’s partners discussed in this Chapter did not face a similar threat from Israel, though some were willing to target Israel as part of their relationship with the PFLP-SOG. Likewise, the PFLP-SOG was sometimes willing to attack those governments that threatened its allies and thereby provoke a threat from them. Overall, it did not gravitate towards or attract partners that shared its perception of Israel as the primary threat. Thus its alliance hub status was not attributable to its position at the center of a coalition balancing against the threat from Israel.

More broadly, the PFLP-SOG allied with groups that also perceived the overall international order as threatening. This perception tended to be rooted in their shared ideology. The groups attracted to the PFLP-SOG viewed their enemies as being part of an imperialist alliance led by the
United States and which included Israel. However, some groups that shared this perception were noticeably absent from the partnerships discussed in this chapter, which raises questions about whether such a shared perception helped enable alliances, but was not sufficient on its own to instigate them.

3.10 Conclusion

The PFLP, primarily through its violent offshoot, the PFLP-SOG, shaped the terrorist environment of the late 1960s and 1970s and alliances from that point forward. Its adoption of transnational terrorist attacks and international alliances were inextricably linked. The PFLP-SOG sought allies primarily in order to more effectively execute its campaign of international terror against Israel and its supporters and to imbue its actions with an international aura (Schweitzer personal interview). The PFLP-SOG was perhaps the first terrorist group to be international in terms of its activities, allies, and composition. However, its actions were narrowly focused on the Palestinian struggle as situated within the broader anti-imperialist aspirations. The group believed that the Palestinian cause was “the affair of the whole Arab community.... the core of the Arab-Zionist conflict” (Charbel 84). The group saw the existing international order as supporting Israel at the Palestinians’ expense, which gave it both ideological and operational reasons to train allies to wreak havoc all over the world. Over time, the group’s attention grew more occupied by parochial organizational concerns, including tasks undertaken at the behest of its state sponsors or the imprisonment of its members or allies.

The PFLP-SOG was ideally suited for its role at the center of a diffuse international terrorist network from an identity perspective. It was associated with the general leftist doctrine, which prescribed international unity and dominated the militant landscape, yet it was by no means
dogmatic in its adherence to that ideology. It was a representative of a highly symbolic and venerated liberation struggle, which also gave it additional identity affinity appeal as well as an ethno-nationalist identity. The Palestinian militants groups writ large succeeded in embedding their cause in the narratives of other leftist and ethno-nationalist organizations, which created a sense of narrative affinity with groups that did not even have a direct stake in the conflict. Thus it was able to establish sufficient identity affinity and was an acceptable partner from an identity perspective to many groups in the terrorist environment.

The group attracted allies with its high-profile operations and the resources it offered. It advertised its constant receptivity to alliances by running well-known training facilities and visibly including non-member operatives in its operations. Despite its small size and clandestine posture, the PFLP-SOG was able to emulate many of the characteristics of a state sponsor because the group had permissive state sponsors. It was well positioned to cultivate trust through interactions and personal relationships developed in its safe havens. Its reputation, with its foundation of high-profile operations, became self-perpetuating and its array of alliances demonstrated its trustworthiness as an ally, and thereby attracted more allies.

At the helm of this effort was Wadi’ Haddad. While his group was decentralized, he was a micro-manager extraordinaire, and no major decisions were made without his input. He commanded loyalty from his followers as he oversaw the execution of a decade-long international terrorism campaign against Israel and the forces that denied the Palestinians a homeland. A shadowy character with no public persona, Haddad was convinced of the efficacy of terrorism as a tactic to achieve his goal of liberating Palestine through the elimination of Israel (Yallop To the Ends of the Earth 45). The centrality of Haddad and his propensity to compartmentalize of information was the group’s undoing when he died, as there was no clear successor and much of Haddad’s
knowledge went to the grave with him. In his absence, ties remained between various organizations but, with some exceptions, cooperation generally became more ad hoc and tactical.

The remainder of this section of the dissertation will discuss the PFLP-SOG’s relationships, or lack thereof, with other militant organizations. Chapters 4 through 6 present case studies of the PFLP-SOG’s relationships with three terrorist organizations. The studies draw on field research and information available in the literature, media, archives, and expert interviews to explore the groups’ motivations for forming alliances, the areas in which the groups cooperated with the PFLP-SOG, the outcomes of their cooperative efforts, and—to the extent possible—how they maintained their relationships. In each case study, the background of the group, its operations and tactics, its ideology and goals, its organizational composition, and its relationships are examined.

The activities of the groups examined in Section II span the globe from Europe to Asia to the United States. Each group had its own idiosyncratic interpretation of a leftist ideology as well as a pre-dominant nationalist goal. The next chapter examines the PFLP-SOG’s relationship with a group often regarded as its closest ally, the Japanese Red Army. Chapter 5 focuses on the PFLP-SOG’s partnership with the West German Red Army Faction, as well as with two small leftist German groups active during this time. The final case study in this section, Chapter 6, investigates the PFLP-SOG’s lack of alliance with the American Weathermen—one of the few leftist groups of this era that did not collaborate with the PFLP-SOG to some degree, despite sharing a common enemy and having a compatible ideology. The last chapter of Section II, Chapter 7, summarizes the findings of these three case studies and evaluates the hypotheses laid out in Chapter 1-2.

Student protests, non-violent resistance movements, and competitor militant groups shaped the landscape of the individual host countries of the organizations examined in this section. Advances in communication and transportation technology generated greater connectivity and awareness, fostering a sense of common struggle (Klimke The Other Alliance 3). While each
movement had a distinct local perspective, opposition to the existing distribution of power and anti-Vietnam war sentiments imbued an overarching sense of affinity and collective identity, if not actual connections (Klimke The Other Alliance 3). By the late 1960s, leftist and counter-culture movements spawned militant violent offshoots in Japan, West Germany, and the United States, among numerous other places. All claimed solidarity with “Third World” struggles, including the Palestinian cause, and viewed themselves as part of a broader revolution. The rest of this section will illuminate how their approaches to partnerships with their comrades both differed in important respects and exhibited significant commonalities.
"When I was a child, I was told that when people died they became stars. I didn’t really believe it, but I could appreciate it. We three Red Army soldiers wanted to become Orion when we died. And it calms my heart to think that all the people we killed will also become stars in the same heavens. As the revolution goes on, how the stars will multiply!"—Kozo Okamoto, surviving attacker of the 1972 Lod Airport Massacre

4.1 Introduction

On May 30, 1972, three Japanese men disembarking from a flight arriving from Rome opened fire with automatic weapons at the baggage collection in the Lod Airport in Tel Aviv. When the shooting finally stopped, twenty-four people were dead, and only one of the attackers had survived. The seemingly indiscriminate nature of the attack, executed by foreign attackers with no apparent relationship to the entrenched Arab-Israeli conflict, shocked the international community. In the chaotic aftermath of the attack, the PFLP issued a triumphant claim of responsibility. But its communiqué made no reference to the most baffling part of the attack: the Japanese perpetrators. Soon thereafter, a second statement was published in the PFLP’s newspaper from a Japanese group purporting to be the Red Army, declaring its involvement and common cause with the Palestinians against Israel. This did not entirely dispel the confusion. Who was this Red Army? Was it an offshoot of the Red Army operating in Japan, a group that had made international news two months earlier for brutally killing a dozen of its own members? Or was this a new group? What was the nexus with the PFLP? What would cause Japanese operatives to conduct such a brutal, seemingly senseless, attack in the airport in Tel Aviv?
Like other New Left groups active in the 1970s, the JRA origins can be traced back to discontent that fueled the 1960s New Left protest movement and the state’s response to that challenge. However, as a second generation organization—an offshoot of a militant group that emerged out of the protest movement in Japan—the JRA’s lineage was more circuitous than many of its counterparts. Unlike its peers, the JRA remained in exile throughout its existence and never conducted an attack in Japan, although it retained its aspiration to precipitate a Marxist revolution there. Initially, a handful of Japanese operatives deployed to the PFLP’s headquarters in Lebanon in part at the behest of the Red Army—a militant Marxist group dedicated to the overthrow of the Japanese Government—in order to gain the requisite “revolutionary” experience and skills to defeat Tokyo. They then watched from afar while their comrades were rounded up by police in Japan and, unable to cope with this mounting pressure, the Red Army in Japan imploded.

Adrift in Lebanon, the small Japanese contingent was absorbed by the PFLP-SOG just as the PFLP officially, albeit not completely, expelled Haddad from the group. Wholly dependent on the PFLP-SOG, they embraced the PFLP-SOG’s agenda. The nascent JRA conducted operations with its ally and patron from 1972 to 1974. By 1974, the Japanese group agitated for greater autonomy from the PFLP-SOG, and the partnership transitioned into a still-cooperative, but less subordinate and dependent, relationship between the two groups. The established alliance dissipated with Haddad’s death, although residual contacts between the JRA and Palestinian groups continued thereafter.

This chapter—a case study of the evolution of the JRA’s relationship with the PFLP-SOG—is comprised of four sections. The first section provides the background in Japan during the period that the Red Army and then the JRA emerged. The subsequent section is an overview of the JRA’s identity characteristics and organizational dynamics. Then the chapter describes the JRA’s initiation
of an alliance with the PFLP-SOG and a chronology of its activities, including attacks, that highlights the PFLP-SOG’s fluctuating influence and the variation in their relationship. The chapter concludes with an examination of the type of collaboration these two allies engaged in and the drivers that brought them together in the first place, the factors that explain the variation in their relationship, as well as the motivations that sustained the relationship until Haddad’s death.

4.2 Turmoil in Japan: the Rise and Fall of the Red Army

Japan was rocked by a wave of protests during the 1960s. Broad-based demonstrations erupted in 1960 against the proposed revisions to the Japan-United States Joint Security Treaty, an agreement imposed on Japan after its defeat at the end of World War II. However, the combination of robust economic growth throughout the 1950s, the country’s restoration of sovereignty in 1952, and Japan’s admission to the United Nations in 1956 created a sense among some Japanese, particularly left-wing youth, that the terms of the Treaty were no longer commensurate with the country’s status. While the modifications under consideration to the Treaty modestly reduced Japan’s subordination to the United States, they kept the country subservient to the United States. The opposition in Japan had grown distrustful of the United States, particularly U.S. calls for Japan to rearm, and saw the Treaty as adversely affecting Japan’s security by antagonizing Communist bloc and entrapping Japan in an alliance with the United States. Instead, they advocated that Japan take a position of unarmed neutrality (Vogel 108-10). In the wake of the opposition’s failure to derail the ratification of the revisions to the Treaty, the protesters re-grouped to prepare for the next decennial review of the Treaty that was scheduled to take place in 1970.

But this setback fractured the tenuous unity of the movement and internecine fighting ensued. The student Communist League organization, called Bund, was beset with extensive
factionalization, producing an estimated fifty different groups over the course of its existence. Ideology was central to the discourse in Japan, and splits regularly occurred as the result of arcane differences in interpretation of Marxist canon (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 726-8). An array of New Left student organizations competed to mobilize supporters around international issues that were central to Japan’s domestic politics, such as its peace treaty with South Korea and the scope of U.S. activity in Japan, and local issues on university campuses, like hikes in tuition costs (United States Central Intelligence Agency Restless Youth 10-1). High on the list of the galvanizing issues was disapproval of the Vietnam War—an issue that resonated strongly in Japan, given its proximity to the war, history, and relationship with the United States.

As the decade wore on, direct clashes between the police and protesters grew more frequent and the level of violence escalated, which coincided with a decrease in public support for the protesters. The death of a protester in 1967 was a pivotal moment for the Japanese Leftist protest movement. A demonstration against the Japanese Prime Minister’s visit to Vietnam, where he was scheduled to discuss Japan’s role in the Vietnam War, spiraled out of control. In the ensuing chaos, protesters commandeered a police van and accidently struck, and killed, a fellow protester with the vehicle. Deaths during protests were exceptionally rare in Japan.

This incident, particularly in the immediate aftermath when there was uncertainty about how the death occurred, sent shockwaves through the movement. It was a catalyzing event and injected the specter of lethal violence into demonstrations which to date had been, as the CIA described, “accommodated in the existing social and political structure with both the police and demonstrators observing tacitly agreed rules of engagement” (United States Central Intelligence Agency Restless Youth 1). In 1968 and 1969, the use of Molotov cocktails and other homemade incendiary devices by protesters became more common as they intensified their efforts in the lead
up to the 1970 review of the Japan-United States Joint Security Treaty (Steinhoff “Student Protest” 3).

By the late 1960s, the Japanese Government had enacted more repressive measures to quell the unrest, and arrests had skyrocketed. This was in notable contrast to its response to the protests in the early 1960s, which had been more restrained. But Tokyo’s patience wore thin as demonstrations surged again, although they were not on the scale of the 1960s protests. Demonstration-related activities were criminalized, harassment and surveillance were employed regularly, and students arrested for minor infractions were subjected to prolonged solitary confinement. The Anti-Subversive Activities Law gave the state new authority to ban certain organizations (Zwerman, Steinhoff and della Porta 91).

The illegalization of such freedoms that were previously protected by the constitution fed into calls for “direct action,” i.e. violence, to combat the state’s “growing authoritarianism.” A restive faction within the protest movement organized a paramilitary group, the Red Army, which argued that violence was necessary to defeat the entrenched power of the “bourgeois” state—a position that also conveniently explained the protesters’ lack of results to date and their waning influence (Steinhoff “Portrait” 832). Shortly after its formation, the Red Army saw international allies as an integral part of a successful campaign to overthrow the Japanese Government. The Red Army deemed alliances to be necessary for reasons that drew from balancing logic, i.e. because of Japan's position was embedded in the existing, imperialist-dominated international order that had to be defeated as well (Zwerman, Steinhoff, and della Porta 91).

Banished from the mainstream student protest movement in 1969 for advocating for greater violence, the Red Army issued a public call for weapons, support, and armed action. Soon thereafter, police foiled a plot by the group to disrupt the Prime Minister’s trip to the United States.
by surrounding his residence and barricading him inside his home. The government arrested over fifty members as they were preparing for the operation, delivering a serious blow to the organization. This plot, particularly because it targeted the Prime Minister, alarmed the Japanese Government and the operating environment for the Red Army grew even more prohibitive. The Red Army—which had operated semi-openly, albeit under constant police scrutiny—decided to go underground (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 728; “Interview by David Marx” 2).

However, the Red Army—largely comprised of middle-class students—lacked the organizational capability and materiel to effectively operate underground and to execute its proposed violent campaign against the state (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 728). Moreover, as Japan expert Patricia Steinhoff pointed out, the group faced environmental constraints as “[t]he tactics they chose required weapons which were difficult to obtain in Japan. Training in how to use these weapons was even more remote” (“Portrait” 832). Few youth had paramilitary skills or guerilla experience. Students coming of age in Japan in the post-World War II era did not have access to military training or combat experience. Recognizing its inability to undertake the requisite self-reform, the group devised a plan for a cadre of Red Army members to leave Japan to attain guerilla training from a successful revolutionary movement. Using skills acquired, they planned to return to Japan to teach others and foment the revolution (Steinhoff personal interview).

In pursuit of this organizational learning need, in March 1970, nine Red Army members armed with samurai swords and homemade pipe bombs hijacked a Japanese Airline flight enroute to Fukuoka from Tokyo. When they discovered that the small aircraft was not equipped to fly all the way to Cuba, the hijackers demanded that it be diverted to North Korea. The pilots and authorities tried to trick the hijackers into believing that they had landed in Pyongyang when they were in fact in Seoul. The hijackers soon realized the deception and released the hostages in Seoul, but insisted
on being taken to North Korea ("Apology for Terror: Red Army Figure Admits Hijacking"). The
North Korean Government agreed to accept the hijackers, but it refused to let them journey onward
to Cuba. Instead, the eccentric Stalinist Government held the hijackers incommunicado for the next
decade while subjecting them to “re-education” training. For all intents and purposes, from the Red
Army’s perspective, the act was an unmitigated failure (Steinhoff personal interview).

In the wake of these losses and the unrelenting pressure from Japanese authorities, the
seriously weakened Red Army merged with another Leftist group in Japan to form the United Red
Army. Both groups were struggling to recover from losses, and the one-time competitors joined
forces in seriously debilitated conditions. As is often the case for groups forced underground,
internal turmoil mounted and rigid in-group thinking distorted perceptions and decisions. As the
noose tightened around the newly-merged group, in March 1972, a group exercise in “self-
criticism” spiraled out of control and ended with the torture and death of twelve members at the
hands of their compatriots. In an attempt to make them “stronger revolutionaries,” members were
killed after being beaten severely, stabbed, and tied up outside during inclement weather. The
police were not far behind as the group dispersed following the grisly purging, and authorities
succeeded in arresting the group’s leaders as well as many of the remaining members shortly
thereafter. Five of them managed to flee and hole up at a nearby resort with a hostage. The ensuing
standoff lasted over a week. The police eventually stormed the lodge and apprehended the hostage
takers and rescued the hostage, although two policemen were killed during the mission (Farrell
129-31). At this point, the Red Army was in shambles.
4.3 From the Ashes—the Japanese Red Army is Born

Meanwhile, shortly after the 1970 hijacking debacle, but prior to the violent internal upheaval, the Red Army continued its search for allies located in external venues where its members could gain revolutionary experience and be “part of the international vanguard of an ongoing global revolution” (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 729). The group created a foreign relations committee, charged with exploring options. The committee was headed by senior Red Army member and the future JRA leader Fusako Shigenobu. North Korea was out of the question after the 1970 hijacking fiasco. While a small number of Japanese were fighting in Vietnam, the situation there was not deemed a suitable situation for the Red Army’s organizational development purposes. As part of its outreach, the Red Army sent an emissary to the United States to link up with the Weathermen. But the Weathermen found the Red Army’s proposal for cooperation, which included a plan to blow up the Pentagon, ill-conceived and even farcical, so the Americans declined to ally with the Red Army (Farrell 121; Steinhoff personal interview).

Stepping back to survey the options, the Middle East stood out as a viable, accessible destination where an ideologically-compatible movement was actively engaged in resistance and where Japanese revolutionaries could acquire both experience and training. The Palestinian cause was not a particularly prominent topic in the discourse in Japan, although it was recognized as one of the venues where a revolution against imperialism was underway (Steinhoff personal interview). But it did not have particular cultural resonance among the Japanese Left. They were aware of the Arabs’ loss in the Six Day War and the PFLP’s audacious hijackings, particularly by late 1970 when the Red Army’s search was in full swing and the PFLP had recently engineered multiple hijackings to Dawson’s Field in Jordan (Farrell 122). More importantly, the PFLP’s facilities in Lebanon offered everything the Red Army was looking for to fulfill its organizational learning and adaptation needs:
a venue to train, an ally to provide experience, a way to contribute to the international revolution, and a place to find haven from Japanese authorities, all courtesy of a fellow Leftist organization (Steinhoff “Interview by David Marx” 3).

For the Red Army, Shigenobu in particular, it was imperative to collaborate with an ideologically-compatible Palestinian organization, which made the PFLP a more desirable ally than Fatah (Steinhoff personal interview). This requirement was a reflection of both the prominence of ideology in Japan and the lack of other shared affinity qualities with the Palestinians. Absent other commonalities, ideology affinity served as the primary basis for identification, making the PFLP the most desirable ally option of the Palestinian groups that could fulfill the Red Army’s organizational requirements. Therefore, while ideology did not stimulate the Red Army’s alliance search or dictate its partner, it shaped its decisions and offered a justification for the relationships that fit into the group’s framework. For its part, as Chapter 3 demonstrated, at this juncture, the PFLP was providing training for foreigners and looking for volunteers, valuing skilled professionals in particular.

The Red Army began to gather a small delegation of such individuals to go to Lebanon, including Shigenobu and a sympathetic physician. But various logistical delays beset the effort, so a few select individuals decided to go ahead (Steinhoff “Interview by David Marx” 3). Shigenobu was the only established member of the Red Army to deploy to Lebanon. She was a senior member of the group and had led the effort to find a venue. However, her relationship with the Red Army’s newly ascended leader, Mori Tsuneo—the man would later spearhead the killing of twelve of his followers—was strained by the time she deployed to Lebanon in 1971 (Hoffman “Creatures” 81). Unlike Shigenobu and his predecessor, Tsuneo was not convinced of the need to seek assistance overseas and sought to embed his own organizational frames as a new leader. He had assumed a
leadership role in the group in the wake of numerous arrests and the hijacking fiasco, and his organizational frames did not include such relationships. His ascension prompted internal debate, and some questioned his capability to lead, including Shigenobu. Shigenobu was determined to pursue the opportunity in Lebanon, irrespective of Tsuneo’s objections. The night before she departed, Tsuneo acquiesced and sent her a message requesting that she go to Lebanon as a Red Army representative (Farrell 122).

Shigenobu had recruited and then married a fellow leftist, Takeshi Okudaira, which allowed her to change her name and travel without being detected by Japanese authorities. While she was not being actively sought by authorities, she had been arrested once and travel out of the country would have raised red flags (Farrell 123). Very little is known about the Kyoto Partisans, the group her husband hailed from, except that it was a loosely-organized leftist group consisting of small, underground cells that drew many of its adherents from universities in Kyoto, which were radical hubs in the 1970s (Steinhoff personal interview)

The PFLP already had amorphous connections with Japanese leftists at that point, although their exact origin is unclear. Okudaira had some unspecified links with the PFLP prior to the couple’s travel to Lebanon. The PFLP’s spokesman claimed that the original Red Army’s outreach to the PFLP occurred as early as 1968 (United States Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 1). A Red Army member traveled to Lebanon in March 1970 and then an Iraqi PFLP member went to Tokyo that same year (Steinhoff “Portrait” 832; Dobson and Payne 73). In her book, The Terrorist Network, Claire Sterling claimed that George Habash met with Red Army representatives when he went to North Korea in 1970 and then subsequently sent Leila Khaled to meet with them again in North Korea and Japan (125). In addition, a handful of Japanese had volunteered at Palestinian refugee camps as nurses or aid workers after 1967 War (Farrell 122). Overall, as the situation in
Japan became more restrictive, this smattering of connections helped foster a sense within Japanese Leftist circles that Lebanon was a viable place one could go to be involved in the revolution (Steinhoff “Interview by David Marx” 3). Simply traveling to Lebanon was a “revolutionary contribution” as travelers were sometimes asked by the PFLP to assist with logistical issues or to conduct surveillance during their travel (Dobson and Payne 73).

Shigenobu made her way to Lebanon in 1971, where her husband was already located. Through their respective assignments, Shigenobu and Okudaira linked up with different parts of the PFLP. Shigenobu had public relations skills and was not interested in guerilla training, so she opted to work with the PFLP’s media wing. For his part, Okudaira wanted training, so he deployed to the camps, where he entered Wadi’ Haddad’s sphere of influence (Steinhoff personal interview). In the spring of 1971, Shigenobu worked in the PFLP’s newspaper office and assisted with the production of a propaganda film on the Palestinian struggle geared towards Japanese audiences (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 2). The film, “Red Army-PFLP World Revolutionary Manifesto,” boasted of the connection between the Japanese and Palestinian causes and cooperation between the two groups. It featured Palestinian guerilla training, which was appealing and exotic to Japanese Leftists who had little exposure to such brazen displays of weapons handling and shooting (Steinhoff personal interview). A bus toured around Japan that fall, showing the film on university campuses to drum up support for the Palestinian cause and to arrange volunteers to come to Lebanon to work with the PFLP (Steinhoff personal interview, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 3). Shigenobu also assisted in the publication of a book entitled The Arab Guerilla and the World Red Army (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 2). This propaganda started to pay off, and Japanese volunteers trickled into Lebanon.
A handful of men associated with the Kyoto Partisans and a few other Japanese radicals entered the training camps with Okudaira. This was not the Red Army delegation originally envisaged; it was a small number of individuals, most of whom only had loose connections with the Red Army, at best. The Japanese men were all co-located at the training facility, lived together and began to develop a sense of camaraderie. Okudaira, who had learned some Arabic, served as the de facto leader of the Japanese trainees. They did not regularly interact with Shigenobu because she lived in a separate location and was involved in different activities for the PFLP. She would occasionally cook for the men when they would gather together. She was favorably viewed and respected by virtue of her role in the Red Army, but she did not issue instructions or orders to the other Japanese in Lebanon. Her role was primarily to be a public face of the effort (Steinhoff personal interview).

Meanwhile, in Japan, the original Red Army had turned on itself. Shigenobu's best friend was killed in the March 1972 purge that resulted in the death of a dozen members. Most of the group was imprisoned, and the Japanese public was horrified and alienated by its actions; Shigenobu and her compatriots' world back in Japan was shattered and in disarray. But the contingent in Lebanon was gaining strength incrementally and had substantial freedom of action. Okudaira had earned the trust and confidence of his Palestinian hosts over the course of more than a year (Steinhoff personal interview). The Japanese trainees had earned the respect of their Palestinian hosts, who described them as:

honest until death. When they made a decision, they did not return from it. They valued friendship highly.... They did business with the commander with a complete seriousness. During the trainings on kidnapping a person and detaining him, one of the Japanese trainees executed the kidnapping of his colleague and threw him on the floor. He caused an injury to the young man (Charbel 72; 77).
Their performance at the camp had not gone unnoticed. Their trainers reported to the PFLP-SOG's leadership, as was the procedure, that the Japanese had distinguished themselves during training and nominated them for further missions (Charbel 65). It was at this critical juncture that Wadi’ Haddad asked his Japanese trainees to undertake an operation.

Why did Haddad decide to increase the level of cooperation with the Japanese? Their ability to circumvent Israel’s robust security measures to strike targets that had become inaccessible to his Palestinian operatives almost certainly factored heavily into his thinking. Considering how much he relished creating a spectacle, Haddad may have seen an opening to exploit the publicity surrounding the purge and hostage standoff in Japan by using Japanese operatives in his attack. The brutality of the purge and the Japanese trainees’ performance in the camps gave Haddad the impression that they would be willing to undertake the risky mission he was proposing (Steinhoff personal interview). The Japanese had been vetted by the PFLP-SOG’s process and demonstrated their seriousness, commitment, and loyalty, all traits that Haddad valued highly. Haddad may have also made a rather Machiavellian calculation that given their dependent position, his Japanese trainees would be more likely to agree than other potential candidates. It is difficult to know exactly why the Japanese were selected, but some combination of these reasons probably factored into Haddad’s calculus.

The Japanese were indeed beholden to Haddad for hosting and training them, a debt that they felt acutely (Steinhoff personal interview). In exile, they were dependent on the PFLP for virtually everything: training, haven, arms, and funding (Hoffman “Creatures” 81). The prospects for the revolution in Japan were bleak. Haddad’s scheme created an opportunity for them to repay their Palestinian comrades, contribute to the broader fight against imperialism, and shift the spotlight away from negative events in Japan, which were adversely impacting their fundraising
and recruitment (Farrell 138). It is also quite possible that they were simply ready to use the training they had acquired for a cause they believed in. They had come to Lebanon seeking revolutionary experience, and now Haddad was offering them a chance to undertake such an action. In any event, after some deliberation, they collectively agreed to Haddad’s proposal and, with this action, an early version of the JRA came into being.

*The Japanese Red Army Commences Violent Action—the 1972 Lod Airport Massacre*

In May 1972, a handful of Japanese operatives were prepared to assist in the execution of the PFLP-SOG’s next major operation. Haddad refused to adhere to directives to inform the PFLP leadership prior to attacks and to cease hijackings. He had infuriated his detractors by conducting a lucrative hijacking for ransom a few months earlier. For its part, the PFLP had begun selectively disassociating itself from PFLP-SOG’s attacks (Schweitzer and Ophir 24). But Haddad was unfazed by the controversy, and he had operatives prepared to execute his next plan.

The Japanese consulted internally—an approach that was consistent with their cultural values and would become a core aspect of the JRA’s organizational culture—and they collectively agreed to the idea and then individually decided whether to participate (Farrell 136). When asked how Haddad persuaded the Japanese to undertake this operation, one of his lieutenants later emphasized the role of ideological compatibility and common enemies, responding that the JRA was “a Marxist Organization and it considered Imperialism and Zionism in the forefront of enemies of the Worldwide Revolutionary Movement. Strikes on Americans and Israelis were not contradictory to their [sic] program, but rather consistent with it” (Charbel 65). While this explanation was true, it was incomplete and applied to numerous other allies that were not asked—and likely would not have agreed—to conduct the operation.
Moreover, it was not that straightforward at the time. Some Japanese trainees had reservations about the plot. Shigenobu subsequently claimed that she raised unspecified concerns with Haddad about the operation. The two knew one another, but Shigenobu was still working with the PFLP’s media section and had not received guerilla training. Haddad did not take her misgivings seriously. Haddad viewed Okudaira as the leader of the Japanese fighters and trusted him, more so than Shigenobu. Okudaira was receptive to Haddad’s plan, which was sufficient in Haddad’s estimation (Steinhoff personal interview).

Two Japanese trainees declined to participate in the operation, opting instead to return home after assisting with the attack preparation. Another trainee died in an accident during training, drawing the attention of Lebanese authorities and accelerating the timeline for the operation (“Suicide Victim Left Terrorist Attack Details”). Therefore, in order to have a sufficient number of operatives to undertake the difficult mission, Kozo Okamoto was enlisted to travel to Lebanon. Okamoto was on the periphery of the Red Army. As the brother of one of the hijackers who ended up in North Korea in 1970, he had connections to the group. He had also assisted with the PFLP’s film tour in Japan. He agreed to travel to Lebanon for training and to participate in the operation.

On May 30, 1972, three Japanese operatives landed at the Lod Airport (now the Ben Gurion Airport) in Tel Aviv. They retrieved guns and grenades from their baggage and commenced an attack on the airport that ended with twenty-four people killed and seventy-six people injured. Two of the attackers also died during the assault, including the nascent JRA’s leader Okudaira. Okamoto, the surviving attacker, was captured by Israeli authorities (United States Department of State “Terrorism and the Fedayeen” 1-2). A fourth attacker was rumored to have been assigned to
meet the arriving attackers on the ground and provide assistance, but failed to do so (Steinhoff personal interview).

Known as the "Lod Airport Massacre," the attack was heralded in separate statements first by the PFLP and then by the JRA, calling itself the “Arab Red Army.” The initial PFLP claim of responsibility did not refer to the Japanese attackers, which the PFLP media section was probably not privy to, given Haddad's strict compartmentalization and unwillingness to share details of the PFLP-SOG's operations with his parent organization. Though Habash was aware of the impending operation, few others knew anything about it, which, once again, stoked internal tensions with the PFLP, even though many in the group were pleased with the attack in principle (Charbel 61-3). When the Japanese operatives’ role came to light, Haddad persuaded Shigenobu to issue a supporting statement on behalf of the Japanese group (Steinhoff personal interview). Her letter, published in the PFLP's newspaper, claimed:

We in the Red Army declare anew our preparedness to fight hand-in-hand with the Palestinians and wage joint onslaughts at any time to defeat the Israeli enemy. All of us should not be bound by international laws or by resistance within the framework of these laws... because only revolutionary violence would enable us to defeat imperialists throughout the world... If the imperialists give themselves the right to kill the Vietnamese and the Palestinians, then we should have the right to blow up the Pentagon and kill the imperialists (qtd. in Farrell 107).

Like the PFLP-SOG lieutenant's justification, Shigenobu's statement emphasized the Japanese’s ideological solidarity and the enemies—namely “imperialism,” which included Israel—it shared with the Palestinians. At first glance, this seems to be an affirmation of convention wisdom that ideological solidarity and common enemies produce alliances. Except in this case, targeting Israel was a product of the relationship, not what precipitated it. Without the alliance with the PFLP-SOG, the Japanese would not have executed such an attack against Israel. Moreover, if ideological solidarity and a common antipathy towards Israel motivated this relationship and this
attack, why was the Lod Airport attack the only operation that the JRA conducted against Israel?

Common enemies and shared ideologies offer limited insight into the trajectory of the relationship.

Despite Shigenobu’s reference to the “Arab Red Army” in her statement, none of the attackers were actually Red Army members. Nor had anyone in the Red Army in Japan had been consulted about the impending operation. The remaining ties were effectively severed in the aftermath of the purge and the ensuing arrests. Thus there was no organization in Japan behind Shigenobu’s declaration.

Shigenobu’s statement created the perception that she was the head of the Japanese contingent in Lebanon that had just thrust itself onto the world stage, despite her somewhat distant, albeit senior, role in the group. However, with the loss of the three operatives, particularly Okudaira, during the attack, combined with the two trainees who returned to Japan and the death in the training accident, there was not much of a group left for Shigenobu to lead. Thus not only was the Red Army in Japan in shambles, the group in Lebanon was emaciated (Steinhoff personal interview). But the spectacle attracted new recruits, who sought ways to join the new group.

The Lod Airport assault is often portrayed as a kamikaze mission by attackers who sought to both kill as many people as they could and to die during the operation. The captured attacker’s plea that he be allowed to kill himself and his active attempts to ensure he received the death penalty during his trial in Israel contributed to this perception (Farrell 139). However, the now-imprisoned Shigenobu and one of the trainees who returned to Japan rather than participate in the attack have claimed that the operation was not intended as such and had actually went badly awry. According to their accounts, the attackers’ objective was to take over the control tower at the airport. Their attempt to create a diversion precipitated a firefight with airport security, which was heightened following the recent Fatah attack at the airport and the numerous other aviation-related
attacks. But the operation was being celebrated by its Palestinian hosts, so the JRA felt compelled to embrace it (Steinhoff personal interview, “Suicide Victim Left Terrorist Attack Details”). One of Haddad’s lieutenants also conceded that while they knew there was a high possibility of the operatives being killed in the course of the mission, it was not a suicide mission (Charbel 63).

Such claims may be dismissed as self-serving, but it is worth noting that this “kamikaze style,” mass casualty modus operandi was not employed by the JRA in the future. It was the first operation conducted by these operatives against a fairly hardened target, increasing the likelihood that things would not go according to plan. While the JRA would conduct several high-profile attacks in the future, including three in conjunction with the PFLP-SOG, there were no casualties as a result of these actions. Nor were any of its members killed while conducting subsequent operations, let alone acting as “kamikaze” operatives deployed with the intent of dying in the course of a mission. However, JRA operatives were poised to take fatal actions against hostages if their demands were not met on several occasions. Notwithstanding whether the operation was executed as planned or not, the Lod Airport attack established the JRA as a brutal and lethal force, a reputation that the group exploited in the future when it made threats and demands.

The Japanese operatives had demonstrated their value to the PFLP-SOG and were celebrated as martyrs. Haddad viewed the operation as a success (Charbel 61-3). The Japanese operatives’ willingness to undertake a difficult mission and penetrate a target like the Lod Airport, which the Palestinians and other Arabs were hard pressed to access, were qualities coveted by the PFLP-SOG. In addition, the involvement of third-country nationals—who had no direct stake in the conflict—generated tremendous media attention and projected a sense of international opposition to Israel, which the PFLP-SOG valued as well. In other words, the burgeoning JRA fulfilled the organizational needs that were driving the PFLP-SOG’s alliance decisions.
For the JRA, working with the PFLP-SOG offered a way to adapt to its environment. Its exiled members were not positioned to operate on their own in Lebanon, thus they were dependent on the PFLP-SOG. Sympathy for the Palestinian cause or opposition to Israel was, at best, only a partial motive. In an interview with Steinhoff in 1973, the surviving attacker, Kozo Okamoto, who became a spokesman of sorts for the group by default, explained his involvement in the attack. Steinhoff paraphrased Okamoto as saying that the:

opportunity to become a guerilla had come through the PFLP but it might have just as easily been another group in another country. While... personally concerned about the state of Palestinian refugees... that was definitely not [his] motivation for entering guerilla training. He was moved by a desire to participate in world revolution ("Portrait" 838).

A number of Okamoto’s statements have been outlandish and have raised questions about his mental health, but it is worth noting that his rationale was consistent with Shigenobu’s decision to relocate to Lebanon. It was not out of a commitment to the Palestinian cause or an ideological solidarity with the Palestinians; first and foremost, it was because the PFLP offered a venue to get experience in the anti-imperialist struggle.

At this point, the JRA was an enigma to outside observers—having emerged suddenly in Israel to conduct one of the most deadly terrorist attacks to date—and would remain so. After the attack, the CIA conceded that “little is known concerning its [the JRA’s] ideology other than adherence to a form of world revolution in which the masses will rise up and defeat the existing imperialist governments.... little is known on the JRA to illustrate definite patterns of operation” (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 1). But the JRA was developing identity and organizational characteristics, which were shaped from the outset by the PFLP-SOG.

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1 According to Japanese press, he developed schizophrenia while in prison and manages it through medication.  
2 Okamoto also claimed that he was enticed to come to Lebanon by a promise that he would see his brother, one of the hijackers being held in North Korea after the 1970 hijacking.
4.4 Background: The JRA’s Identity and Organizational Characteristics

The JRA’s Ideology and Narrative

The nascent group that made its lethal appearance on behalf of the PFLP-SOG in 1972 had aspirations to foment a communist revolution in Japan as a key step in causing a worldwide revolution. The JRA adhered to a leftist ideology with a heavy infusion of both Old and New Left figures, including Mao and Che Guevara (Steinhoff “Interview with David Marx” 2; Zwerman, Steinhoff, and della Porta 86). The group espoused “Trotsky’s theory of simultaneous, worldwide revolution in which the proletariat of the entire world must overthrow the bourgeoisie which rules individual nation states” (Steinhoff “Portrait” 831). Japan was one such state, particularly critical to the overall success of the revolution because of its strategic position in the international order.

While the PFLP-SOG was not as ideologically dogmatic as its Japanese counterparts, ideological affinity was at the core of their identity affinity. As discussed earlier, ideological commonalities shaped the Red Army’s search for a partner—in fact, a shared ideology was a prerequisite for an alliance—and the PFLP-SOG was inclined to accept partners with shared ideological features. Their common leftist orientation was sufficient to forge ideological affinity from the outset. Like the PFLP-SOG, the JRA’s ideological affinity threshold was not rigid. It did not require extensive agreement on the nuance of Marxism, Maoism or other leftist doctrine. The partners did not engage in discussions on such matters or come to a consensus on all aspects of their ideology. An overarching shared ideology was sufficient for initial affinity.

The JRA’s enemy narrative emphasized the necessity of destroying all forms of imperialism, especially “Japanese imperialism” (United States Department of State “Terrorist Attack in Kuala Lumpur” 2). Despite the centrality of Tokyo in its enemy narrative, the JRA embraced its exile as an opportunity to contribute to the international struggle against imperialism as the overarching
framework of its enemy and victim narrative. The JRA articulated this sentiment, vowing “[c]omrades and friends all over the world, we confront a common enemy with you, we unite forces of oppressed people, we proceed until total liberation of the peoples all over the world” (United States Department of State “Terrorist Attack in Kuala Lumpur” 2). It retained its desire to activate the revolution in Japan, even when working closely with the PFLP-SOG on seemingly tangentially-related endeavors (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 729).

Thus the JRA and PFLP-SOG shared narrative affinity grounded in their shared ideology at the point of alliance initiation. But their narrative emphases differed. Their narratives did not naturally converge because their causes were only tangentially related under the rubric of imperialism. Therefore, their narrative affinity increased after alliance formation as a consequence of their deliberate efforts to accommodate one another. But the lack of clear symbiosis in their narratives caused a strain over time and limited their ability to build a shared identity, as will be discussed below.

Commensurate with its broad enemy narrative, the JRA defined its targets broadly. The JRA attacked a variety of targets it deemed “imperialist” across the Middle East, Europe, and Southeast Asia, including Japanese targets. In its early years, the JRA adopted the PFLP-SOG’s identity and norms, thus adhering to the PFLP-SOG’s wide-ranging tactics and targeting prerogatives. Even as it gradually created its own identity, the JRA’s tactics and targets continued to reflect the PFLP-SOG’s influence. Like the PFLP-SOG, it primarily conducted hostage takings and hijackings, believing them to be a legitimate means to extract concessions from governments.

*The JRA’s Ethnic Identity*

The JRA was an entirely Japanese organization. It had no readily apparent ethnic identity beyond its nationalist one. Potentially, it could have forged a broader Asian identity, but did not
embrace or articulate such an identity in its declarations or actions. This may be in part because the group's members did not share a language with others in its region. Therefore, no common language bound it to fellow Asian leftists or other groups in Northeast Asia, thereby underpinning a salient Asian identity. Tellingly, when the Red Army looked for allies, it did not find allies within its immediate region. Its decision to reach out to North Korea during the 1970 hijacking was a default choice after the attackers mistakenly hijacked a plane that could not reach its first choice, Cuba. Thus it did not have an ethnic identity that engendered a sense of affinity that would have promoted an alliance with other groups, and it did not share an ethnic identity with the PFLP-SOG.

The JRA’s Organizational Dynamics and Relationships

The JRA’s organizational dynamics evolved significantly from its inception until the dissolution of the PFLP-SOG. It gradually morphed from a subordinate unit under Wadi’ Haddad’s management to an independent group with its own organizational culture, processes, and routines. Even after becoming autonomous, the JRA continued to employ some of the PFLP-SOG’s organizational processes, which its members were indoctrinated into during the group’s early years. As a small group in exile with a limited support base and small constituency, protecting and supporting existing members as well as drawing in new ones was key to its survival and health, and thus informed most of the group’s actions. Through its relationship with the PFLP-SOG, the JRA learned how to conduct operations to achieve those ends; many of JRA’s operations were conducted primarily to secure these objectives, rather than in pursuit of loftier strategic aims. Attention to these organizational prerogatives paid off, as the JRA’s prioritization of its members’ freedom encouraged loyalty to the group and discouraged arrested members from cooperating with authorities (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 735).
Fusako Shigenobu was branded the leader of the group, based more on her public profile than her actual position within the group. The “empress of terror” and “mistress of mayhem” was not the terrorist mastermind that she was reputed to be (Farrell 105; McCurry). Nor was she a prostitute or stripper, as the lore of the day claimed. She was dogged by such rumors, prompted in no small part by her telegenic good looks (Farrell 106). She was among a crop of fierce women in visible leadership roles in militant leftist organizations during the 1970s, like Gudrun Ensslin in the West German Red Army Faction and Bernardine Dohrn in the Weathermen. For her part, Shigenobu functioned as more of an ideologue and public figure than a guerilla mastermind. Fittingly, she was comfortable operating in the spotlight and issuing tracts that justified the group’s actions. But she was not the sole, or even the primary, decision maker within the JRA. In pleading not guilty in Japanese court on charges related to the JRA attack on the French Embassy in the Hague, Shigenobu provided a glimpse into her role in the organization when she said “[w]hile I certainly have organizational and moral responsibility (for the embassy seizure) as one of the founders of the Japanese Red Army, I did not join any meeting to plot” (“Unaware of ’74 Embassy Seizure: Shigenobu Pleads Not Guilty to Terrorism”). Unlike the PFLP-SOG, the JRA adhered to an organizational cultural expectation that it would reach consensus decisions. Therefore, Shigenobu, called “Auntie” by JRA members, was not a dictatorial or dominant leadership figure within the group (Farrell 125).

While Shigenobu was labeled the leader, in the early years, Shigenobu’s “followers” took their orders from Haddad. Despite the extensive partnership between the two groups, Haddad and Shigenobu were not close and did not enjoy a personal friendship. The alliance was not rooted in a rapport or trust between them. Shigenobu did not serve as a central node or intermediary between the two groups either, as her contacts resided primarily with the PFLP’s media office. Instead the affinity and trust was primarily centered on the men who attended his camps, initially Okudiara,
and, after his death, the remaining Japanese trainees who remained in Haddad’s charge. As was his policy, Haddad trusted and developed personal relationship with members of the JRA. These relationships underpinned the organizational-level relationship.

Small, clandestine, and committed solely to “direct action,” the JRA did not have a political party, charitable wing or any overt components. JRA members were initially drawn from universities, where most had received at least some advanced education. Its parent organization, the Red Army, was comprised of the sons and daughters of the regional elite in Japan—students at the prestigious schools in Japan who were being groomed for powerful positions in government and business (Steinhoff “Hijackers” 726). The pedigree of the JRA was not quite as refined, but it also generally attracted fairly educated and promising individuals from Japan’s universities. Later, new members were largely acquired through prisoner releases. The group grew gradually, though it always remained small. At its peak, the group had as many as thirty to forty members, according to high-end estimates (United States Department of State Terrorist Group Profiles 25). When it was initially created in Lebanon, the JRA may have had as few as six members, but certainly less than a dozen (Steinhoff “Interview by David Marx” 3).

The JRA had several state sponsors and backers throughout its lifespan. Early on, when Pyongyang detained several Red Army hijackers trying to arrange transport to Cuba and held them incommunicado, the North Korean regime demonstrated that it was an unreliable sponsor, at best. After journeying to the Middle East, the JRA benefitted from the PFLP’s haven in the weak Lebanese state and was later able to carve out its own small sanctuary there even after Haddad’s death and the PFLP-SOG’s demise. The JRA’s involvement in the “acclaimed” Lod Airport attack in 1972 earned the group a level of local protection in Lebanon. In addition to benefitting from the various state sponsors by virtue of its relationship with the PFLP-SOG, the JRA’s notoriety held it in good
stead with several regimes in the Middle East, Damascus and Tripoli in particular, where JRA members found sanctuary and received assistance for several decades. The JRA forged a particularly close proxy relationship with Tripoli during the 1980s, when the group undertook operations at Qadhafi’s behest—a dynamic that was in some respects reminiscent of the relationship the JRA had with the PFLP-SOG from 1972 to 1974.

4.6 The JRA and PFLP-SOG Embark on Joint Actions

Fears of another similar attack abounded after the 1972 Lod Airport attack. U.S. intelligence agencies received reports that the JRA intended to conduct joint attacks with the PFLP against airports in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France. The CIA detected the split between Haddad and Habash on operations, and its information indicated plots were being coordinated by the JRA and Haddad’s group, but that Habash was not consulted or even aware of them (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 4). However, over a year passed with no further attacks perpetrated by JRA, mostly because there was hardly anyone left after the Lod Airport attack.

Despite the PFLP leadership’s stance against hijackings, the PFLP-SOG returned to its tried and true tactic when it struck with the JRA next. A PFLP-SOG team of Arab and one Japanese operative identifying itself as “Sons of the Occupied Land Organization” hijacked a Japanese Airlines (JAL) plane departing Amsterdam for Tokyo in July 1973 (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 3). The Japanese operative was one of the original Japanese trainees. The team was led by a female Arab operative. However, she was killed when the

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h This operative was reportedly slated to participate in the Lod Airport attack as ground reinforcement but failed to meet up with the team arriving from Rome once the melee broke out.
grenade strapped to her waist accidently detonated. As was typical of the PFLP-SOG’s operation, for operational security reasons, only she knew the full plan, including what the demands were to be and where the plan was to be diverted to. In her absence, the rest of the team was unsure what to do and they sought a destination, only to find that no country was willing to accept them (Dobson and Payne 150-1). They issued only one demand: the release of the surviving Lod Airport attacker, which Israel immediately refused to do (Time 1). For several days, the hijacked plane sat on the tarmac in Dubai in the sweltering heat, cooking its nearly 150 occupants. The attackers did not issue any further demands or reveal their intentions, except for requests for food and refueling (“Hijacked Jet Refueled, but Held Second Day” 10). Four days later, the plane departed Dubai and landed in Libya, where the hijackers destroyed it with explosives after releasing the hostages and crew without issuing any further demands. It was a particularly confused and chaotic operation that accomplished very little. The operation was roundly and publicly condemned by all sides—including the PFLP which denied involvement in the attack—as adventurism unhelpful to the Palestinian cause (United States Department of State “NATO Consultations” 1-2; “Hijacked Jet Refueled, but Held Second Day” 10).

They struck together again in Singapore several months later in January of the following year. In the midst of the oil crisis, a joint team of two PFLP-SOG and two JRA operatives attacked a Shell oil facility on Pulau Bukum island. They set fire to one oil storage tank and attempted to blow up three more—causing only minor damage—before seizing a ferry boat with five hostages during their escape attempt. The goal was to strike “the store house of oil which contained some of the strategic oil reserve for the American navy in the region and U.S. airplanes participating in bombing Vietnam” (Charbel 82). Singaporean authorities soon caught up with the ferryboat and surrounded it at sea. The Japanese Ambassador was called in to negotiate and the standoff stretched on for a week with little progress while the attackers grew more and more seasick and desperate
"Singapore Hits Snags in Deal With Guerrillas on Ferryboat"). Interestingly, the attackers identified themselves as PFLP and JRA (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 3). For its part, the PFLP publicly embraced the action. Its spokesman issued a statement declaring the operation “a warning to monopolistic, exploitative oil companies and a rejection of the Geneva efforts for a peaceful settlement of the Palestine problem.” He vowed that the PFLP would continue to work with other international revolutionary organizations against imperialist interests (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 5, United States Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 1).

To break the stalemate, five Arab PFLP-SOG operatives seized the Japanese Embassy in Kuwait, took the Ambassador and seven others hostage, and demanded that their comrades in Singaporean waters be released and flown by the Japanese Government to Kuwait (New York Times “Guerillas”). The Embassy attackers also claimed they were acting on behalf of the PFLP, though this action was not welcomed by the PFLP. After the Japanese, Singaporean, and Kuwaiti Governments agreed to these conditions, the four oil refinery attackers were taken to Kuwait, where they met up with the five Embassy attackers. The reunited group was then taken to the PFLP-SOG’s stronghold in South Yemen where they were subsequently freed (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 3). This was the first time the Palestinians had conducted an operation in Kuwait, and it was a clear violation of a tacit agreement with the Kuwaiti Government. Palestinian operations were never to involve Kuwait (“Guerillas in Kuwait Seize Tokyo Envoy and Embassy Staff”). The Kuwaitis were furious about the transgression. They vented their ire to the PLO, which the Kuwaitis felt should be able to control other Palestinian groups, although the PLO pleaded otherwise. In response, the Kuwait Government undertook selective deportations and squeezed Palestinian financial sources in country in an effort to force the Palestinians to police themselves more rigorously in the future (United States Department of State “Terrorism: Singapore
Incident” 2). Rather than risk losing his operatives, Haddad had, once again, ventured into forbidden waters and disregarded political arrangements designed to circumscribe who would experience the Palestinians’ attacks rather than lose operatives.

A jointly-issued statement on the operation in Singapore gave equal billing to both the PFLP and JRA, although the Palestinian cause was emphasized with no specific mention of the situation in Japan. As was its modus operandi, the PFLP-SOG did not issue its own claim. Unlike the initial statement after the 1972 Lod Airport attack, when the PFLP media wing initially took credit without recognizing their Japanese counterparts, this statement publicly and unequivocally allied the PFLP and JRA. It is unclear whether Shigenobu had a role in crafting this statement, but given her work with the PFLP’s media office, it is quite plausible that she did. The relationship was essentially on dual tracks; the Japanese operatives involved in the operation reported to the PFLP-SOG while Shigenobu worked with the PFLP media wing. The claim of responsibility, as acquired by the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, read as follows:

Martyr Basil al Qubaissi Unit carried out this operation according to instruction received from the PFLP and Red Army. It was done because of anti-Arab role played by oil companies and Government of Singapore against Arab people in general and Palestinian people in particular. Units which executed [sic] operation planted explosives in tanks at same time when international imperialism and its agents were conducting fierce campaign against Arab masses to subjugate their will and plunder their oil wealth. Operation [sic] is in implementation of our revolutionary strategic policy of striking imperialist interests pursuant to orders issued by PFLP and Japanese Red Army.

Blowing up these oil storage tanks took place at same time when Shell Oil Co and Government of Singapore were engaged in hostile activities against Arab people in general and Palestinian people in particular in close association with Israel. Also at same time when Shell was supplying imperialist agents in Saigon with oil, after Vietnamese rebels had blown up Saigon’s oil stores in December. Naming this operation after Martyr Basil al Qubaissi denotes appreciation by Palestinian and Japanese revolutionaries for what he has exemplified—symbol of international struggle against imperialism. Martyr Basil fell at the hands of Israeli agents in the streets of Paris, like other revolutionaries who fell victims of suppression, repression, racism, and fascism. These liquidation plots will never succeed. Let our people struggle against interests of imperialism and Zionism (United States Department of State “Lebanese Efforts” 1-3).
The allies continued to frame their cooperation as rooted in their common ideology and the shared enemy derived from that ideology. Unlike its previous two attacks, which targeted each group’s primary enemy, Israel and Japan, this operation was less clearly linked to the two groups’ primary goals. The PFLP-SOG identified oil-related targets as a priority because of the role of oil in perpetuating the system it sought to destroy, but this operation was an expansion for the allies in terms of target, location, and tactics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>PFLP-SOG Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Lod Airport</td>
<td>Armed Assault</td>
<td>Seizing the Airport Control Tower</td>
<td>PFLP-SOG Directed, JRA Executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Shell Oil Facility</td>
<td>Sabotage</td>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>PFLP-SOG Directed, Jointly Executed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>French Embassy</td>
<td>Hostage Taking</td>
<td>Prisoner Release</td>
<td>Assisted in the Planning and Execution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 5.1

4.7 The JRA Strikes on its Own, but Stays Close

The Japanese had only operated under the rubric of the PFLP to date; in 1974, they began to agitate for more independence. The JRA entered a new phase, focused exclusively on operations designed to secure the release of its imprisoned Japanese comrades. It was not what the JRA initially envisioned when it struck out on its own in 1974. The group conducted three major operations over the course of the next three years, all hostage takings intended to coerce the
release of its members or prospective recruits. Its activities would span Europe, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, but it would remain unable to return to Japan.

After the Singapore operation, the JRA was ready to transition from being a subordinate unit within the PFLP-SOG to being its own organization. It had steadily grown, as its participation in each high-profile attack attracted more members, though it remained small. It had the nucleus of its own group, a network of supporters, and ample experience and capability. The JRA wanted to set its own priorities, rather than adhering to those set by the PFLP-SOG (Butterfield). The Japanese were frustrated by the PFLP-SOG’s organizational dynamic and discontent with Haddad’s management style. Accustomed to a culture of collective decision making and respect for consensus, the JRA chafed against Haddad’s tendency to dictate decisions, issue orders, and compartmentalize information. While the three operations conducted jointly with the PFLP-SOG may be considered “successes” from the PFLP-SOG’s standpoint, the JRA operatives were tired of participating in operations with only limited information about the plans. From their perspective, all three operations had gone awry, and the operatives’ ignorance had been especially problematic when things did not go according to script (Steinhoff personal interview). But Haddad was not willing to compromise on his scrupulous operational security practices and was thus not sympathetic to the Japanese’s desire for greater consultation (Schweitzer personal interview). This cultural mismatch fostered the Japanese’s ambition to have their own group, but the ties with the PFLP-SOG ran deep enough that they still wanted to maintain a close organizational-level relationship. One of Haddad’s lieutenants singled out the JRA as an organization that the PFLP-SOG maintained a “trusted relationship” (Charbel 61-3).

The JRA’s first independent action was a plot to kidnap a Japanese executive in Paris for ransom in order to garner funds for the newly autonomous organization—an operation nicknamed
“the translation event.” But in July 1974, a JRA senior leader involved in the plot, Yamada Yoshiaki, was detained by French authorities as he entered Orly Airport. He was carrying several false passports, ten thousand dollars in counterfeit U.S. currency, and coded papers detailing the JRA’s plans in Europe (Follain 45; Farrell 159; Schweitzer and Ophir 36; United States Central Intelligence Agency *Emergence of the Japanese Red Army* 6). His detention led to the discovery of the JRA’s network in Paris. One hundred people were questioned by French authorities and eight were subsequently expelled from the country (Butterfield). However, Yoshiaki remained in custody on charges of carrying false passports and counterfeit currency and sentenced to several months jail time. Despite its desire to be more autonomous, when the JRA hit into this roadblock, it turned to its longtime ally.

When the JRA realized what had happened to Yoshiaki, a rescue plan was immediately set into motion. One of the JRA members involved in the Singapore operation approached the PFLP-SOG for assistance conducting an operation to break Yoshiaki out (Steinhoff personal interview; Steinhoff “Interview with David Marx” 4). Yoshiaki was well known to the PFLP-SOG, having participated in the Singapore operation and carried out other support activities for the PFLP-SOG, so Haddad immediately agreed and tasked his ambitious lieutenant, Carlos the Jackal, with helping the Japanese group (Butterfield). Haddad ordered that Yoshiaki’s release be given priority over other PFLP-SOG operations already in the works in Europe. He recommended that the JRA target the French Embassy in the Netherlands because he assessed the Dutch response would be the most tepid (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 79-80). Carlos dutifully surveilled the target and then provided the attackers with weapons and guidance.

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1 According to some accounts, Yoshiaki was on PFLP-SOG business when he was detained at Orly Airport.
In September, as Haddad advised, JRA operatives seized the French Embassy in the Netherlands and took nearly a dozen Embassy employees hostage, including the Ambassador. In exchange for the hostages, they demanded the release of their detained compatriot, one million dollars in ransom, and a plane to take them to the country of their choosing (Farrell 162). Two days after the Embassy was seized, in an effort to terrorize the French Government into capitulating to the JRA’s demands, Carlos threw a grenade into a crowded area in Le Drugstore shopping complex in Paris. However, this act was not linked to the Embassy seizure at the time, so it did not have the desired effect (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 84-5, Follain 49). Two people were killed and dozens were wounded in the blast. In case the French had any doubts about the seriousness of the Embassy attackers’ demands, Haddad’s chief of operations in Europe, Michael Mourkhabel, placed a half dozen empty grenade cases in the unclaimed luggage office in Orly airport and then called in a threat warning that the rest of the contents would be unleashed in Paris if the JRA member was not released (Bougereau and Klein 39). Two days later, the French and Dutch Governments acquiesced to the JRA’s demands, albeit with a reduced ransom of $300,000. A plane left Amsterdam with the attackers on board. In a departure from its typical lenience, Aden refused to accept the attackers, and they were routed to Damascus instead, where the attackers reportedly “surrendered” to the PLO. The attackers did not get to keep the ransom money; although accounts differ as to whether they were forced to give it to the Syrian Government or they returned it to the French Government (United States Central Intelligence Agency Emergence of the Japanese Red Army 6, United States Department of State “Red Army Terrorists” 1-2; Butterfield).

During this period, the JRA’s organizational structure was in flux. No clear leader had been established, although Haddad clearly continued to be a central figure. Shigenobu was still in a position of authority, but was not intimately involved in day-to-day operations or planning. She denied direct involvement in the planning or execution of the Embassy attack (“Unaware of ’74
Embassy Seizure: Shigenobu Pleads Not Guilty to Terrorism"). She was often pre-occupied or out of contact because she was raising her young daughter—fathered by an unknown “Palestinian resistance fighter”—named May in honor of the month of the Lod Airport operation (Negishi). Responsibilities for various functions were dispersed throughout the group. Given its small size, all members had some additional responsibilities. Because the group members were not co-located, the organizational structure was diffuse, but there was an emphasis on cultivating the qualities that they had been missing under Haddad, namely consultation and consensus building about major decisions (Steinhoff personal interview).

The French Embassy attack, combined with the three prior joint operations, eroded the JRA’s operational utility for the PFLP-SOG, which likely reinforced the reduction in the level of the inter-dependence in the alliance already occurring. The Japanese no longer had the inconspicuous profile that made them so useful to Haddad, both operationally and logistically. Haddad’s efforts to ensure the freedom of a JRA member further compromised his ability to effectively use his Japanese colleagues in the future and increased the pressure on his own network in France, which was a central hub for the PFLP-SOG in Europe. The arrest in France of the JRA operative demonstrated that he could no longer assume, as he had before, that Japanese operatives could travel in Europe with minimal scrutiny (Schweitzer and Ophir 37). The attack on the French Embassy in Europe captured the attention of European authorities and the U.S. Government. That October, Washington proposed that NATO countries convene a group of experts to conduct an urgent, classified study of the JRA, using knowledge gleaned by the French and Dutch Governments during the Embassy attack. The U.S. Government argued that common action against JRA would be more beneficial than continuing unilateral and bi-lateral responses in the midst of crises, and that they all most was a need to better understand the group’s modus operandi (United States Department of State “NATO Consultations” 1-5). Therefore, rather than breaking out on its own, this would have been the ideal
time for the JRA to remain allied with the PFLP-SOG in order to balance against the powers and threat that were allying against it.

The JRA's final two operations during this era did not have a clear nexus with the PFLP-SOG, although the tactics it employed were clearly a product of years of collaboration with its Palestinian counterpart. The PFLP-SOG continued to employ third-country nationals in its operations from 1975 to 1977, most notably West Germans, but it did not include Japanese operatives as part of its multi-national commando teams. Haddad respected the JRA's desire for autonomy. He did not ask the JRA or individual JRA operatives to participate in any operations after 1974 nor did acrimony exist over the new arrangement. The two groups reached an amicable understanding that their alliance would consist of mutual support and assistance with autonomy in operations and other decisions. The JRA retained the ability to access Haddad and consult with him as necessary (Steinhoff personal interview).

After the French Embassy attack, the JRA continued to focus on organizational needs, particularly prisoner releases and ransoms to sustain the organization. In addition to securing the freedom of its members, prisoner releases were central to the JRA's strategy of bringing in new members. The group identified prospective recruits in prison—usually those with previous involvement in leftist activities—and then demanded their release in exchange for hostages. After securing their release, the JRA provided them with security and haven while indoctrinating them into the organization before asking them to join. In a conscious rejection of its parent organization's oppressive approach, the JRA's philosophy was "hard to get in, easy to get out." Even if an individual opted not to join after being sprung from prison, the JRA committed to helping him or her with alternative arrangements (Steinhoff personal interview).

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The JRA’s organizational structure continued to evolve during this period. The group was generally divided into military and non-military functions. Shigenobu was still a prominent figurehead on the non-military side, but others also had key leadership functions, particularly in terms of security and operations. Major decisions were made collectively by a leadership executive committee. Shigenobu was part of the executive committee, which communicated its decisions to the rest of the group, which was dispersed throughout the Middle East. However, the executive committee did not issue orders—a clear rejection of Haddad’s management style—and it accepted criticism and feedback from members outside of the executive committee (Steinhoff personal interview).

The JRA shifted back to Southeast Asia for its next operation in August 1975. By this time, the group was acting independently and planning its own operations. Despite the U.S. Government’s efforts to learn from the JRA siege of the French Embassy, it was the victim of the group’s next operation. Storming the offices of the U.S. Consulate and Swedish Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, JRA operatives took more than fifty people hostage, including senior diplomats from both countries. They demanded the release of seven comrades in jail in Japan, including original Red Army members, as well as transportation out of Malaysia (Farrell 166). The Japanese Government agreed to these conditions, although two of the requested individuals in prison declined to be released as part of the deal. The attackers were then flown to Tripoli. The operation coincided with the Japanese Prime Minister’s visit to the United States and was probably intended to overshadow it (Farrell 168). The JRA’s communiqué largely focused on the group’s grievances against the Swedish Government, the United States, and Japan. But it did not forget its ally and it also paid homage to the Palestinian cause and repeatedly denounced Zionism (United States Department of State “Terrorist Attack in Kuala Lumpur” 1-4). Thus ideological affinity still existed, as did the common enemy, yet the relationship had been downgraded significantly.
The final JRA operation of this period was the hijacking of a Japanese Airline flight out of Bombay (now Mumbai) in September 1977. Over 150 passengers and the crew were on board. The JRA operatives forced the plane to land in Dhaka and demanded the release of nine prisoners in Japanese custody. They were individuals with varying degrees of association with the group. Some had been involved in the JRA’s French Embassy takeover in 1974, while others were involved in attacks in Japan, but did not have existing links with the JRA. The list also included two criminals who were not associated with JRA, but who were deemed viable recruits due to their active involvement in the prison reform movement in Japan (Farrell 186-7). While the PFLP-SOG was learning the limitations of this tactic against Israel and West Germany, the Japanese Government was still susceptible to this type of coercion, and the JRA extracted its largest concession to date: the release of six prisoners and a six million dollar ransom ("Red Army's Reign of Terror"). The hijackers released the hostages and were then taken to Algiers, at their request.

4.8 The JRA’s Threat

The JRA generally viewed Japan as its greatest threat throughout this period. Like the PFLP-SOG, the JRA was threatened intermittently by governments where it conducted attacks or operated. It reacted strongly to the imprisonment of any of its members and would temporarily view those governments as its greatest threat, as was the case with France in 1975. Although the Japanese Government’s offensive power against the group was limited and Tokyo was not proximate to the group in the Middle East, it remained the JRA’s greatest threat because of its aggregate power, especially with the U.S. backing, and the JRA’s perceptions of its aggressive intentions. In addition, as the U.S. noted in its plea to other government to coordinate their efforts
against the JRA, the threat the group posed was diffuse so that no other government except Japan felt consistently threatened by it and responded accordingly.

Thus the PFLP-SOG and JRA’s relationship was not precipitated by a specific shared threat. At the time of alliance initiation between the Red Army and the PFLP, no shared threat existed, except an overarching view of imperialism as a threat. The JRA and PFLP-SOG’s co-location probably contributed to the JRA’s willingness to attack the PFLP-SOG’s greatest threat, but the JRA did not share the PFLP-SOG’s perception of threat. In other words, the JRA viewed Israel as a general threat in light of Israel’s role in the “imperialist” camp, but it was not a direct threat to the JRA nor was it viewed as such by the group. Thus a shared greatest threat did not stimulate the alliance.

Over the course of the alliance, no specific shared greatest threat emerged. The two groups worked together to target one another’s greatest threat, but did not adjust their respective perceptions of threat. The lack of common definition of threat contributed to the downgrade in relations over time, as the JRA grew more insistent that it focus on its main threat. No clear changes in threat occurred to cause this shift, so threat is insufficient to explain this alliance trajectory.

4.9 A Period of Silence and a Return to Terror

With a generous six million dollar nest egg in hand, the JRA went underground for nearly a decade. Wadi’ Haddad’s death in 1978 and the subsequent dissolution of the PFLP-SOG did not cause the JRA’s withdrawal from the scene, but may have contributed to the group’s lower profile. Information on the group’s whereabouts in the interim is scarce, but the information available suggests that the group resided in camps in the Bekaa Valley in the early 1980s until the war in
Lebanon broke out. The JRA adopted an active alliance posture and became a service provider in its own right, traveling around to assist and train other revolutionary organizations, particularly in Asia (Farrell 229; Terrorist Group Profiles 118; Charbel 61-3). For her part, Shigenobu lived quietly in Damascus with May and frequently visited group members in Lebanon (Steinhoff personal interview). When war broke out in Lebanon, the group re-located to Libya, where it formed a lucrative relationship with the mercurial late Colonel Qadhafi (United States Central Intelligence Agency 9-12).

Another iteration of the JRA re-emerged in 1986 willing to undertake mass casualty attacks as Qadhafi’s proxy and hired guns. While most leftist groups were reeling, JRA demonstrated a willingness and ability to embark on a renewed terrorist campaign. It also remained interested in forging ties with likeminded groups, meeting with two of its remaining counterparts in Europe, the Red Brigades and the Red Army Faction, to pledge a unified front against imperialism (Hoffman “Creatures” 80). The JRA made its re-appearance by firing mortar rounds at the Japanese, Canadian, and U.S. Embassies in Jakarta. On the first anniversary of the 1986 U.S. airstrikes against Libya, JRA struck three U.S. diplomatic facilities in Spain (Hoffman “Creatures” 82). It detonated a car bomb and launched a rocket attack against the U.S. Embassy and the British Embassy in Rome in June 1987. The group was reportedly involved in several other terrorist attacks throughout the 1980s, at least one of which was at the behest of the Libyan Government—the 1988 bombing of a U.S. military recreational club in Naples, Italy, which killed five people. A JRA operative was arrested with explosives on the New Jersey Turnpike, planning an attack in the United States to coincide with the bombing in Naples. During this period, the JRA did not publicly claim any of these attacks using its name and instead used the alias “Anti-Imperialist International Brigades.” After a failed mortar attack on the U.S. Ambassador’s residence in Madrid, the group disappeared as quickly as it had re-appeared (United States Central Intelligence Agency 9-12).
By the late 1990s, the government in Lebanon was willing to arrest and eventually to deport the handful of JRA members still in country (Japanese National Police Agency 1-3). Okamoto, the surviving Lod Airport attacker, however, still retained his cachet and received amnesty in Lebanon ("Red Army Members Expelled by Lebanon"). Shigenobu was arrested in November 2000 in Osaka, Japan. Her presence in Japan came as a shock to authorities, who believed she was still in hiding overseas. Shigenobu declared the disbandment of the JRA from prison the next year admitting, “If I am released I will continue the fight, but through peaceful means. The armed struggle was closely related to historical circumstances, and what is right in one time and place may not be right in another” (McCurry).

4.9 Conclusion and Findings: The JRA and the PFLP-SOG—The Evolution of an Alliance

Organizational needs, bolstered by identity affinity and enabled by trust, exerted the greatest influence over the alliance decisions between the two dyads discussed in this Chapter: 1) the Red Army and PFLP; and 2) the JRA and the PFLP-SOG. These three variables interacted during the process of alliance formation as organizational needs prompted the search for allies, while ideological affinity shaped partner selection. Receptivity to the alliances was based in large part on the receiving groups’ organizational requirements, and their belief that the prospective ally could also assist with these needs. The affinity threshold was met largely based on ideological commonalities as well as some affinity in the enemy narrative, which helped enable trust formation as did the ability to interact in a safe haven. Despite the lip service paid to ideology and common enemies, organizational needs and dynamics were the primary determinant of the alliances configuration and sustainment. The Red Army and PFLP’s relationship was short-lived as the Red Army’s organizational needs were extensive, yet its dysfunctional organizational dynamics stunted
its ability to derive more benefit from its relationship with the PFLP prior to its implosion and defeat. The durability of the JRA and PFLP-SOG’s partnership rested on their ability to fulfill one another’s continuous organizational needs. The JRA’s needs were so significant and acute that it heavily relied on the PFLP-SOG during its early years. The JRA’s move towards independence was largely a consequence of the PFLP-SOG’s fulfillment of the JRA’s organizational needs, to the point that the JRA did not need its ally to the same degree. The downgrade in relations was also motivated by the groups’ inability to forge mutually acceptable constitutive norms and a shared identity within the alliance.

*The Red Army and the PFLP*

Though the case selected was the JRA and PFLP-SOG, the alliance initiation effort between the PFLP and the Red Army offers another opportunity to test the theoretical frameworks. This dyad is not independent from the JRA and PFLP-SOG; the JRA and PFLP-SOG’s alliance is inextricably linked to the connection forged by the PFLP and Red Army. Though not a matched comparison per se, the similarities in their ideologies and enemies offer a useful comparison of these theoretical frameworks.

The Red Army and the PFLP shared an overarching common enemy, vaguely defined as “imperialism,” which was derived from their shared ideology. They considered their respective enemies and one another’s enemies to be part of the imperialist camp; therefore, cooperation was consistent with the overall strategic objective to destroy imperialist powers. But in terms of the impetus for relationship initiation, a desire to balance did not exert strong causal influence over their decisions to initiate cooperation. They were not focused on forming a balancing coalition; each wanted to use the other to pursue its parochial agenda against its own enemy. The Red Army was willing to assist the PFLP with its effort against Israel, but it was in order to learn and transfer that
knowledge to Japan. Their struggles were only tangentially related under this revolutionary umbrella. At the time of alliance initiation, each group viewed its primary enemy as the main focus and its partner's enemy as a tertiary consideration. Thus balancing considerations were not the main impetus for alliance initiation.

The Red Army and PFLP did not share a greatest threat at the time of alliance initiation nor was there a common threat that provoked a countervailing alliance. The Red Army was overwhelmingly threatened by the Japanese Government, while the PFLP’s attention was consumed by the threat from both Israel and Jordan during the period of alliance formation. Again, these both fall loosely under the guise of imperialism, but this was too vague a construction to serve as a concrete impetus for a relationship or to explain the timing. Not only was there a lack of shared threat, there was little relationship between their primary threats as Japan was not engaged heavily in the Middle East and Israel was not involved in the struggle in Japan.

Organizational learning and adaptation requirements were the primary impetus for the Red Army’s decision to initiate this alliance. Still a young organization, the Red Army needed skills, materiel, and experience—all of which the PFLP could offer—in order to strengthen its organizational capacity to instigate a revolution in Japan. A significant discrepancy existed between the Red Army's knowledge and resource base and the environment in Japan that the group could not address through self-reform. In addition to the knowledge and resource shortfalls of the group due to its organizational youth, the group suffered from personnel losses that compounded its organizational vulnerabilities. It had thus continuous organizational needs that were both acute and growing. As discussed in Chapter 2, from an organizational perspective, one of the more serious disruptions a terrorist group can experience is the loss of its leader. In the Red Army case, the loss of several leaders and emergence of a controversial new leader changed the dynamic in a way that
was detrimental to the alliance effort. Tsuneo’s opposition to the alliance reduced the depth of cooperation to the point that the PFLP could not meaningfully assist the Red Army in addressing weaknesses that proved fatal.

Conversely, the PFLP’s overall receptive posture towards this alliance was motivated by its own organizational considerations, though they were more general, ongoing adaptation and learning needs. While it primarily sought volunteers who could assist with medical, technological, and other advanced skills, international propaganda support was a constant need as the group diagnosed the Palestinian problem to be in part caused by a lack of international attention and it sought ways outmaneuver Fatah. Organizational factors were thus a central stimulus for the Red Army’s decision to seek an alliance; they factored into its selection of the PFLP as a partner, and they motivated the PFLP to accept the Red Army.

Ideological affinity heavily influenced the Red Army’s partner selection, but the alliance was not motivated by ideological solidarity. Once it decided to pursue an alliance with a group in the Middle East—a decision driven by organization needs—it had several options. It specifically chose the PFLP over Fatah for identity reasons. The Red Army and the PFLP’s shared leftist ideology was the primary basis for their identity affinity. The Red Army in particular was a product of an environment where ideological nuance and sophistication was privileged and highly valued. While ideology was the central identity affinity criteria, the Red Army did not scrutinize its ally’s ideological platform. Rather it accepted the PFLP’s leftist credentials based on its actions, which were widely-known to be plenty “revolutionary.” For its part, the PFLP’s identity threshold was fairly flexible as it had various avenues to find affinity with other organizations and the Red Army’s leftist orientation provided an adequate level of identity affinity to form an alliance. The two groups
did not share an ethnic identity. To a limited degree, they shared a victim and enemy narrative as both viewed themselves as unjustly repressed by the powers in the U.S.-led imperialist world order.

Identity affinity based on ideological compatibility, coupled with a smattering of personal connections and other interactions, served as a cue that it was safe to attempt to build trust and initiate an alliance. The PFLP’s reputation as a group actively involved in the revolution against imperialism and assisting others in the fight factored into the Red Army’s calculation that it was an ally that could be trusted. The initial forms of collaboration, mainly propaganda as well as training, were low-risk forms of cooperation that provided interactions to forge trust. In addition, there was also a safe venue to build this trust in Lebanon.

*The PFLP-SOG and JRA*

With the deterioration of the operating environment in Japan and the demise of the Red Army, the Japanese trainees remaining in Lebanon did not have a clear organizational allegiance. Their presence was partially related to the Red Army alliance effort, though even when the Red Army was functioning, they were not solely serving in that capacity. The trainees were not a fully coherent organization nor did they identify themselves as such, though they collectively possessed organizational qualities. They functioned as a unit, lived together, trained together, and consulted with one another about decisions and plans. Okudiara was the *de facto* leader of the Japanese contingent in the training facility in Lebanon. During his tenure, he earned the confidence of Wadi Haddad and attempted to bridge the culture gap by learning Arabic. When the Red Army collapsed and the revolution appeared to be on the verge of defeat in Japan, Shigenobu and the trainees, who would form the core of the future JRA, then entered into their own relationship with the PFLP-SOG. There was a transition period during which roles and relationships were unclear and fluid, but the terms of a partnership between the PFLP-SOG and the future JRA soon emerged. The clearest
decision point was when Haddad asked the Japanese trainees to undertake a mission on the PFLP-SOG’s behalf. In responding to Haddad as a unit, they made a collective decision independent of the Red Army or other figures back in Japan.

Like the Red Army and the PFLP, the PFLP-SOG and JRA shared a common enemy and strategic objective to combat “imperialism.” The Japanese trainees had come to Lebanon seeking skills and experience to use in their effort against imperialist Tokyo. While they viewed Israel as part of the imperialist camp, they did not view it as a priority in their battle against imperialism at the outset. The group eventually adopted the PFLP-SOG’s fight against Israel as its own only after the revolution in Japan was defeated and the PFLP-SOG enlisted it as an ally. It was thus not the groups’ mutual interest in balancing against Israel that caused the alliance. Rather the alliance prompted the JRA to adopt the PFLP-SOG’s interests and enemy.

At the point of alliance initiation between the PFLP-SOG and JRA, the JRA trainees had been present in Lebanon for approximately a year. In practical terms, given that they were based in Lebanon, Tokyo no longer posed the greatest threat to them. It was not proximate and it lacked offensive power to project into the Middle East. Israel, on the other hand, conducted retaliatory strikes against Palestinian groups in Lebanon. Even though the JRA was not the intended target, it was threatened by Israel’s actions because it was co-located with the PFLP-SOG, which was a high-priority target for Israel. Israel was the PFLP-SOG’s greatest threat in 1972, although it was also threatened by competitors and some “reactionary” Arab regimes. Therefore, the two groups shared a greatest threat; however, threat was not a decisive factor in their decision to initiate an alliance. The JRA’s sense of threat from Israel was a consequence of the relationship, not the cause of it. Conversely, if balancing against the threat from Israel was the PFLP-SOG’s primary goal, it would have selected a larger and more powerful ally than the handful of newly minted Japanese trainees.
The JRA’s decision to ally with the PFLP-SOG was largely rooted in its organizational weakness and both groups’ need to adapt to the environment. The individuals who later constituted the JRA sought out the PFLP-SOG in Lebanon in order to get training to compensate for their lack of skills and knowledge. In their absence, the conditions in Japan shifted in a way that exacerbated these deficiencies. Yet the nascent group was also unable to function independently in the environment of Lebanon either. The gap between the JRA’s resources and its environment was thus both significant and acute. It had ongoing, continuous organizational needs for safe haven and skills. It faced a high level of uncertainty about its future requirements and needs. JRA was, for all intents and purposes, a brand new organization and thus at a young organizational age. It had minimal ability to undertake reforms on its own. The decision to ally with the PFLP-SOG was heavily influenced by the group’s need to adapt to an environment where the prospects for struggle back in Japan were bleak and its own resources, skills, and knowledge were limited. It was presented with an ally option that could help narrow the disparity. The most viable strategy for the group to survive was to ally with the PFLP-SOG.

For its part, the PFLP-SOG’s desire to ally with the Japanese contingent was based on its need to adapt to the operating environment and its inability to do so on its own. The PFLP-SOG remained fully committed to its international operations campaign as a way to punish Israel and get international attention. The operational environment was increasingly prohibitive in Israel and for its Palestinian operatives, which had prompted the PFLP-SOG to adapt and widen its target set and theatre of operation. Israel’s counter-measures were frequently disrupting Palestinian attacks, and Palestinian groups were incurring losses in operations. Yet striking within Israel remained the PFLP-SOG’s highest priority and, unlike some of Haddad’s other operations, attacks within Israel were still acceptable to the broader PFLP at this point. Foreign operatives, particularly those who demonstrated acumen and commitment, offered a way for the PFLP-SOG to circumvent Israeli
security measures and escalate its attention-grabbing campaign against Israel. The PFLP’s camps in Lebanon were an ideal venue to vet prospective allies and select distinguished groups or individuals to assist in this venture. The Japanese in particular had impressed their Palestinian trainers with their seriousness and dedication to the training (Charbel 77).

Alliances were already an established part of the PFLP-SOG’s organizational culture, routines, and problem-solving frames. It had used an allied foreign operative during the 1970 hijacking, but the mission that Haddad was envisioning in 1972 would be a further adaptation in that it would be wholly executed by foreign operatives. The use of foreign operatives had the added benefit of projecting international opposition to Israel beyond the Middle East, giving the group an international aura and garnering international publicity. The JRA attack on the Lod Airport would accomplish all of these objectives and stunned the world to a degree that exceeded even the PFLP-SOG’s expectations.

At the time of alliance initiation, the nascent JRA and PFLP-SOG already had established mutual trust based on a combination of reputation, regular interactions, and personal relationships, enabled by the safe haven in Lebanon. Given the nature of the alliance effort—operational cooperation that involved divulging sensitive operational procedures, plans, and tactics—the PFLP-SOG had to trust the prospective ally to ask it to undertake a mission. From a trust perspective, the JRA was thus a clear choice. The training camp in Lebanon offered an ideal venue for the interactions to build such trust. The personal relationship between key leaders—Okudiara and Haddad—further enabled organizational trust. The Red Army’s implosion, which caused so much angst for the JRA, may have actually improved the JRA’s reputation with the PFLP-SOG as it gave the Palestinians the impression that the Japanese were hardcore, committed fighters willing to undertake risky missions—a perception that they had reinforced with their conduct in the camps as
well (Charbel 77). In addition to the organizational factors and identity affinity already discussed, trust factored heavily into the reason why the PFLP-SOG solicited the JRA specifically.

The PFLP-SOG and JRA’s alliance lasted from 1972 to 1978. It went through three phases during those five years. From 1972 to 1974, the JRA and PFLP-SOG’s forged a subordinate alliance as the JRA was heavily dependent on the PFLP-SOG and operated as a unit within the PFLP-SOG. Resources and knowledge, in the form of both training and shelter, largely flowed from the PFLP-SOG to the JRA. In return, the JRA acquiesced much of its autonomy to the PFLP-SOG, adhered to the PFLP-SOG’s decisions, and adopted the PFLP-SOG’s goals. The onerous was not only on the JRA, the PFLP-SOG incorporated the JRA’s objectives into its activities as well. While the JRA was consulted and had input into plans, ultimately, Haddad made the final decisions and the JRA was subsumed within the PFLP-SOG’s organizational culture.

The JRA’s organizational development and PFLP-SOG’s unbending organizational culture eventually precipitated a change in the alliance arrangement in 1974. The JRA’s frustration with Haddad’s management style and its subordinate position in the relationship prompted a move towards greater independence. The JRA wanted more autonomy to set its own agenda and to operate in a manner consistent with its cultural norms. It had gained skills and operational experience through its relationship with the PFLP-SOG such that it no longer had acute organizational learning or adaptation requirements that necessitated remaining in a dependent relationship. While the JRA remained small, its membership and support network had grown, and it now believed it could operate independently in the environment. No change in its ideology or enemies occurred, though the lack of identity affinity beyond ideological affinity contributed to their difficulties building a shared identity. The organizational-level alliance was still reinforced by personal relationships.
The change underway was evident in 1975 as the JRA—for the first time—prepared for its own operations in Europe. Yet when faced with an unexpected and urgent organizational need, the JRA’s solution was to request the PFLP-SOG’s assistance. Without hesitation, the PLFP-SOG gave the JRA’s problem immediate attention, despite the change in the alliance configuration. The JRA conducted the attack to obtain its operative’s freedom without PFLP-SOG personnel as part of the attack team. This masked the PFLP-SOG’s significant contribution to the operation. The PFLP-SOG was heavily engaged in the preparation for the operation, including providing guidance on target selection and location, logistical support, weapons, surveillance assistance, and even conducting an operation intended to break the impasse in negotiations. An operation in Europe, which garnered significant attention, reduced the PFLP-SOG’s to utilize the JRA to fulfill its organizational adaptation needs. The Japanese could no longer operate with minimal scrutiny in Europe, which cemented the shift in the alliance arrangement already in progress between the two groups.

With the group’s reduced ability to fulfill one another’s organizational needs, the relationship became a more exchange-based relationship, largely based on logistical cooperation and consultation, during the next three years. The two groups were not consistently co-located as the JRA no longer required the PFLP-SOG’s sanctuary. Cooperation and consultations continued, but both groups had organizational sovereignty over their own assets and independence in matters of strategy, membership, and organizational processes. Both parties expected ongoing and future cooperation; however it was not at the same level as the previous period, particularly in terms of operational cooperation. The areas and parameters of cooperation were generally well established and the needs being fulfilled through the alliance were more often discrete, like acquiring weapons or advice, rather than continuous.
During this period, their agendas were driven largely by their respective organizational prerogatives, particularly prisoner releases, and to a lesser extent, their strategic aims. Both groups were preoccupied with their own organizational health concerns, which dominated their operational agendas. The small size of both groups was one reason that the detention of their members was a matter of such paramount importance for the organizations. The PFLP-SOG did not play a direct role in JRA’s final two operations in this period—both hostage-takings for prisoner releases—though the U.S. Government assessed that the JRA “probably consults with it prior to conducting any attacks for its own purposes” (Department of State Terrorist Group Profiles 118).

The JRA enjoyed greater “success” than the PFLP-SOG during this period as Tokyo remained willing to acquiesce to JRA’s demands.

The JRA and PFLP-SOG’s relationship fluctuated most clearly in accordance with the groups’ organizational dynamics. The JRA’s organizational needs exerted more influence over the alliance’s direction than the PFLP-SOG’s requirements. As the JRA’s knowledge and resource base improved—i.e. it grew better aligned with the environment and thus had fewer organizational learning and adaptation needs—it sought greater independence and the alliance posture correspondingly evolved. The PFLP-SOG addressed the JRA’s continuous needs such that it gradually imparted an operating system that the JRA could then implement on its own. The JRA’s independent operations—hijackings and hostage takings with demands for prisoner releases and exorbitant ransoms—clearly reflected the skills it learned through its relationship with the PFLP-SOG, but it no longer depended on its ally to conduct these operations. Thus as JRA became capable for addressing its own organizational needs, it grew less dependent on the alliance. It continued to seek the PFLP-SOG’s assistance when needs arose that it could not address on its own, but those needs became less frequent and substantial.
The PFLP-SOG’s need for foreign operatives did not diminish as the JRA grew less dependent on the alliance. However, the Japanese operatives had lost some of their utility over time. With each high-profile attack they were involved in, they drew more and more scrutiny from security services, which reduced their operational effectiveness and utility for the PFLP-SOG. The JRA operative’s arrest in Paris in 1975 was indicative of their reduced ability to travel without drawing attention in Europe, which was a critical operational and logistical theatre for the PFLP-SOG. But the PFLP-SOG would likely have continued to find ways to employ the JRA, if the JRA would have been willing to maintain its subordinate position. Instead, around the time the JRA was agitating for more autonomy, the PFLP-SOG had an influx of West German operatives flow into its training facilities in Aden. This eased the transition for the JRA to become less dependent on the PFLP-SOG, while the PFLP-SOG still had the ability to fulfill its ongoing organizational adaptation need for foreign operatives. Thus the PFLP-SOG and JRA were able to shift into an alliance that was more of an equal partnership than a hierarchical arrangement.
CHAPTER 5:
THE WEST GERMAN RED ARMY FACTION AND THE PFLP-SOG

“This fascist state means to kill us all... Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is Auschwitz generation, and there is no arguing with them.”—Gudrun Ensslin, founding leader of the RAF

5.1 Introduction

During the 1970s, the West German Red Army Faction achieved the greatest notoriety of all the New Left organizations. Its iconic leaders were a media sensation. During their terrorist spree, they conducted arson attacks and bombings, orchestrated a jail break, engaged in deadly shoot outs with police, robbed banks, and stole BMW getaway cars, which were nicknamed "Baader-Meinhof Wagons" after two of the group’s prominent members. After the group's leaders were re-arrested, the campaign to free them from prison was no less dramatic. They went on hunger strikes, which resulted in the death of one senior member, to draw attention to their plight in prison. They succeeded in spawning a following; sympathizers formed “torture committees” to protest the conditions of their imprisonment. These committees provided a pool of recruits ready to go to extreme lengths to secure the prisoners’ freedom. Their followers unleashed a reign of violence that, for a short time, brought West Germany to its knees. The saga ended with the suicides of the imprisoned leaders, which were carefully orchestrated to sow doubts about whether they had taken their own lives or were murdered by the “fascist” West German Government.

At two pivotal points, the RAF turned to their Palestinian counterparts for assistance. When the RAF initially formed, its members journeyed to Jordan to undergo training with the nationalist Palestinian group, Fatah. The Palestinians were not impressed with the flamboyant and undisciplined West Germans. Moreover, the RAF was dismayed to learn that the skills that Fatah
could impart were not readily translatable to the urban West German environment. These shortcomings aside, the temporary respite Fatah provided in Jordan was of immeasurable value for the RAF at a time when it was under intense pressure in West Germany. Five years later, the next generation of the RAF again sought out the Palestinians during a crucial rebuilding phase. This time, the RAF connected with Wadi’ Haddad’s PFLP-SOG. The relationship between the two groups flourished, though clear parameters existed from the outset. The RAF’s singular focus on securing the leadership’s freedom both stimulated its alliance with the PFLP-SOG and constrained cooperation. The RAF relied heavily on the PFLP-SOG to help plan and implement its ultimately unsuccessful schemes to free its leaders. But the RAF would not expand its cooperation with the PFLP-SOG beyond these confines. For his part, Haddad saw the value in capitalizing on the RAF leaders’ infamy, though he expected compensation for his counsel, especially given the RAF’s unwillingness to participate in his operations. Haddad found other West German allies that imposed fewer limitations on their relationship to fulfill organizational needs for foreign operatives.

This chapter is a case study of the RAF’s alliance with the PFLP-SOG and two mini-case studies of the PFLP-SOG’s relationship with two other West German groups during this same period, the Revolutionary Cells and 2nd of June Movement. It begins with an overview of the broader environment in West Germany which shaped the RAF and other Leftist groups before delving into the group’s formation and evolution. The next section describes the RAF’s identity and organizational dynamics, including state sponsor relations. The subsequent two sections provide a chronology of the RAF’s activities and attacks during its first and second generation, highlighting the initiation of its relationship with the PFLP-SOG, the points when the PFLP-SOG exerted influence, and the known instances of cooperation between the two groups. Then this chapter examines the PFLP-SOG’s relationship with other West German leftist groups during this same
period and concludes with a comparison of the various relationships. The chapter concludes with 
an examination of the type of collaboration these allies engaged in and the drivers that brought 
them together as well as the motivations that sustained the relationship until Haddad’s death.

5.2 The Youth Movement in West Germany: Haunted by the Past and Dismayed by the 
Present

The New Left youth protesters in West Germany in the 1960s, particularly those who 
turned to violence towards the end of the decade, fervently believed that West Germany was still in 
the clutches of fascism, albeit a more cleverly disguised version. There were two sources of this 
masked fascist threat: 1) West Germany’s unresolved Nazi legacy, a force that protesters believed 
still dominated and controlled the apparatuses of power; and 2) the U.S. war in Vietnam, for which 
the West German Government was also responsible, given its “special relationship” with the United 
States (Varon 33). The “special relationship” referred not only the formal transatlantic partnership 
between the two countries, though the protesters certainly objected to West Germany serving as a 
base for the American war in Vietnam. Yet their opposition ran even deeper than that. Historian 
Jeremy Varon in his trenchant examination of Leftist groups in the 1960s described the place that 
the United States occupied in the West German psyche at the time:

[t]he United States had tried to create the Federal Republic Germany—West Germany— 
largely in its own image and West Germany saw its alliance with the United States as key to 
both its survival and its redemption; adopting American values was to enter the modern 
family of nations and achieve the long-elusive ‘normality’ so desperately sought after the 
catastrophe of National Socialism (6).

But the Vietnam War shattered the United States’ image as a liberator in the eyes of the 

youth counterculture movement. Instead, the U.S. Government, like the West German Government, 
was seen as a hypocrite of the worst kind—an imperialist power trying to cover up its true nature
in order to dupe the masses. Given the role of the United States in rebuilding West Germany, the entire system was now suspect in the eyes of these youth (Klimke *The Other Alliance* 132). Varon continued that

[s]eeing the United States engaged in mass violence against a poor country struggling for self-determination—as Leftists commonly saw the conflict—potentially undermined Germans’ already fragile sense of their own society’s legitimacy, which was derived in part from its effort to emulate the Americans (34).

The centrality of the Vietnam War for the West German New Left rivaled even its American counterparts’ preoccupation with this issue (Varon 3). Its view of the Vietnam War was inextricably bound to its country’s past. Anti-war activists frequently evoked Nazi metaphors to describe U.S. actions in Vietnam. The Holocaust became the dominant lens through which disenfranchised leftist youth, who were not actually old enough to remember World War II, viewed the Vietnam War. For example, protesters regularly insisted that they refused to be “good Germans” and idly stand by while this “travesty” took place, as some of their parents had done a generation earlier (Klimke *The Other Alliance* 137). A banner placed on the memorial site at the Dachau concentration camp in 1966 crudely proclaimed, “Vietnam is the Auschwitz of America” (Varon 35).

The prosperity and political consensus of the 1950s did little to comfort youth in the 1960s who were horrified to learn that sixty percent of West German military officers serving in 1965 had fought for the Nazis. Students demanded to know their professors’ background as well, driving a wedge between the students and the universities’ administration (Varon 33). The CIA assessed that the “alienation of one generation from another is particularly marked in West Germany where the elder generation is more discredited than perhaps any other country” (*Restless Youth* 3). Similarly, as German historian, Andrei S. Markovits observed:

The protesters—commonly referred to in Germany (as in France) as “68ers”—were the first to confront the Federal Republic’s fascist legacy in a comprehensive way. They revolted against the complacency and silence of their parents, questioning the entire value structure.
of a supposedly "new" Germany that they believed to be little more than a continuation of its Nazi predecessor (133).

The New Left further characterized its efforts as analogous to anti-colonialist struggles, arguing that West Germany was, in essence, a colony of the United States. In doing so, they also likened their cause to the Black Power movement in the United States, which framed the African American community as living in an "internal colony." In his examination of the ties between the American and West German protest movements, historian Martin Klimke argued that the intensity of the West Germans’ identification with the Black Panthers in the United States contributed to the radicalization and legitimization of violence within the movement (8). This anti-colonial frame of reference created a narrative that situated the resistance in West Germany as complementary to Third World liberation campaigns (Klimke personal interview).

As the 1960s wore on, the Palestinian cause garnered significant attention in West Germany, especially following the 1967 Six Day War. The Middle East already had particular saliency for West Germans, given their country’s past and geographic proximity (Varon 69-70). West Germans, including those in the New Left, were initially supportive of Israel—a sentiment rooted at least in part by a sense of guilt and obligation towards its Jewish population. However, with the Arab defeat in 1967 and Israel’s acquisition of new territory in that war, the narrative among West German’s New Left shifted dramatically. Israel was now deemed to be an aggressor, an occupier, and an imperialist force subjugating the Palestinians. By 1968, support for the Palestinian struggle was a revolutionary requirement for leftists in West Germany, on par with solidarity with the Viet Cong (Varon 69). This was not rooted in any particular cultural affinity or identification with the Palestinians per se; instead it was a function of the assessment that Israel had joined the ranks of imperial powers by virtue of its treatment of the Palestinians. Some argued that this allowed leftists to re-channel their discomfort about their heritage against the former victims of
West Germany’s fascism (Klimke personal interview). The intensity of the New Left’s condemnation of Israel raised the disturbing specter of enduring anti-Semitism within the post-Nazi generation, despite their avid condemnation of their parents’ actions. The attempted bombing of a Jewish Community Center in West Berlin in 1969 by the first West German New Left terrorist group, which was trained by Fatah, the Tupamaros West Berlin, was timed to coincide with the anniversary of Kristallnacht. It served as a particularly chilling indicator that anti-Semitism was alive and well among Germany’s radical New Left, despite the perpetrators’ claim that the goal was to demonstrate the parallels between the Nazis’ treatment of Jewish people and the Israelis’ treatment of the Palestinians (Smith and Moncourt 587; Hoffman *Inside Terrorism* 2006 230).

The New Left believed that its concerns about the nature of the West German Government were validated on June 2, 1967 when an unarmed protester, Benno Ohnesorg, was shot in the back of the head and killed by an undercover police officer, Karl-Heinz Kurras, during a demonstration against a visit by the Shah of Iran to West German (Varon 39). Ohnesorg was a compelling victim. It was the first time that the twenty-six year old had participated in a demonstration, and he left behind a pregnant wife. For leftists, the photograph of a young woman cradling the head of a dying Ohnesorg became a poignant depiction of the “true face” of the West German state (Kulish A4). Inept and inaccurate efforts to portray Ohnesorg’s death as self-defense only further enraged protesters as did Kurras’s subsequent acquittal of manslaughter and re-instatement in the police force (Kulish A4). At a gathering in the wake of Ohnesorg’s death, future RAF leader Gudrun Ensslin ominously declared, “[t]his fascist state means to kill us all... Violence is the only way to answer violence. This is Auschwitz generation, and there is no arguing with them” (qtd. in Varon 39).

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¹ Stasi’s files unearthed in 2009 would show that Kurras was an East German spy, although there is no evidence that he conducted the shooting at the behest of Stasi.
5.3 The Emergence of the Red Army Faction

Ohnesorg's death, as well as the near-fatal shooting of a prominent New Left leader by a right-wing fanatic in the spring of 1968, solidified a radical minority's belief that the student movement was now the target of the still-brutal, fascist German state—another Holocaust metaphor that instilled the sense of an existential threat and need for urgent action (Varon 40). Some were already well along on a pathway to violence. As Stephen Aust, a prominent German journalist and expert on the RAF, characterized the process; “indignation turned to protest, protest to resistance, resistance to violence and violence to outright terrorism” (Aust xiii). By the spring of 1968, Ensslin’s patience with resistance had expired. She, along with her boyfriend Andreas Baader and two others, initiated their embryonic campaign against capitalism and imperialism by setting fire to several department stores in Frankfurt (Varon 41). The actual damage was minimal, and the perpetrators were soon apprehended.

The four arsonists were sentenced to three years in prison. In June 1969, they were released on bail during an appeal, but the appeal was subsequently denied. Rather than return to jail, three of the four decided to flee. By April 1970, the law had caught up with Andreas Baader, and he was re-arrested. Ensslin then enlisted the help of prominent leftist journalist, Ulrike Meinhof, to help free Baader. Meinhof arranged with the prison authorities to interview Baader at a research facility under the guise of conducting research for a forthcoming book. She then helped the lightly-guarded Baader escape with the assistance of masked and armed accomplices. A security guard and employee were injured in the assault (Varon 65). With this act, Meinhof entered the illicit world of what was then dubbed the “Baader-Meinhof Gang” by the media—a nickname that erroneously suggested that Meinhof was more influential within the group than she actually was (Aust 61). Reflecting the West German leftists’ affinity with the Black Power struggle, the RAF included the
Black Panthers’ logo at the top of its communiqué celebrating Baader’s escape. This was the opening salvo for a group that would span the next three decades.

5.4 The RAF’s Identity and Organizational Characteristics

The RAF’s Ideology and Narrative

The longest lasting of the New Left militant groups in Europe, the RAF underwent a number of transformations and reinventions during its lifespan from 1968 to 1998. But one goal remained constant—the destruction of the “capitalist, imperialist, and fascist” West German state, which would pave the way for the nebulous “proletarian dictatorship” (Alexander and Pluchinsky 55). The RAF envisioned its role as the vanguard force that would instigate a revolution in West Germany, but it did not promote itself as the post-revolution leaders. While the group could go on at length about the ills and shortfalls of the current system, its ideas for the future were vaguely defined and highly abstract, at best (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Red Army Faction” 4).

The RAF adhered to an idiosyncratic mixture of Marxist-Leninism and anarchism (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Red Army Faction” 4). Unlike many Marxists, the group did not articulate a clear position on class struggle (Varon 68). But its lack of vision for the future and focus on precipitating the revolution were the most apparent positions that separated the group from other Marxists and gave the group its anarchist streak (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Red Army Faction” 4). As a founding RAF leader argued, “[a]s for the state of the future, the time after victory, that is not our concern…. we build the revolution, not the socialist model” (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 172). The group drew on the writings of Che Guevara and
Mao Tse Tung, as did most other New Left organizations, to justify the need for direct action in spite of the absence of the traditional conditions Marx identified as necessary for revolutionary change (Zwerman, Steinhoff, and della Porta 86; Varon 7).

The RAF’s narrative drew heavily on its leftist ideology (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 230). The RAF saw itself as part of the international revolutionary movement, fighting imperialism, capitalism, and fascism in all its forms, all over the world (Alexander and Pluchinsky 54). The group viewed the struggle in West Germany as central to the international revolution because of the country’s position in the international order, its disreputable past, and its close relationship with the United States. Consistent with this perspective, the RAF’s attacks were aimed at either German or American targets, especially symbols of “imperialism” or capitalism (Alexander and Pluchinsky 56). Opposition to the Vietnam War featured prominently in the group’s early narrative. As a base for the U.S. military, West Germany was deemed equally culpable for the war by the RAF. The group’s first major attack was executed against a U.S. military facility in West Germany on the anniversary of a U.S. bombing campaign in Vietnam. The U.S. military presence in West Germany was repeatedly targeted by the group. Although the U.S. military remained a target after the war ended, the Vietnam War was central to the original justification for such attacks (Alexander and Pluchinsky 55).

While the RAF identified with all Third World liberation efforts, the Palestinian struggle occupied a central place in the RAF’s narrative. Israel was considered an imperialist enemy, yet this did not extend to targeting Israeli or Jewish interests, which the RAF did not do, either. Some RAF attacks were justified by the group in part by citing the target’s offenses against the Palestinians. For example, in its communiqué claiming the 1970 bombing of a well-known conservative West German media outlet’s headquarters, the RAF demanded that the newspaper cease “propaganda...
against the freedom movements in the Third World, particularly against the Arab countries which are fighting for the liberation of Palestine” (Alexander and Pluchinsky 59). The RAF also defended and justified Palestinian attacks on Israel, including most controversially, Black September Organization’s attack on the Munich Olympics in 1972. Other West German New Left groups—most notably the 2nd of June Movement and the Revolutionary Cells, which are discussed in greater detail later in the chapter—did attack Israeli and Jewish interests and participated in the PFLP-SOG’s attacks.

*The RAF’s Ethnic Identity*

The RAF membership was entirely West German, though the group operated in other countries as well. The West German identity was a defining feature of the RAF, particularly in its early years, as Germany’s history and world position were central to the group’s belief that its struggle was critical to the broader revolution. Yet this was not to say that the RAF had a sense of nationalism. It was like many West German youth in that it expressed distaste for traditional nationalist sentiments (United States Central Intelligence Agency Restless Youth 4). Seventy-eight percent of respondents in a 1967 poll in West Germany responded that they would vote for a United States of Europe (United States Central Intelligence Agency Restless Youth 4). The RAF had a broader European identity that grew more salient in subsequent years and served as a major identity and affinity point during the 1980s. But given the narrative focus on the Third World during the 1960s and 1970s, this First World identity was not a major component of the group’s self-described identity. However, its Third World counterparts, like the Palestinians, saw a First World identity embedded in the sense of entitlement and privilege demonstrated by the West Germans. It strongly identified with Third World movements, but did not share an ethnic or other identity that bound the group to these counterparts.
The RAF’s Organizational Dynamics and Relationships

Spanning four decades, the group’s durability belies the pressure it endured at the hands of the West German state. A consistently small group, typically consisting of a few dozen members at any given time, the RAF garnered attention that far exceeded its modest numbers with its high-profile, symbolic attacks, and staying power. It recovered from the arrest of over 150 core members over the course of thirty years, the detention of its entire leadership on at least two occasions as well as the shocking suicides of its founding leaders (Alexander and Pluchinsky 55). At the end of 1970—the year the RAF was officially created, coining itself after the Japanese group of the same name—the CIA estimated that the group consisted of twenty-three members (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Red Army Faction” 2). At the peak of its deadly campaign to free the prisoners in 1977, the group had about a dozen hardcore operational members outside of prison. However, the group had a much larger aboveground support network that it could draw on throughout its existence. It received some assistance from East Germany’s security service, including haven and a willingness to turn a blind eye to the group’s transit through the country (Whitney).

The RAF was largely comprised of “intellectuals,” university-educated, but not particularly successful, students (Reich 52). Most RAF members were middle class (Reich 53). Despite their comfortable socio-economic upbringings, they disdained their peers who embraced capitalism. “All they can think about is some hairspray, a vacation in Spain, and a tiled bathroom,” lamented Meinhof (qtd. in Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 80).

The group’s early years were by far it most notorious, spawning numerous books and movies. Its legendary leaders attained a “Bonnie and Clyde”-like celebrity status and possessed a mystique that surpassed their actual abilities. For his part, Baader was essentially a “politicized
criminal” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Red Army Faction” 1). He was a quick-witted bully and action junkie intent on defying authority and instruction at every turn (Becker 75). Ensslin, who was more intellectual and ideologically motivated, complemented Baader perfectly. A member of a rival group remarked that “[i]t was always obvious they belonged together and no one could drive a wedge between them” (qtd. in Aust 131). The two led the group from its inception until their deaths in 1977. From prison, they inspired and orchestrated not only the rebuilding of the group outside of prison, but also the creation of a more complex, multi-layered, and enduring organizational structure designed to weather future setbacks with less disruption (Alexander and Pluchinsky 46). This endeavor typified a key quality that explains the group’s longevity: its ability to learn from past mistakes (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 2006 250).

Its small size and underground existence predisposed the RAF to vacillate between rigid group think and vicious infighting (Varon 9). This tendency was exacerbated during the 1970s by the domineering leadership style of the Baader and Ensslin. They engaged in relentless “self-criticism exercises,” during which the group dissected the shortcomings of every individual members, with the notable exception of Baader, in order to make them “better revolutionaries.” Common in New Left groups, this was the same practice that spiraled out of control and led to the torture and death of a dozen Red Army members in Japan in 1972. Some attribute founding ideologue Ulrike Meinhof’s 1976 suicide to the unremitting criticism she endured from Baader, Ensslin, and other RAF members (Aust 257).

Following the founding leaders’ arrests in 1972, the currency of influence in the reconstituted group outside of prison was determined by proximity to the imprisoned leadership. The ability to speak on their behalf, to be in contact with them, and to know their desires was privileged above all. Fittingly, their followers outside of prison were led by the prisoners’ lawyers
as well as individuals released from prison after serving sentences for lesser charges. The outside group was unequivocally subordinate to the prison contingent until 1977. After that time, the power shifted to the contingent outside prison, although imprisoned members remained important to the group (Alexander Pluchinsky 54). Although the RAF was active until 1992 and did not formally disband until 1998, this chapter focuses on the group during the first generation period from 1968 to 1973 and the second generation from 1974 to 1977, when an alliance with a hub was possible.

5.5 Forging Alliances in Jordan

With attempted murder charges pending and “Wanted” posters hanging up everywhere, the fugitives quickly realized that they could not stay in West Germany. So they prepared to travel to the Middle East. Unlike the Japanese’s extended search for a destination to train, for the RAF, it was the “obvious” option from the outset (Aust 10). As noted earlier, the Palestinian cause had become a central issue for the West German Left the year before and occupied a prevalent place in the RAF’s narrative. The RAF’s decision to initiate contact with their Palestinian brethren in Jordan was motivated by its organizational needs, though the saliency of the Palestinian issue contributed to that selection as well. All of the Palestinian militant groups were considered “legitimate” by the RAF by virtue of their struggle for “national liberation” against imperialist Israel. Therefore, unlike the Japanese group it was named after, the RAF did not limit its search to only leftist Palestinian groups (Klimke personal interview).

A well-known PLO/Fatah representative, Said Dudin, was resident in Berlin. The group’s selection of Fatah as a partner in particular was based more on his accessibility than a careful evaluation of the Palestinian partner options from an affinity or even organizational needs
standpoint. He agreed to help the RAF get weapons, but insisted that they must undergo training in Jordan first. This worked out perfectly for the West Germans. At a critical juncture, they had a place to hide beyond the reach of the West German Government, to get training, as well as a source for weapons. So they went to Jordan to train with Fatah in the summer of 1970, travelling in two separate groups (Aust 65). The experience was not what they expected.

Dudin’s reasons for insisting the RAF get training soon became clear. Fatah provided the burgeoning West German group with the standard “revolutionary tourism” circuit of activities that it called training, but were really designed to invoke sympathy, increase awareness, and garner funds for the Palestinian cause. This consisted of visits to refugee camps, hospitals, schools, and orphanages. The Palestinians did not take the Western European “revolutionaries” who cycled through their camps very seriously, viewing their activities as more theatre than substance and seeing them as guests they had to entertain, rather than fighters in real need of combat skills (Khaled 121).

This tour did not include any actual guerilla training and, therefore, was not particularly valuable for the recipients. When the West Germans insisted on participating in more rigorous military training, Fatah relented. But at the desert camp where Palestinians trained as well, they complained that many of the skills Fatah taught were not readily applicable to the Western urban environment in Germany—a valid, albeit poorly communicated, criticism (Aust 67-8). Unlike the JRA, which impressed its Palestinian hosts with its members’ seriousness and commitment during training, Fatah was decidedly unimpressed with the RAF and the West Germans earned a reputation as being prima donnas.

Moreover, the West Germans were a cultural mismatch with their Palestinian hosts. The Europeans complained about the lack of food and absence of soda. Baader refused to wear the
issued uniform, preferring to don his black velvet pants. The RAF trainees wasted precious ammunition firing aimlessly, while their Palestinian counterparts only received limited ammunition to use in training. Then West Germans went on strike when the camp commander rationed their ammunition. The Palestinians were initially uncomfortable with the West Germans’ insistence on mixed-sex sleeping accommodations and were later unhinged by the West German women’s naked sunbathing (Aust 67-8).

A senior Fatah representative, Ali Hassan Salemeh, came to the camp to mediate the strife and educate his guests on the Palestinians and their situation. Knowing little about Fatah or the Palestinians, the RAF’s brash leader nonetheless saw himself as equal to the veteran, battle-hardened Palestinian commander who would later mastermind Fatah’s 1972 attack at the Munich Olympics. But Salemeh was not reciprocally impressed with the West Germans. The next time trainees caused a disruption at the camp, their Palestinian hosts disarmed them and locked them in their quarters. Training was over, and it was time for the West Germans to go home (Aust 72). In spite of their rocky tenure, the final parting was not acrimonious. Fatah arranged their safe passage back to West Germany and agreed to consider providing weapons in the future, but did not make promises of future cooperation or consultation (Aust 74). By departing in August 1970, the RAF narrowly missed being caught up in the PFLP’s multiple hijackings and the subsequent turmoil in Jordan the following month. The two groups continued to cooperate on an ad hoc basis for the next two years, including some weapons transfers and logistical assistance.

*The May Offensive*

The CIA assessed that during the RAF’s early years, while the group was the most well-known, it was the least proficient (“The Red Army Faction” 1). These “amateur performances, however, were soon replaced by increasing levels of tactical ability and technical expertise” (United
For the next two years, the group was preoccupied with the task of functioning underground, tasks like robbing banks, stealing cars, securing safe houses, and recruiting new members. It did not conduct its first attack, three pipe bombs planted in a U.S. Army officers’ mess hall in Frankfurt, until May 1972. The attack was symbolically launched on May 11, “the day on which the U.S. imperialists began a bomb blockade against North Vietnam,” according to the RAF communiqué claiming responsibility for the attack (Alexander and Pluchinsky 57). Its first attack crossed the lethality threshold, causing one fatality and thirteen injuries in the blast.

A series of operations followed in short order. The group conducted more attacks in 1972 than in any other year in its twenty-eight year existence (Alexander and Pluchinsky 53). The day after the attack in Frankfurt, two devices exploded at the Augsburg police headquarters, injuring five police officers. Two hours later, on the same day, a vehicle rigged with explosives blew up at the criminal investigations office in Munich. On May 15, the wife of a federal judge who had signed arrest warrants for RAF members was wounded when explosives wired to her car detonated while she was driving. Three bombs hidden in the Springer Press headquarters, a conservative West German media outlet, injured seventeen on May 19. A call warning of the impending attack was believed to be a prank and not heeded. On May 24, two bombs at the European headquarters of the U.S. Army in Heidelberg exploded and killed three American servicemen (Alexander and Pluchinsky 58).

In response, a manhunt for the RAF ensued. By the end of June, the police had captured the RAF’s leaders and many of its members in a series of arrests. Outside of prison, the group was
essentially defunct by the end of 1972. From that point on, the prisoners were the central issue for the group, bar none. More than that, they were the only issue, to the exclusion of all others (Karmon 62). Their fate equaled the fate of the revolution.

The RAF was not the only terrorist threat the West German Government was facing during this period. Other leftist groups, namely the Revolutionary Cells and 2nd of June Movement, were also launching their own campaigns. In addition, West Germany was also a theatre for Palestinian violence. Attacks in West Germany had particular propaganda value for Palestinian militants who blamed Germany for Israel’s very existence and bemoaned the reparation payments made by Germany to Israel as well as other assistance it had provided (Khaled 127). The PFLP-SOG struck repeatedly in West Germany in 1972, including assassinating five Jordanians, damaging an oil pipeline, and blowing up a factory with contracts with Israel. The group extorted five million dollars from the West German Government by hijacking a Lufthansa plane. Reports abounded that the West German Government began to pay “protection” money to the PFLP-SOG in order to get it to cease attacks in West Germany (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 418).

Fatah’s Black September Organization then stunned the world by taking Israeli athletes hostages during the 1972 Munich Olympics. Seizing on the hype surrounding its former trainees’ imprisonment, the attackers included the release of the RAF’s founding leaders among its demands for the release of the Israeli athletes (Hoffman *Inside Terrorism* 2006 67). In return, the RAF issued a statement from prison, penned by Ulrike Meinhof, in support of the attack, much to the horror of even most of the New Left. The RAF heralded the act as bringing the Palestinians’ war from the Arab periphery of imperialism to the centre [sic]. The comrades of Black September.. went back to the place that is the origin of this massacre: West Germany—formerly Nazi Germany—now at the centre [sic] of imperialism. Back to the site of the power that forced Jews of both West and East Europe to emigrate to Israel. Back to those who had hoped to profit from the theft of Palestinian land. Back to where Israel got its
reparations and, until 1965, officially, its weapons... Israel cried crocodile tears. Israel burned their own athletes just as the Nazis burned the Jews—kindling for the imperialist policy of extermination (qtd. in Smith and Moncourt 207).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Tactic</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>PFLP-SOG Role</th>
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<td>Arson</td>
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<tr>
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<td>U.S. Army Mess Hall</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest Vietnam</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Police Headquarters</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest Imperialism</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Federal Judge</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retribution</td>
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<td>Protest Imperialism</td>
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<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest Vietnam</td>
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<tr>
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<td>German Embassy in Stockholm</td>
<td>Hostage Taking</td>
<td>Prisoner Release</td>
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<td>Federal Prosecutor</td>
<td>Assassination</td>
<td>Punishment for Prisoners Conditions</td>
<td>Supported</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>German Businessman</td>
<td>Attempted Kidnapping</td>
<td>Prisoner Release</td>
<td>Supported</td>
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<td>Federal Prosecutors Office</td>
<td>Rocket Attack</td>
<td>Signal to the Prisoners</td>
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<td>1977</td>
<td>German Businessman</td>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>Prisoner Release</td>
<td>Consultation &amp; Coordinated Operation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1

5.6 The Second Generation of RAF: One Mission

The RAF prisoners were obsessed with the conditions of their imprisonment and used their alleged maltreatment as a platform to highlight the fascism and cruelty of the West German Government, even going so far as to compare their circumstances to those experienced in Nazi concentration camps in World War II (Aust 198). This was reflective of what one former member
called the group’s “persecution mania” (Aust 220). Their protestations garnered a following and “torture committees” formed to condemn the prisoners’ “torture by isolation” and “torture by sensory deprivation,” whereby prisoners were held in solitary confinement in wings of the prison where there was no sound, all white walls, lights were on twenty-four hour a day lights, and the cells were kept at uncomfortably cold temperatures (Smith and Moncourt 238). These committees served as a critical source of new recruits for the RAF and other militant groups. Stephan Aust argues that, after the 1972 arrest:

[t]he Red Army Faction became its own subject... The perpetrators of terrorist acts now took on the role of victims. In a post-war German society stricken with guilt, that lent them a position which their helpers outside prison exploited to the full. At last they could play the part of martyrs. They put on a virtuoso performance allowing them to feature as victims persecuted and tortured by an unconstitutional state. And the machinery of that state readily, and stupidly, went along with them (xvii).

The prisoners went on several hunger strikes to protest their treatment. Several members eventually were force fed in order to keep them alive, further fueling protests. When one of the founding members, Holger Meins, died during a hunger strike in 1974, there was an outpouring of sympathy for the group. A photograph depicting Meins’s condition when he died—the 6’4” man weighed less than 100 lbs.—that circulated was seen as evidence that the government was culpable for Meins’s death (Aust 209).

After one stymied attempt, the RAF prisoners orchestrated the rebuilding of the group outside prison throughout 1973 and 1974. Slowly but surely, a small cadre of members coalesced around the goal of securing the prisoners’ freedom. The prisoners’ lawyers were essential to this effort. Because of their activities, the lawyers were eventually forced to go underground, where they served as the outside leaders of the reconstituted group and as a mouthpiece for the imprisoned founders. The release of RAF members serving time for lesser charges provided important continuity for the group. But the imprisoned leaders, namely Baader and Ensslin,
remained the ultimate authority in the group for both those in prison and for those on the outside seeking their freedom.

Despite the RAF’s far-reaching aspirations and professed opposition to imperialism writ large, it was completely consumed with the plight of its imprisoned founding leaders. All of its efforts were directed towards securing their freedom. This resulted in goal displacement, whereby the fate of the prisoners replaced the group’s other objectives (Smith and Moncourt 337). All its attacks during this period were designed in some way to compel their release. The prisoners’ cause, particularly persistent accusations that they were being mistreated, was the primary motivation for new members to join the group during this period. This very concrete goal—and the urgency of the effort—gave the RAF license to engage in more lethal actions, despite the group’s persistent proclamations that it did not target “civilians.”

The freshly rebuilt RAF undertook its first effort to coerce the release of the RAF leaders as the final preparations for their trial were underway. In April 1975, six attackers calling themselves “the Holger Meins Commandos,” seized the West German Embassy in Stockholm and demanded the release of twenty-six prisoners, including Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Jan-Carl Raspe. According to one RAF member, who was new to the group at the time, Baader hatched this plot (Smith and Moncourt 332). Emboldened by the West German Government’s recent acquiescence to the far more modest demands made by the 2nd of June Movement after that group kidnapped a mayoral candidate in Berlin, the RAF was confident it could achieve a more dramatic result with the Embassy seizure.

However, the West German Government realized the dangerous precedent it had set and refused to meet the RAF hostage takers’ demands. The attackers demonstrated their willingness to follow through on their threats when they shot the Embassy’s Military Attaché in order to force the
Swedish police to pull back their forces. But the West German Government still would not budge. Upon hearing the news that the West German Government was still unwilling to negotiate, the attackers then killed the sixty-four year old Economic Attaché. With seemingly no other way to stop the anticipated slaughter of the remaining hostages, the Swedish police prepared to storm the building. However, before the Swedish could launch their rescue mission, the explosives that the attackers had rigged in the Embassy to prevent any rescue attempt unexpectedly detonated. The attackers fled the building and were promptly arrested by the Swedish police. One perished immediately from his wounds. A second attacker was badly burned and subsequently died in a prison hospital in West Germany, which was poorly equipped to treat a critically wounded burn victim. The RAF—believing that the government had killed him, or least deliberately allowed him to die—pointed to his death as further evidence that the West German Government would use whatever means necessary to eradicate the group (Aust 227).

*Back to the Drawing Board... And the Palestinians*

Following in the footsteps of its predecessors, the newly-minted RAF once again sought out the Palestinians for training and assistance to build up its capability after the Embassy debacle. However, by this time, Fatah was no longer prepared to accept such “guests.” Fatah told the RAF that it now eschewed such “military operations” and was pursuing a path to negotiations. Arafat suggested that the new RAF leadership approach George Habash’s PFLP instead (Aust 269). The RAF’s PFLP interlocutor then wisely referred the RAF to Wadi’ Haddad’s unit. Upon approaching the PFLP-SOG, the RAF found that Haddad welcomed a relationship with it, despite the poor reputation that the West Germans had earned during their stay in Amman in 1970 (Charbel 64, Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 335). The PFLP-SOG had also forged relationships with other West
German groups by this point, particularly the 2nd of June Movement and Revolutionary Cells, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The RAF members then set off to Aden for training, where they were greeted like dignitaries by the PFLP-SOG and treated well throughout their stay (Charbel 68). With considerably less belligerence than their predecessors, this generation of RAF members ran long distances, learned close combat skills and gymnastics, studied guerilla theory, and practiced sharp shooting (Aust 271). Most importantly, they planned a terrorist campaign that would rock West Germany and secure the release of the prisoners. Unlike Fatah’s experience in 1970, the PFLP-SOG was impressed with the West Germans. One of Haddad’s lieutenants commented that the Germans were “distinguished by their seriousness, accuracy, and commitment.” The RAF’s narrative affinity was reciprocated to some degree, as the lieutenant explained, “[o]f course the German struggle was nearest to us” (Charbel 67).

Still, the RAF would not be sidetracked from its main goal, even when Haddad asked them to participate in an operation against the OPEC ministers in Vienna in 1975. He needed operatives who could readily operate in Austria, like RAF members. Unlike the Sandinistas and JRA, despite the critical assistance the PFLP-SOG was providing, the RAF demurred when Haddad asked for its participation. It cited its pressing organizational objective and privately noted discomfort with the operation’s dubious origin (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 392). Instead, the PFLP-SOG recruited West German operatives from rival leftist organizations, one from the Revolutionary Cells and one from 2nd of June Movement, as part of the attack team (Smith and Moncourt 599).

Despite the group’s unwillingness to participate in the PFLP-SOG’s operation, Haddad added the RAF prisoners’ freedom to his agenda. After all, it was the issue du jour, especially as the circus trial dragged on and the controversy about the prisoners’ treatment grew following Holger Meins’s
death and Meinhof's suicide by hanging in 1976. During the ill-fated 1976 hijacking of an Air France plane to Entebbe, the PFLP-SOG attackers included the release of RAF members among its demands for 53 prisoners (Smith and Moncourt 440). Beyond such gestures, which could be characterized as largely symbolic, Haddad used his resources to help devise plans to secure their freedom. He considered a plot by the West German 2nd of June Movement to kidnap the Pope to exchange him for the RAF prisoners, but ultimately advised against it due to concerns that the international blowback would be too severe to withstand. He explored a plan to execute a series of escalating bombings in West Germany to compel the RAF leaders' release. If the government refused to capitulate, progressive larger bombings would be conducted (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 366-7). It is unclear what prevented this effort from going forward. The PFLP-SOG's commitment to the RAF clearly exceeded merely symbolic gestures and involved undertaking risks and expending resources on its behalf.

The German Autumn: the Apex of the RAF and PFLP-SOG's Relationship

By 1977, the RAF’s efforts to free the prisoners had reached a feverish pitch. It prepared to commence a full offensive. The group’s activities during this year—known as the German Autumn—were shaped and influenced by its alliance with the PFLP-SOG. Meinhof’s suicide the previous May contributed to the group’s sense of urgency about securing the prisoners’ release. The prisoners deliberately fostered the perception that her death had not been a suicide, despite their knowledge to the contrary, so that their followers would fear for their safety. In April, the RAF’s “Ulrike Meinhof Commando” claimed the assassination of Federal Prosecutor Siegfried Buback, blaming him for Meinhof’s death (Ulrike Meinhof Commando). Later that same month, the RAF prisoners were found guilty of multiple murders and sentenced to life in prison (Aust 289). With
that verdict, the RAF’s efforts entered its final phase. The prisoners delivered a very clear message to their followers: no more failed attempts to free them (Aust 276).

With that ominous warning in their heads and preparations for several operations underway, the outside RAF leaders journeyed to Baghdad to consult with Haddad. This gesture alone spoke volumes about this alliance. When it came time for the RAF to execute these critical operations and as the stakes were rising precipitously, it turned to the PFLP-SOG for assistance. The RAF entrusted Haddad with information about its impending attacks and sought his input on how to secure their leaders’ release. The RAFs not only needed its ally’s expertise and contacts to execute its plans, it also trusted the PFLP-SOG input on critical operational details and relied on it to assist in securing its leaders.

In Iraq, before getting down to business, the PFLP-SOG delegation greeted the visiting RAF members warmly and treated them to a lavish meal, which was notable in contrast to the strife between the RAF’s founders and Fatah several years before when the RAF leaders felt they were not given sufficient respect from their Palestinian counterparts. Among the issues the RAF wanted to raise with Haddad was where the RAF prisoners would be taken upon their release. Haddad agreed to assist with arranging a secure location for them. The PFLP-SOG’s stronghold in South Yemen appeared the most plausible location (Aust 267).

But the RAF’s preparations were premature. In July, during an attempted kidnapping, the RAF shot and killed Jurgen Ponto, the head of the Dresdner Bank. It was another failed attempt in the prisoners’ eyes. This plot, “Operation Big Money,” was one planned during the group’s hiatus in South Yemen, another indication of the centrality of this alliance for the RAF’s central goal (Aust 271; 273; 299).
Following the Ponto murder, the RAF attempted a rocket attack against the Federal
Prosecutor's Office. Justified as a way to send “a sign to the comrades imprisoned,” the attack could
have caused significant casualties, yet would do little in terms of guaranteeing the prisoners’
release. This operation was an indication of the sense of desperation that had set in within the
group. The rocket launcher misfired—due either to an accident or sabotage by a member with
misgivings about the operation—and no one was injured or killed. For their part, the detained RAF
leaders issued thinly-veiled ultimatums that they would be forced to take matters into their own
hands if their followers were unable to secure their freedom. They went so far as to question the
outside members’ capability and threatened to disavow them (Aust 297). Their frantic followers,
determined to free them, still had one more trick up their sleeve.

Before conducting the next operation to free the prisoners—the plan dubbed “Operation Big
Get Out,” also hatched back in Aden months earlier—the RAF again sent representatives to discuss
the plans with the PFLP-SOG. In addition to establishing agreed-upon code words and flight routes
for the prisoners upon their release, the RAF queried Haddad about how much ransom should be
demanded. More to the point, since the PFLP-SOG’s ongoing assistance was not simply a charitable
endeavor, the RAF and PFLP-SOG negotiated how they would split that money (Aust 294).

The climax of the RAF’s efforts to free the prisoners—and its alliance with the PFLP-SOG—
was the kidnapping of Hanns Martin Schleyer in September 1977, codenamed “Operation Big Get
Out.” Schleyer was a carefully selected target, and his kidnapping was professionally executed. The
outside group had learned from its previous mistakes. Careful reconnaissance was conducted of his
route to and from work. The attackers isolated a choke point—a one-way avenue adjacent to a
park—where they could launch their assault (Alexander and Pluchinsky 62). Both symbolic and
powerful, Schleyer was an ideal target. He was the head of the Federation of German Industries and
the Confederation of German Employers’ Association as well as Daimler-Benz board member. He was a personal friend of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Schleyer was also an SS officer during World War II (Aust 315). He was, as Aust eloquently stated, “a figure symbolizing the economy, capitalism, the system. A man positively destined for the role” (Aust 300). But once again, the RAF would underestimate the West German Government’s resolve to withstand what it saw as a serious test of the democracy.

Less than two weeks after being kidnapped, Schleyer was moved out of West Germany with a small group of RAF members to guard him. The remaining RAF members fled to Baghdad, where the PFLP-SOG provided accommodations and haven in its hour of need. In Iraq, the RAF found relief from the relentless pressure that they had experienced since abducting Schleyer. At this juncture, Haddad was once again consulted about the way forward. Much to the RAF’s dismay, Haddad recommended that the RAF dramatically increase its ransom demand from one million Deutsche marks to ten million Deutsche marks. The RAF grumbled about Haddad’s “capitalist” preoccupation with the ransom money. Nonetheless, the RAF heeded his request and issued a demand for ten million Deutsche marks on top of the freedom of eleven RAF prisoners (Aust 345).

At the end of September, still with no movement on the West German Government’s side, Haddad sent one of his West German lieutenants—a member of the Revolutionary Cells—to discuss a proposal with the RAF. He broached the idea that the PFLP-SOG could conduct an operation in support of the RAF’s kidnapping. The RAF balked at discussing this idea with one of Haddad’s underlings, even if he was a fellow countryman. At the next meeting with Haddad, the RAF representative raised the possibility and found that Haddad was not only amenable to the idea; he already had two potential plans in mind. The PFLP-SOG was prepared to conduct either a seizure of the West German Embassy in Kuwait—the same place it seized the Japanese Embassy for its ally in
1975—or a hijacking of German vacationers transiting home from Spain. The RAF only had to choose which operation it preferred (Aust 351).

The RAF selected the hijacking option, despite the plan’s unambiguous targeting of civilians. It was a clear violation of the group’s core ideological tenet that it “served the people.” Meinhof had explicitly argued in court that “[t]he actions of the urban guerilla are never, never directed against the people. They are always directed against the imperialist machine. The urban guerilla fights the terrorism of the state” (Aust 321). The prisoners had even previously voiced reservations about a hijacking mission being used to free them. Yet in the panicked environment that was in significant part the prisoners’ own creation, these objections were set aside. An Embassy seizure would have been more consistent with the RAF’s prior efforts and targeting parameters, but the debacle of the group’s attack on the West German Embassy in Stockholm still loomed large in its calculation (Aust 351). The unrelenting pressure, both from the West German Government and the prisoners, had taken its toll on the small group and dissent was quickly suppressed or not voiced.

The PFLP-SOG commenced its final preparation for the hijacking. With the additional hostages came additional ransom, which necessitated more negotiations about the division of the money—a continuing sore spot in the relationship. The two groups coordinated joint statements containing the new demands and reached agreements on how the exchange of prisoners would be conducted. The ransom was increased to fifteen million Deutche marks. The release of two Palestinians in prison in Turkey was added to the list of demands as well (Aust 352). All of the bases were covered, or so they thought.

Why was the PFLP-SOG willing to undertake such an action on behalf of the RAF? Haddad clearly saw the opportunity to garner funds through the operation. However, given that he had already pushed the RAF to increase the ransom associated with the kidnapping, the additional
money demanded by the hijackers was not enough to justify the risk on monetary grounds alone. Besides, Haddad had other, less risky, ways to acquire funds. In addition, he had no particular affinity for the RAF prisoners. It is possible that he or some members of the PFLP-SOG had limited interaction with the RAF’s founding leaders prior to their imprisonment in 1972, but strong personal relationships did not drive his interest.

Given his penchant for publicity, Haddad surely saw an opportunity to seize the international attention the RAF prisoners garnered. In doing so, he could regain some of the credibility he had lost following Israel’s daring rescue of the hostages of the hijacking of the Air France plane to Entebbe the previous year. There was also the possibility of freeing two of his own people, who were sentenced to death in Turkey. A RAF member heavily involved in the group’s operations during the 1975 to 1977 time frame opined that:

> [t]he Palestinians had their own interest in such action. Of course, getting the prisoners out, there was also the issue of the two Palestinian prisoners who were sitting in Turkish prison, but there was something else altogether. They said to themselves, ‘When a country like the Federal Republic, the most important country in the European Community, is involved in a confrontation that the entire world is watching, then we have an opportunity to introduce our concerns (qtd. in Smith and Moncourt 482).

Although Haddad did not have any apparent allegiance to the RAF prisoners, he did develop a close friendship with a senior RAF member on the outside, Peter Boock. One former PFLP-SOG member described Boock as Haddad’s most trusted non-Arab confidant (Yallop *Tracking the Jackal* 233). For example, as the planning for the hijacking progressed, Haddad solicited advice from Boock, who was an explosives expert, on devices that could get through x-rays undetected. The explosives did not need to be powerful, Haddad said, just realistic enough to “keep things under control.” The RAF expert recommended using a certain type of plastic explosives. Haddad heeded his recommendation, and the very real-looking explosives rigged inside the hijacked plane were in fact plastic explosives with limited detonation power (Aust 351). While Haddad was surely not
moved to seek the RAF prisoners' freedom by his personal relationship with Boock, this relationship facilitated the ease and depth of the collaboration.

On October 13, 1977 four PFLP-SOG—all Arab—attackers executed the promised hijacking of a plane with over eighty passengers, mostly German vacationers returning from Majorca. Using the pseudonym “Organization of the Struggle against World Imperialism,” the PFLP-SOG issued a statement in support of the RAF kidnapping, stating that its operation “emphatically reinforces the aims and demands of the operation of the RAF” (Alexander and Pluchinsky 62). The RAF then released its own communiqué supporting the hijacking and reiterating the demands.

However, Haddad miscalculated the South Yemen Government’s willingness to go along with the plan. Aden tried to block the hijacked plane from landing by deploying tanks on the runway. After the plane made an emergency landing anyway, Aden insisted the plane depart soon thereafter and then refused to accept the prisoners. After experiencing significant problems finding a country to accept the hijacked plane, it eventually landed in Mogadishu, where the PFLP-SOG also had connections with the government. Unlike Idi Amin’s maniacal regime in Uganda, which wholeheartedly welcomed a PFLP-SOG hijacked plane the previous year, President Said Barre’s dictatorial government in Somalia reluctantly allowed them to land. The PFLP-SOG’s relationship with Barre’s regime was still in the “honeymoon” phase, as one PFLP-SOG member described it (Charbel 53). But the honeymoon was quickly coming to an end as Barre’s regime was susceptible to international pressure and the prospect of future enticements that the West German Government alluded to in its appeals for its cooperation (Aust 395). Barre agreed to allow a West German counter-terrorism unit to secretly land in Mogadishu. Five days after the plane was hijacked, a unit created after the bungled rescue attempt during the 1972 Munich Olympics hostage taking launched a rescue mission. The twenty-three commandos were part of a 170-man unit. It was the
West German’s first military operation outside its borders since World War II (Getler A16). The special forces unit succeeded in rescuing all the remaining hostages\(^k\) and killing three of the four hostage takers. During the siege, the hostage takers detonated explosives rigged in the plane, which only caused minimal damage, as Haddad had intended.

In the early morning hours of the next day, October 18, in the wake of the hijacking’s resounding failure, the imprisoned RAF leaders acted on their threat to take matters in their own hands. Andreas Baader and Jan-Carl Raspe were found dead in their cells with gunshot wounds to the head. Gudrun Ensslin hung herself, as Ulrike Meinhof had a year earlier. Irmgard Moeller survived her self-inflicted knife wounds to the chest. Their deaths stoked tremendous controversy in West Germany amidst accusations that the government had executed the prisoners. At a minimum, the government had to have been grossly negligent for the prisoners to have guns and knives in their cells. Moeller consistently maintained that her comrades’ deaths were at the hands of the West German Government, as did her colleagues outside of prison who knew that their leaders’ deaths were a deliberate “suicide action” (Aust 413; In Love with Terror). The prisoners’ last act was designed to frame the government as the “fascist” threat the group insisted it was. Despite revelations that the government had bugged the cell block where the prisoners were held, it would not produce the recordings from that fateful night, which fueled conspiracies about what actually transpired (In Love with Terror).

The rest of the group, still in hiding in Iraq, was inconsolable. They had failed at their central goal, their raison d’être. There seemed to be no reason to go on. Previously stifled reservations about the kidnapping and hijacking now came pouring out. Without the leaders’ fate hanging in the

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\(^k\) The pilot had been killed during a stopover in South Yemen.
balance, the outside leaders had no way to muzzle the dissent. They bore the brunt of the criticism and several members opted to leave the group and go into hiding (Aust 414).

However, Schleyer's fate still hung in the balance. Haddad urged the RAF not to kill him, as he still offered the group some leverage (Aust 417). But the RAF would no longer heed Haddad's counsel. The RAF leaders in Iraq issued the order to kill him to the operatives guarding Schleyer. The RAF then issued a communiqué on October 19 coldly stating that "[a]fter 43 days, we have ended Hanns Martin Schleyer's miserable and corrupt existence" (In Love with Terror). His body, with three bullet wounds to the head, was found in the trunk of an Audi sedan in Mulhouse, a French town located near the West German and Swiss borders. With this final action, the “German Autumn” drew to a close.

Despite the group’s desolate state and refusal to listen to his guidance about Schleyer, Haddad continued to provide haven for the remaining RAF members in Iraq. They drifted aimlessly in the aftermath of the events of 1977 (Alexander and Pluchinsky 47). While it was evident that they would be of little use for the foreseeable future, Haddad continued to support them. In fact, the RAF was not able to regroup during Haddad's lifetime. After Haddad's death in mid-1978, a group of RAF members were still able to secure haven in South Yemen for several years with a resident Palestinian faction, though it is unclear which specific organization it was (Smith and Moncourt 612). Others found sanctuary in East Germany, where they received new identities courtesy of the East German Government (Smith and Moncourt 614).

It would be nearly two years before the group would sufficiently recover to conduct another attack in West Germany. Throughout the 1980s, the group focused on American military targets in West Germany and developed a more Europe-centric, anti-imperialist agenda (Alexander and Pluchinsky 44). It sought to become a regional alliance hub in its own right, cultivating
relationships with other West European leftist groups throughout 1980s. The Palestinians continued to be factored into its calculations about alliances, but in a much less visible and central role. While negotiating the possibility of a partnership with the Italian Red Brigades, the Red Brigades raised the possibility of including the Palestinians into the coalition, saying that it was concerned that “not to do so would be tantamount to telling the Palestinian revolutionary forces in the Middle East that we have no interest in them” (qtd. in Alexander and Pluchinsky 226). The RAF responded that such:

> alliances are possible, but they should not be made public, because as far as the Palestinians are concerned, Western Europe serves two purposes: it should be attacked and used as a hinterland. That is one of the reasons why none of the Palestinian organizations use their real names when operating in Europe. That is why we never discuss alliances with them (qtd. in Alexander and Pluchinsky 226).

By the end of the 1980s, however, the alliances with other West European groups were in disarray or defunct and the RAF was quickly losing direction as well. In 1992, the group declared a unilateral ceasefire—a move that reflected its “ideological fatigue, strategic confusion, and organizational isolation,” according to terrorism expert Dennis Pluchinsky (136). In its final communiqué announcing its disbandment in 1998, the RAF paid tribute to its former ally. “We will never forget the comrades of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine,” the RAF wrote, “who lost their lives in the Fall of 1977 in an act of internationalist solidarity, seeking to liberate the political prisoners” (Red Army Faction).

### 5.6 The RAF’s Threat: West Germany, West Germany, and West Germany

As the previous section traced, the RAF was consumed by the threat posed by the West German Government. In its early days when it forged an alliance with Fatah, the group targeted the United States’ presence in West Germany, the West German Government, and the pillars of support...
for them. In those early years, the RAF viewed its threat more broadly than just the West German Government. Bonn was the first among equals in terms of threat it posed to the RAF as it possessed the most offensive power, geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions, though the United States had the most aggregate power. But once the RAF’s founding leaders were imprisoned, the group was single-mindedly consumed by the threat from the West German Government, as Bonn’s aggressive intentions towards the prisoners loomed large in the group’s calculation.

Therefore, the RAF and PFLP-SOG did not share a greatest threat, and threat did not precipitate their alliance. They saw one another’s foes as part of the broader enemy coalition, but not as an acute or direct threat. The RAF was motivated in part to seek an alliance in order to combat the threat from the West German Government, but its partner selection was not determined by a need for an ally that shared its threat, and a common greatest threat was not necessary for the alliance to form. Unlike the JRA case, the RAF and PFLP-SOG’s threats were viewed as intertwined, given West Germany and Israel’s sordid history. Yet the two groups’ sense of threat still did not converge and did not sustain the alliance over time. The PFLP-SOG’s willingness to target West Germany and help the RAF to do so was not derived from a shared threat, but a sense of a common enemy helped enable cooperation.

5.7 The PFLP-SOG’s Other German Partners

The RAF’s high-profile actions and dominant personalities overshadowed two other significant militant leftist organizations active in West Germany during this same period: the 2nd of June Movement and the Revolutionary Cells. The actual ideological differences between these groups and the RAF were idiosyncratic and hard to ascertain. During an aborted attempt to foster closer cooperation in the early 1970s, the RAF openly disdained the 2nd of June Movement’s laissez-
*faire* lifestyle and attitude towards drugs and sex, accusing its members of not taking the revolution seriously enough (Baumann 106). The 2nd of June Movement—named after the day that the unarmed protester, Benno Ohnesorg, was killed—later merged with the RAF in 1980, when both groups were at a low ebb. The RAF also had its share of complaints about the Revolutionary Cells, which was the last of the three groups to emerge in 1973 (Alexander and Pluchinsky 80). Its primary criticism was that the Revolutionary Cell lacked sufficient commitment to the cause because its loosely-organized members did not go underground and were often “part-time” revolutionaries (Bougereau and Klein 56). Yet Revolutionary Cells conducted many of the attacks in West Germany during this period (United States Central Intelligence Agency *Terrorism Review*). For their part, the Revolutionary Cells and 2nd of June Movement found the RAF to be arrogant, overly hierarchical, and rigid. The Revolutionary Cells sent an open letter to the RAF in 1976, challenging the RAF to define its current tenets as well as defend several of its recent actions, statements, and failures (Smith and Moncourt 460). While the three groups were discrete entities, during the 1970s, collaboration occurred amongst them. A few individuals left one group to join another, which resulted in some cross-fertilization.

Despite their differences with the RAF, the 2nd of June Movement and Revolutionary Cells declared solidarity with the RAF prisoners. This may have both helped facilitate their cooperation with the PFLP-SOG and in turn heightened Haddad’s awareness and interest in the prisoners’ fate. One key event that led to future cooperation was the 2nd of June Movement’s kidnapping of a West Berlin mayoral candidate in 1975 three days before the elections were scheduled to occur. In exchange for him, the West German Government released several of 2nd of June Movement members as well as a few RAF members from jail. The group’s demands were carefully measured and, therefore, did not include the RAF leaders or anyone convicted of murder as these were individuals who the West German Government would be hard pressed to release. In a statement
claiming responsibility for the operation, the 2nd of June lamented its current inability to obtain the release the RAF leaders, “but at our present strength,” the communiqué read, “we’re not in a position to do it” (Aust 221). The released German prisoners were transported to South Yemen, an arrangement probably coordinated with Haddad, where they found haven, underwent training, and began cooperating extensively with the PFLP-SOG ("A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 1).

All three West German groups were allied with the PFLP-SOG to varying degrees. Because of the RAF’s high profile and the other groups’ advocacy of the prisoners’ cause, actions taken by the 2nd of June Movement and the Revolutionary Cells were often attributed to the RAF. For its part, the 2nd of June Movement members created ties with an unidentified Palestinian group as early as 1969. Like the RAF’s experience in 1970, the 2nd of June Movement members received some training in shooting, combat, and bomb making, but discovered the Palestinians were mostly keen on propaganda and wanted trainees to bolster awareness at home about the Palestinian cause. They did not offer further weapons or operational support at that time. Nonetheless, the individuals who returned from this training were more radicalized, hardened, and prepared to initiate greater violence (Baumann 55). By the mid-1970s, the 2nd of June Movement regularly received money, training, and weapons from the PFLP-SOG. The members that found haven in South Yemen were the closest to the PFLP-SOG, and some were integrated into the PFLP-SOG’s ranks. One of its operatives participated in the 1975 OPEC operation, although it is not clear if she had the approval of her parent organization for her actions (Smith and Moncourt 439).

*Revolutionary Cells: A Stalwart Ally of the PFLP-SOG*

Of the three organizations, the PFLP-SOG was probably the most closely allied with the Revolutionary Cells. The group is the least well-known of the three West German groups, although
its longevity rivaled the RAF, and it conducted even more attacks than its counterparts. The dynamics of this partnership were akin to the PFLP-SOG and JRA’s relationship from 1972 to 1974. Unlike the RAF, which carefully guarded its independence, the Revolutionary Cells gradually became subordinate and dependent on the PFLP-SOG. Several individuals were essentially dual members of both PFLP-SOG and Revolutionary Cells.

The Revolutionary Cells’ structure contributed to this alliance arrangement. It was loosely organized in a series of semi-autonomous cells, generally divided into two sections: one German-focused and another internationally-oriented. Unlike its international counterpart, the domestic contingent did not commit lethal acts within West Germany and had something of a Robin Hood reputation for dispersing forged transit passes and food vouchers (Smith and Moncourt 437). Haddad drew on the Revolutionary Cell’s international wing for several PFLP-SOG operations that required non-Arab operatives, especially following the JRA’s move for greater independence in 1974. The PFLP-SOG’s support for the Revolutionary Cells was institutionalized through a $3,000 monthly stipend as well regular weapons and supplies (“A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 3). In exchange, the Revolutionary Cells assisted in PFLP-SOG operations, and several Revolutionary Cells operatives were co-located in South Yemen with the PFLP-SOG.

As discussed in Chapter 3, in early 1975, the PFLP-SOG attempted to shoot down an El Al plane taking off from Orly Airport in Paris on two separate occasions (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 98). Both attempts failed. When the second attempt also failed, in large part due to the enhanced security measures enacted after the previous attempt, the attack team seized several hostages and holed up in an airport restroom. Less than twenty-four hours later, the attackers exchanged their hostages for an Air France flight to a destination of their choosing. For these two attempts, a
Revolutionary Cells operative assisted the PFLP-SOG with the logistics of the operation, including transporting both attack teams to the target site (Yallop Tracking the Jackal 103).

Revolutionary Cells operatives also participated in attack on a meeting of the OPEC ministers in Vienna in 1975. Haddad needed operatives who could operate easily in Austria for the plot so he turned to his German allies. The RAF declined his request to participate. Haddad then turned to his Revolutionary Cells allies, who agreed to be a part of the operation (Bougereau and Klein 3). Carlos the Jackal led the multi-national team. It included Palestinians, West Germans, and, of course, the Venezuelan commander himself. There was also a backup team of West Germans positioned in Vienna who assisted with logistics. The majority of these West German operatives, with one notable exception of the female 2nd of June Movement operative, involved hailed from the Revolutionary Cells (Schweitzer and Ophir 41; Yallop Tracking the Jackal 392; “A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 1; Sterling 145).

Despite the mishaps during the OPEC and Orly airport operations, Haddad still had confidence in—or at least a need for—his Revolutionary Cells comrades. Less than a year later, they were again part of a joint commando team, this time charged with an ill-fated hijacking operation (Smith and Moncourt 481). West German Revolutionary Cells operatives and Palestinian PFLP-SOG members were the hijackers who seized the Air France flight departing Tel Aviv and diverted it to Entebbe in 1976. The two Germans were founding members of the Revolutionary Cells. The hijackers and their 250 hostages were warmly welcomed by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Amin even provided military reinforcements to the hijackers at the airport (In Love with Terror). The non-Israeli passengers were then released. The West German attackers’ ceremonious separation of the Jewish and non-Jewish passengers invoked particular horror, causing one passenger who was a
Holocaust survivor to remark to his German captor that little seemed to have changed in West Germany (Byman *A High Price* 55). In exchange for the remaining 106 hostages, the attackers demanded the release of fifty-three prisoners in five countries—mostly Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, but also RAF and 2nd of June Movement members imprisoned in West Germany, a German imprisoned in Switzerland, a JRA member held in Israel, and four Palestinian and West German attackers \(^1\) who had been detained in Nairobi while plotting to shoot down an El Al plane and secretly rendered to Israel several months earlier (Karmon 69; Byman *A High Price* 55; Schweitzer and Ophir 45).

The Israeli Government feigned a willingness to negotiate with the hijackers while it prepared a rescue operation (Byman *A High Price* 55). An elite Israeli commando team launched a surprise rescue mission, killing all seven hijackers and forty-five Ugandan soldiers. Two hostages died during the assault as did one of the Israeli soldiers. The remaining hostages were rescued, except one elderly woman who had been removed from the plane and taken to the hospital with health problems. She is believed to have been murdered and was never seen again (Byman *A High Price* 55). For the Israelis, this was a tremendous coup. For the PFLP-SOG, it was yet another serious setback, which revisited in the loss of and it lost two of its allied West German operatives.

In addition to participating in PFLP-SOG operations, Revolutionary Cells operatives were charged with handling sensitive matters for Haddad. For example, the PFLP-SOG’s relationship with the Revolutionary Cells was sufficiently close that Haddad entrusted the Revolutionary Cells to act as a liaison and deliver messages to other allies. When Haddad wanted to broach the idea of undertaking an operation in conjunction with the RAF’s kidnapping of Schleyer, he initially sent a Revolutionary Cells emissary to discuss the possibility with his fellow West Germans. While this

\(^1\) The affiliation of these West Germans is unclear, but it is likely that they were Revolutionary Cells members.
approach was not well received by the RAF, which insisted on communicating with Haddad directly about the proposition, it does demonstrate that Haddad had confidence in his Revolutionary Cells allies. Haddad’s willingness to entrust a Revolutionary Cells lieutenant with this responsibility is particularly noteworthy considering his proclivity to tightly compartmentalize information and use of rigorous operational security procedures.

The Revolutionary Cells went beyond cooperating with the PFLP-SOG on a quid pro quo basis, and embraced its agenda, including targeting Israeli and Jewish interests. In addition to the operations already discussed, a former member later disclosed a Revolutionary Cells’ plan to assassinate two Jewish community leaders in West Berlin and Frankfurt as well as a plot to kill a famous Nazi hunter—an idea that even Haddad opposed (“A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police”; Karmon 94). A prominent leader of the Revolutionary Cells, Wilfried Boise, was one of the West German operatives who forced the separation of Jewish and non-Jewish passengers on the hijacked plane in Entebbe. In essence, the Revolutionary Cells, at least its international wing, became highly interdependent with the PFLP-SOG. The Revolutionary Cells’ lack of coherent organization and leadership probably contributed to the PFLP-SOG’s ability to co-opt its international wing. Operatives living in exile were particularly susceptible to this and, unlike the RAF, they had no compelling organizational reason to risk re-entering Germany.

5.7 Conclusion and Findings: The Palestinians and the West German Leftist Groups

Outside of the Middle East in the 1970s, the Israel-Palestinian conflict was perhaps the most salient in West Germany during this period. The perception that Israel shifted from being a victim to an aggressor featured prominently in the West German New Left’s narrative about the struggle
against imperialism. This was a consequence of both the historical significance of the Middle East for West Germany and its relative geographic proximity (Varon 69-70). All of the major West German Leftist militant groups harbored this anti-Israel sentiment and had organizational relationships with Palestinian militant groups. A robust network of personal relationships developed between West German leftists and their Palestinian counterparts, including instances of inter-marriage between the West German women and Palestinian men (Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 77).

Alliance Hub Selection

All Palestinian groups, nationalist and leftist alike, that opposed Israel were legitimate liberation groups and part of the revolution against imperialism in the eyes of the radical West German Left. This reduced the importance of ideological affinity in West German groups’ selection of a Palestinian partner because all of the Palestinian groups fit prominently into the West German’s enemy and victim narrative. Fatah was initially the alliance partner choice of the RAF in part because it was the most well-known and the most accessible. It was not until Fatah reduced the visibility and scope of its ties with non-Palestinian groups that the PFLP-SOG became the hub of choice for West German Leftist groups. Thus ideological solidarity was not clearly the factor that determined the West German groups’ choice of alliance hub partner. The PFLP and PFLP-SOG’s “promotion” to the West Germans’ Palestinian ally of choice was less a function of ideological solidarity than its willingness and ability to assist foreign groups coupled with its increased profile and reputation based on the attacks it had conducted.

The RAF and Fatah Alliance Effort

The initial alliance initiation effort between the RAF and Fatah in 1970 was stimulated primarily by the RAF’s organizational needs. The RAF had minimal capabilities when it conducted
the arson attacks on the department stores in 1968 and broke Baader out of prison in 1970. Its ambitions to overthrow the West German Government far outstripped its capabilities and, on the run, the group recognized its need to acquire materiel, especially weapons, and skills quickly. Its organizational needs, which could not be addressed through self-reform by the young, inexperienced group, were acute and significant and ran the gamut from continuous and discrete. The RAF initiated a search for a partner to quickly fulfill its discrete need for weapons. Fatah was in a position to assist with such a need and was readily accessible. Fatah ran training camps for foreigners to increase awareness of the Palestinians’ plight and saw the RAF’s approach as a low-cost propaganda opportunity. Given West Germany’s position in Europe and its historical legacy, Fatah viewed the RAF as a potential source of support for the Palestinians in that highly symbolic and strategic theatre.

Fatah agreed to provide weapons, if the RAF came to Jordan to undertake training. The RAF recognized that guerilla training from an experienced organization would be valuable. Accepting Fatah’s invitation to come to Jordan had the additional benefit of providing the RAF a period of respite at a time when the group was being intensely pursued by West German authorities. While this seemed like a golden opportunity, this “training” was actually a tour designed to invoke international sympathy for the Palestinians—a way to fulfill Fatah’s organizational needs—not a program to prepare fellow “revolutionaries” for guerilla warfare. The RAF insisted on getting military training, but was dissatisfied when Fatah’s training regimen did not actually address its needs. Fatah found that the West Germans were more trouble than they were worth, as they caused constant disruptions at the camp. The RAF’s insistence that it receive training appropriate to its circumstances—and its behavior when those needs were not met—demonstrated that its organizational needs were more of a priority than solidarity with the Palestinians’ plight. Ultimately, Fatah was both not willing and not able to fulfill the RAF’s training needs and the RAF’s
disruptive behavior outstripped its value as a propaganda asset; therefore the alliance effort was stunted.

The RAF and Fatah both had a strong sense of antipathy towards Israel and the United States. While they wanted to defeat these common enemies, their alliance initiation effort was not prompted by a mutual interest in balancing against these enemies. The two groups had different priorities and interests at that point. In 1970, Fatah was focused on Israel and the situation in Jordan, not directly opposing the United States or U.S. allies like West Germany. While the RAF objected to Israel's actions vis-à-vis the Palestinians, it did not have an interest in balancing against Israel, as it was focused on the situation in West Germany. The need to balance against common enemies did not figure prominently into the RAF and Fatah's alliance initiation decision, though the groups did share adversaries.

The RAF and Fatah did not share a threat at the time of alliance initiation nor did a looming threat instigate cooperation. Fatah was not threatened by the West German Government, the RAF’s greatest threat. While Fatah viewed the West German Government as supporting Israel at the expense of the Palestinians, it had a \textit{modus vivendi} with the West German Government and Bonn permitted Fatah to have an unofficial representative in country. Conversely, Fatah’s greatest threats during this time, Israel and Jordan, did not pose any threat to the RAF. Neither government was particularly concerned with the activities of a small, newly-formed leftist group in West Germany.

The RAF and Fatah had a limited basis for identity affinity, which contributed to their failure to successfully form an alliance. The two groups did not share an ideology, though like most leftist groups, the RAF identified strongly in principle with “national liberation” movements, like Fatah. No shared ethnic identity existed. Their sense of identity affinity was derived from their shared enemy and victim narratives. The Israel-Palestinian conflict occupied a prominent place in the
RAF’s narrative, particularly West Germany’s culpability in Israel’s existence. Fatah shared this view and sought to propagate it, especially in Europe. Over the course of their interactions, they were unable to build a shared identity and discovered that the common narrative did not produce enduring affinity in the face of other cultural identity differences. Thus narrative-based affinity was enough to satisfy the initial identity threshold to create an alliance, but in the absence of other shared identity traits and the inability to fulfill one another’s organizational needs, this identity affinity was not adequate to sustain the alliance.

Five years later, once again the RAF sought out Fatah when it needed a partner to train it in operational skills. Despite the shortfalls during the 1970 alliance effort, the RAF returned to Fatah when it was seeking an ally. As hypothesized in Chapter 2, due to the importance of the intervening variable of trust, terrorist organizations are apt to first turn to partners with which they have previously cooperated to explore re-engagement or to get referrals. The RAF’s 1975 approach of Fatah was consistent with this prediction. The RAF returned to Fatah for assistance with its organizational learning needs as it had at least some existing basis for trust. For the RAF, the security of approaching a group that it had cooperated with before outweighed the previous lack of fit. Trust thus influenced partner selection to the point that RAF returned to a suboptimal partner that had been unable to fulfill the same organizational need previously. Though Fatah was not willing to re-engage in another alliance effort, it did refer the RAF to an organization that would be willing and able to assist. This was in spite of the poor reputation that the RAF had earned during its stay in Jordan, which was partially overcome by the groups’ subsequent interactions.

The RAF’s organizational age had been reset by the loss of the first generation, but the group retained an organizational memory of an alliance with Fatah as a way to address organizational needs. But Fatah had evolved into an organization that wanted to present itself as a
government, and thus it sought international legitimacy more so than revolutionary credentials. Therefore, the RAF was not suited to fulfill Fatah’s organizational needs, even for propaganda. Fatah’s and the RAF’s ideology, enemies or threats had not changed; therefore, these theories cannot explain Fatah’s decision to accept the RAF in 1970 and decline it in 1975. Organizational needs were the primary driver of both of these alliance efforts.

**The PFLP-SOG and the RAF**

After declining the RAF’s request, Fatah provided a referral to assist the RAF in finding another alliance partner. This referral offered an early signal to the RAF and PFLP-SOG that it was safe to attempt to build trust. The RAF’s motives in seeking an alliance were unchanged, and it was not unduly concerned about which specific Palestinian organization was willing to respond. The RAF was motivated to find a partner willing and able to teach the skills necessary to free its imprisoned leaders, an organizational need that would persist as long as the leaders remained in prison. It also needed assistance with the logistical arrangements, such as finding a destination for the leaders upon their release. The PFLP-SOG was well positioned to assist the RAF with its alliance request, more so than Fatah.

At the time of the RAF’s approach, the PFLP-SOG was still pursuing its international attack campaign. From the PFLP-SOG’s perspective, the RAF’s approach must have appeared to be a gift. The JRA had grown more independent and was less available for the PFLP-SOG’s missions, but the PFLP-SOG still needed non-Palestinian operatives to conduct some activities. Europe was a central battlefield for the PFLP-SOG, so partners that could readily operate in the region were particularly valuable for the PFLP-SOG. The PFLP-SOG welcomed the RAF’s alliance initiation proposal and invited the Germans at its facility in Aden, which doubled as an opportunity to evaluate its prospective ally.
The PFLP-SOG had an ongoing organizational adaptation need for foreign operatives for both security and publicity reasons, which kept it constantly receptive to alliances. The RAF in particular was a publicity magnet. Given the media sensation surrounding the imprisoned RAF leaders, Haddad surely saw an opportunity to use the RAF to garner publicity. Haddad probably hoped the group would participate in operations, though he was still able to find ways to use the RAF’s profile for his group’s purposes when the RAF refused to be involved in PFLP-SOG attacks. In other words, organization needs prompted the alliance and a degree of fit in their ability to fulfill one another’s respective needs was critical to their alliance perpetuation.

Ideological solidarity clearly did not motivate the formation or perpetuation of this alliance. The PFLP-SOG was the RAF’s second choice for a partner after Fatah with which the RAF had fewer ideological commonalities. If ideological solidarity was primarily the motive, then the RAF and PFLP-SOG would have allied in 1970 and the PFLP-SOG would have been the RAF’s first choice for an alliance. Ideology played a role in the alliance, but not as the main causal force, but as a source of affinity.

The RAF and PFLP-SOG had greater identity affinity than the RAF and Fatah. The RAF viewed all the Palestinian groups as acceptable allies based on its affinity threshold due to the prominence of the conflict in its narrative, but narrative affinity alone had not been adequate to overcome problems with Fatah in the past. Like the RAF and Fatah, the RAF and PFLP-SOG shared an enemy and victim narrative that designated Israel as the enemy and Palestinians as the victim. The RAF and PFLP-SOG also shared a left-wing ideology, which enhanced their identity affinity basis beyond what Fatah and the RAF had. They readily passed each other’s identity affinity threshold with these two commonalities. Their identity affinity developed into a limited shared identity and a bounded set of constitutive norms. The RAF chafed at some of the norms that
governed the relationship, particularly the PFLP-SOG emphasis on money, which the RAF felt bordered on “capitalist” at times. Nonetheless, the RAF adhered to them.

A common enemy or threat was not a central instigating factor. As was the case with Fatah, the RAF considered Israel to be an enemy, but its outreach to the PFLP-SOG was not motivated by an interest in balancing against Israel. With its complete preoccupation with its leaders’ status, the RAF did not have an interest in helping the PFLP-SOG attack Israel or reactionary Arab regimes, which was clear when the group declined to help the PFLP-SOG with these efforts. The PFLP-SOG likewise viewed West Germany as part of the enemy camp. However, several years earlier, it had struck a deal with the West German Government that in exchange for not targeting West German interests, the government would pay protection money. Thus it had no particular interest in balancing against Bonn. The two groups’ decision to ally was not motivated by mutual interests derived from a desire to balance against a common enemy. Their common foes were part of both groups’ narratives, but this did not translate into a mutual need to balance against a common enemy. Interestingly, the PFP-SOG targeted the RAF’s primary enemy, but the RAF never attacked the PFLP-SOG’s central adversary.

The two groups developed a significant degree of trust over the course of their relationship. The positive experience and interactions in Aden—quite different than the previous generation’s experience in Jordan—created a foundation of trust that lasted throughout the alliance. Haddad requested the RAF’s participation in an operation early in the relationship, which suggests that trust developed from an early point. Though the RAF was rightly concerned about the genesis of the plan, its refusal to participate was more a consequence of its other priorities than mistrust. In fact, the RAF trusted the PFLP-SOG so extensively that it shared numerous sensitive operational plans with its ally and even entrusted the PFLP-SOG to secure a location for its coveted leaders upon their
release. Subsequent interaction, enabled by the PFLP-SOG’s havens in Iraq and Aden, perpetuated and reinforced organizational-level trust. Personal relationships developed between members across the two groups, most notably between PFLP-SOG leader Wadi Haddad and RAF leader Peter Boock, which supported the organizational-level alliance.

In summary, the PFLP-SOG provided the RAF with training, safe haven, and operational guidance at several critical junctures from 1975 to 1978. The training and haven that occurred at the outset of the relationship in South Yemen offered an opportunity for the PFLP-SOG to vet the RAF. This period created the foundation for the relationship and a degree of trust developed between the two organizations. While this provided a sufficient basis for the creation and perpetuation of an alliance, the focus on the organizational goal of securing the prisoners’ release imposed limits on the extent of the cooperation. The RAF regularly consulted with the PFLP-SOG about its operations and critical logistical issues. The partnership culminated in a coordinated operation in 1977, when the PFLP-SOG conducted a hijacking in support of the RAF’s kidnapping of a prominent West German businessman in order to compel the West German Government to release the RAF prisoners. Under the PFLP-SOG’s influence and in its haste to secure their release, the RAF lost sight of its targeting limitations—a transgression that damaged its internal unity in the wake of the coordinated operations’ failure. The PFLP-SOG and RAF relationship did not recover from this failure, although Haddad continued to support the desolate group during the aftermath.

The PFLP-SOG and other West German Allies

Despite the greater attention lavished on the RAF and its relationship with the PFLP-SOG, the Revolutionary Cells and 2nd of June Movement forged their own extensive partnerships with the PFLP-SOG, including operational cooperation and joint attacks. These relationships are often overlooked or mistakenly attributed to the RAF. The West German groups shared an ideology and
enemies with the PFLP-SOG, but they developed different alliance arrangements. The Revolutionary Cells, and to a lesser degree the 2nd of June Movement, operated under the PFLP-SOG and depended on it for resources, which included targeting the PFLP-SOG’s enemies.

The West German groups had the same identity affinity basis with the PFLP-SOG. They shared ideological affinity with the PFLP-SOG as well as deeply-held narrative affinity. Over the course of the PFLP-SOG’s alliance with the Revolutionary Cells, its identity became fused with that of the PFLP-SOG. Rather than developing a shared identity, it adopted the PFLP-SOG’s identity and operated in accordance with the PFLP-SOG’s norms. The 2nd of June did not embrace the PFLP-SOG’s identity and norms to the same degree as the Revolutionary Cells, though individual members developed dual allegiances to both organizations.

With enemies, ideology, and identity factors largely the same in these three dyads, what explains the difference in the relationships? Their organizational dynamics and needs. One factor that perpetuated the PFLP-SOG and Revolutionary Cells alliance was the Revolutionary Cells’ continuous organizational need for safe haven. Its international wing operated in perpetual exile. It lacked the same organizational imperative as the RAF to return to West Germany. Safe haven was not a need that it could learn or gradually acquire for itself; it was in a cycle of dependency. In order to adapt to the environment in exile, it need haven and protection from the PFLP-SOG. In return, it was willing to subordinate itself and fulfill the PFLP-SOG’s need for foreign operatives. It accepted the PFLP-SOG’s identities and norms as its own. On the other hand, the RAF was determined to return to West Germany in order to conduct operations to secure its leaders’ freedom; therefore, its sanctuary needs were more discrete, which reduced its dependence.

Another key difference was the groups’ varying levels of organizational coherence. The Revolutionary Cells’ diffuse organizational structure meant that the Revolutionary Cells in-group
identity was not as strong as the RAF’s, which facilitated the PFLP-SOG’s gradual coopting of members of the Revolutionary Cells. Revolutionary Cells became integrated into the PFLP-SOG as the Revolutionary Cells grew more dependent and subordinate to the PFLP-SOG over time. The RAF, on the other hand, had a stronger organizational structure and in-group identity. For instance, there were no RAF members with dual allegiances to the PFLP-SOG.

The RAF’s relationships with Palestinian groups’ were so central that German-Israel counterterrorism expert David Schiller argued that without assistance from the Palestinians, the RAF would not have survived (as cited in Hoffman Inside Terrorism 1998 83). But this was not only the case for the RAF, but for the Revolutionary Cells as well. One former Revolutionary Cells member summed it up by saying “[w]ithout Haddad, nothing works” (“A Terrorist’s Story: German Guerrilla Who Turned in his Gun After Raid Now Fears his Former Comrades as Well as Police” 5).

This chapter offered within-case variation of four dyads that illuminated the role of organizational dynamics in alliance formation, alliance sustainment as well as explaining the difference in alliance arrangements in two groups’ alliances with the same alliance hub. Organizational needs, identity affinity, and trust were the central variables that influenced the Palestinian-West German dyads. Organizational learning and adaptation needs were the primary factors that prompted searches for alliances and determined receptivity to alliance outreach. Identity affinity shaped the parameters of acceptable partners, although initial judgments of affinity were not necessarily sufficient to create shared identity and norms. Opportunities for trust were readily available due to the Palestinian groups’ access to safe haven and reputations for being trustworthy and approachable alliance partners. Idiosyncratic obstacles to trust were not a major hindrance except in the case of the RAF’s 1970 alliance initiation effort with Fatah. In that case, trust issues compounded, but did not cause, an organizational needs mismatch and a weak foundation for affinity, which resulted in a failed alliance initiation effort. This also suggests that identity affinity can impact alliance sustainment,
especially if it was inadequately examined at alliance onset. Without factoring in organization dynamics, however, this variation cannot be fully explained.


CHAPTER 6:

THE WEATHERMEN AND THE PFLP-SOG

“At this time, the unity and consolidation of anti-imperialist forces around a revolutionary program is an urgent and pressing strategic necessity.”—An excerpt from the Weathermen’s 1974 publication, Prairie Fire

6.1 Introduction

On March 6, 1970, an explosion rocked an upscale residential area in Greenwich Village in New York City. The two women who emerged from the burning townhouse were assisted by neighbors before they disappeared. Within the rubble lay the remains of three bodies and enough unexploded ordnance to level the rest of the block. The townhouse, owned by the parents of one of the surviving women, was being used as a bomb-fabrication factory by a cell of the Weathermen, an American militant organization intent on precipitating the downfall of the “imperialist” U.S. Government and, with it, the “imperialist” international order. Authorities were already well aware of the Weathermen by this time. A year earlier, its charismatic leaders had seized control of the largest student anti-Vietnam War organization in the United States, the Student for a Democratic Society (SDS). Shortly thereafter, they organized and initiated a street riot with police in Chicago. They then disbanded the SDS apparatus to wage an underground “armed propaganda” campaign that lasted the next seven years. During that time, the Weathermen successfully bombed some of the most prolific and secure facilities in the United States, while refraining from inflicting causalities and largely avoiding capture.

In pledging to “bring the war home,” the Weathermen envisioned itself as working in concert with other leftist revolutionary forces around the globe, especially in the Third World. However, this ideological solidarity sentiment did not translate into a policy of forging partnerships with comrades outside of the United States, even an alliance hub, for four main reasons. First, because the Weathermen’s identity emphasized its status a white, American, and homegrown
movement, it limited ties with foreign entities, even fellow “revolutionary organizations.” Second, the group was largely self-sufficient in terms of its operational needs, safe haven, and even financial resources. Therefore, it lacked a pressing organizational need that would merit the risk of initiating an alliance. Third, while the Palestinian cause fit in the Weathermen’s overall ideological agenda, due to the relative lack of direct U.S. involvement in the conflict, it did not feature prominently in the group’s narrative, especially while the Vietnam War was ongoing. The intractable Middle East conflict was not highlighted in the group’s regular propaganda either, although Palestinian actors were occasionally heralded in passing. Lastly, there were few organic opportunities for interaction or trust building. The PFLP/PFLP-SOG did not have a support network or conduct attacks in the United States, while the Weathermen insisted on remaining in the United States and only conducting attacks within its homeland. As a result of these four factors, there was no effort to forge an alliance occurred, despite sharing an enemy, the United States, with an overwhelming power advantage that should have stimulated a coalition to balance against it.

This chapter differs from the two cases that preceded it in that it is the story of an alliance that did not happen. It is, in that respect, a more “typical” story, and it illustrates why alliances are relatively uncommon. The lack of relationship between the Weathermen and the PFLP-SOG highlights the importance of organizational dynamics and needs, even when strategic interests seemingly coincide, common enemies exist, and ideological solidarity “should” theoretically bind the groups. The chapter begins with an overview of the environment in the United States that shaped the emergence of the Weathermen before delving into the group’s formation and evolution. The next section describes the Weathermen’s identity and organizational dynamics, including its relationships. The subsequent section provides a chronology of the Weathermen’s activities and attacks, which clearly demonstrate its inattention to the Middle East conflict. The Middle East is conspicuous by its absence in the Weathermen’s activities, especially in light of the role that Third
World national liberation movements played in its attack calculus, propaganda, and narrative. The final section discusses of the group's view of the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the factors that impeded the creation of an alliance with the PFLP or the PFLP-SOG.

6.2 The Youth Movement in the United States—Students for a Democratic Society

In the 1960s, the American New Left was mobilized in opposition to the Vietnam War as well as in support of the civil rights movement underway at home. These two issues in particular were seen, at a minimum, as indicative of the United States' failure to live up to its own ideals, and at the more extreme end of the spectrum, as symptomatic of a fundamentally flawed and unjust system (Varon 21). At the time of its founding in 1960, SDS was a small, relatively unknown organization that modeled itself after the non-violent civil rights movement (Green and Siegel). In the early part of the decade, SDS focused on supporting civil rights efforts, including promoting education initiatives for underprivileged communities and urging the Democratic Party to adopt a more progressive agenda (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 1).

Over the course of the 1960s, SDS grew into the most prominent student anti-war organization in the United States. In 1965, SDS orchestrated its first protest in opposition to the Vietnam War. Its entry into the anti-war movement and the escalation of the war spurred the rapid growth of SDS, and the number of SDS chapters on college campuses more than doubled within six months (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 1). At its peak, it had an estimated 100,000 members nationwide (Klimke The Other Alliance 15). In his influential work on the U.S. protest movement, Martin Klimke describes the SDS, with its motto “Let the people decide!” as an:

open, nondogmatic, and democratic organization, which desired to emancipate itself and break away from the Old Left partly because of the latter's outdated doctrinaire views shaped by anticommunism and the Cold War, but even more so because of its loss of passion (18).
SDS soon became a large and unwieldy umbrella organization with a national following. With such rapid growth, internal fissures were not far behind, and SDS subsequently began to devour itself in a series of power struggles, disputes over priorities, and ideological debates (Green and Siegel). As the decade wore on, as it became clear that the war was not ending, but was, in fact, escalating, tensions and frustration mounted. The Tet Offensive in 1968 was one of the most visible indicators of this reality. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. that same year created to a sense of despair among the New Left. The internal crisis within SDS commensurately grew. As one member reflected, “[w]e petitioned, we demonstrated, we sat in. I was willing to get hit over the head and I did. I was willing to go to prison and I did. To me, it was a question of what had to be done to stop the much greater violence going on” (Green and Siegel).

Radical elements within SDS were impressed by the PFLP’s attention-grabbing hijacking of an El Al plane in 1968, but it was overshadowed by these other events closer to home that year (Kazin). Overall, the American New Left was still fairly sympathetic to Israel, even after the 1967 War, which had the effect of dramatically shifting opinions in West Germany and elsewhere. The specter of the Holocaust also loomed large for the post-World War II generation in the United States, and many were not prepared to turn against Israel (Rudd “Why Were There” 2000 27; Kazin). But the Arab defeat in 1967 raised the New Left’s consciousness about the conflict and spurred debate about how Zionism and Israel fit into the movement’s philosophy (Gilbert 229). Newfound, or at least previously withheld, objections and reservations about Zionism and Israel’s position in the world order began to emerge with more frequency. It was an issue that was uniquely divisive within the New Left as it pitted two values held dear against one another—the right to self-determination for Third World people and the need to protect a population who had been persecuted on the basis of their religion. Despite this tension, the Israel-Palestinian was not a prominent part of the discourse and debate of the day. Even the PFLP’s move to expand both the
scope of its targets and the theatre of the conflict, including the ensuing attacks in Europe and the hijacking of a TWA flight, seemed distant and relatively minor compared to scope of the Vietnam War and the ongoing civil rights struggle at home.

By 1969, SDS was in the throes of a crisis. Fissures had become permanent fault lines as the internecine fighting grew more vicious. A New Left clique that would become the core of the Weathermen was locked in a battle for control of SDS with a pro-China Maoist faction, known as the Progressive Labor Party (Ayres 205). The Progressive Labor Party advocated for students to unite with the “true revolutionary power,” i.e. the working class, in order to foment a revolution. It also rejected nationalism, which was the underpinning of many of the coveted “national liberation” movements (Rudd “The Death of SDS”). This position deliberately subordinated issues of race and ethnicity and, instead, assigned primacy to class, which was unacceptable to those who identified the Third World national liberation movements as the vanguard of the revolution.

As SDS prepared for its annual convention in 1969, eleven influential and charismatic figures drafted a manifesto entitled, “You Don’t Have to be a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows,” drawing from the lyrics of Bob Dylan’s song *Subterranean Homesick Blues*. It laid out their vision for the way forward for SDS, which they presented at the rancorous national SDS conference in Chicago. They proposed building a “revolutionary youth movement” that would unite students and working class youth in support of Third World revolutions (Rudd “The Death of SDS”). In contrast to the Progressive Labor Party’s emphasis on class, the Weathermen faction asserted that race was both the predominant determinant of oppression as well as the engine of revolution; therefore SDS—a predominantly White organization—must support the liberation struggles of Blacks, “Chicanos,” Native Americans, and Third World revolutionaries. A showdown at the convention ended with the Weathermen bloc seizing control of the SDS organizational apparatus. The Progressive Labor Party was effectively expelled from SDS and representatives of the
Weathermen faction ascended to the key leadership positions: Jeff Jones was elected national leader of SDS; Bill Ayres as the education secretary; and Mark Rudd as the national secretary (Berger “Outlaws” 87). However, SDS was fatally wounded during this upheaval and would not survive to see 1970. The Weathermen bloc emerged as one of the more high-profile groups within an increasingly crowded and disparate field of radical New Left organizations in the United States.

The “Days of Rage”

In 1969, now at the helm of the floundering SDS organization, the Weathermen leadership clique began experimenting with more confrontational and attention-grabbing tactics as a mobilization strategy. For example, members ran through the halls of high schools in Pittsburgh calling for students who were being “oppressed by the system” and were thus “metaphorical prisoners” to leave class (Berger “Outlaws” 100). Similarly, a group of Weathermen ran through public beaches in Chicago carrying NLF flags and chanting “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh, the NLF is gonna win” (Gilbert Love and Struggle 186). Such “guerilla theatre” tactics—sometimes involving brawls with locals or the police—epitomized the group’s recruitment and organizing efforts in its early days when it sought to rally working class Whites. As a recruitment strategy, especially of working class youth, these efforts were an abysmal failure, as the group would soon discover.

The SDS/Weathermen leadership then decided it was time to escalate from small-scale acts of theatrical resistance to mass action. The centerpiece of this strategy was an event planned in Chicago that October. Dubbed “the Days of Rage,” the Weathermen envisioned it as a large-scale confrontation with police, timed to coincide with the beginning of the Chicago 8 trial and the second anniversary of the death of Che Guevara. The group deliberately chose Chicago—the site of mayhem during protests against the Democratic National Convention in 1968—because of the city’s reputation for heavy-handedness. The event was designed to be an inflammatory, offensive move,

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n The trial for eight anti-war activists charged with the responsibility for the violent demonstrations at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention.
which would provoke the government to overreact and thereby expose its “true face” as an oppressor (Berger “Outlaws” 107). The Weathermen anticipated tens of thousands of working class White youth descending on the streets for a fight with “the pigs,” the Chicago police (Berger “Outlaws” 108).

To kick off the event, the Weathermen blew up a statute honoring the policemen killed during the Haymarket riot in 1886. The riot was the result of a rally by immigrant workers demanding an eight-hour work day that turned deadly after an unknown culprit hurled a bomb at the police who were trying to disperse the crowd. Therefore, destroying the statue was deemed a fitting, symbolic opening act (Berger “Outlaws” 108). But when the participants gathered in Chicago’s Lincoln Park, it was evident that the Days of Rage would not be a mass action (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 15). The weeks of organizing, advertising, and recruiting had little discernible impact. The turnout fell dramatically short of its organizers’ expectations as a few hundred protesters—a maximum of 600, according to high-end estimates—trickled in (Varon 82). Nonetheless, the event went forward and the group got its awaited brawl with the police. In the ensuing havoc, almost 300 people were arrested and dozens were injured. The action was largely condemned by adversaries and sympathizers alike as a senseless provocation (Berger “Outlaws” 111). For its part, the Weathermen rationalized that the event was still a victory in that it garnered media attention, which it hoped would inspire others, and gave its cadre fighting experience (Jacobs 66).

Positive spin aside, the Weathermen had misjudged its position and felt isolated after the Days of Rage (Green and Siegel). Instead of re-evaluating where it had gone astray, the poor turnout, increased pressure, and slew of indictments that followed the riot in Chicago re-enforced the group’s certainty that it was alone in its willingness to confront the oppressive system and ally with the oppressed minorities (Varon 111). The Days of Rage miscalculation was the product of
what one Weathermen member called “the hothouse effect”—group members talking and listening only to one another (Berger “Outlaws” 118). Rather than correcting for this tendency to engage in groupthink, the Days of Rage mishap only re-enforced it. Disappointed and disgusted with White complicity and complacency, as demonstrated by the lack of participation in the Days of Rage, the group decided to abandon efforts at mass mobilization and to go underground as an “elite fighting force” (Jacobs 87). The organizational culture grew more rigid and harsh, requiring members to give up all previous connections, endure endless self-criticism sessions, and eschew monogamous relationships (Varon 110-5).

The group’s move underground in 1970 was hastened by three events. First was the death of prominent Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in December 1969. Shot at close range by Chicago police in his apartment during pre-dawn raid, the death of the charismatic young figure set off a firestorm. The Black Panthers opened up his bullet-ridden apartment, including his bloodstained mattress, to the public in order to prove that Hampton had been killed in his sleep, not in a gun battle with police as the Illinois State Attorney General claimed (Berger “Outlaws” 119). For the Weathermen, which emphasized solidarity with Black liberation efforts and identified strongly with the Black Panthers in particular, Hampton’s death was a watershed moment. In retaliation for Hampton’s death, the Weathermen bombed several unoccupied police cars in a Chicago precinct parking lot. Hampton’s killing confirmed for the Weathermen the necessity—both moral and existential—of going underground and commencing an armed campaign (Green and Siegel).

To that end, in December 1969, the Weathermen convened a meeting of the “national war council” in Flint, Michigan, which was the second event that accelerated its move underground. Although still technically an SDS event, this gathering demonstrated how far the Weathermen had taken the organization from its original design in a short period of time. It was, perhaps in equal parts, a gathering designed to discuss strategy and plans as well as an effort to encourage and
further radicalize those who were already committed. It was not truly an attempt to garner new followers. Instead, the images and quotes that emerged from the meeting further alienated the Weathermen from the mainstream. For example, Bernadine Dohrn's praise of Charles Manson's murder of actress Sharon Tate was met with revulsion and horror (Varon 158-160). The gathering in Flint was a bizarre spectacle—a celebration, glorification, and sensationalism of violence—as the participants braced themselves for a confrontation that their relatively sheltered upbringings had ill-prepared them for (Berger “Outlaws” 122). It would mark the last public gathering of the SDS/Weathermen and its followers (Varon 151). In January 1970, the Weathermen officially closed the SDS National Office in Chicago, an act that crystallized the group's decision to abandon mass mobilization in favor of becoming as a small, clandestine force (Berger “Outlaws” 124). This decision was a reflection of the group's recognition that it was not, in fact, part of a mass movement anymore.

6.3 The Weathermen at the Precipice

In early 1970, the Weathermen executed several small-scale attacks. The East Coast collective, largely based in New York City, was particularly active. It firebombed the house of the judge who was presiding over the high-profile trial of a group of Black Panthers, known as the “Panther 21 trial,” in New York City. The same night, Molotov cocktails were thrown at a police car in Manhattan and two military recruiting stations in Brooklyn. The New York collective, led by one of the signatories of the original Weathermen manifesto, was preparing an attack with the potential to dramatically alter the trajectory of the entire group. The unintended outcome was the final trigger for the Weathermen to go underground abruptly and, more than that, it shaped all of the group's future actions.
Up until that point, the Weathermen’s actions had not caused fatalities. The group’s leadership body, the Weather Bureau, recognized the possibility that fatalities might occur during the Days of Rage and had forbidden participants from bringing guns or knives, in an effort to prevent such an escalation. It had come precariously close on other occasions (Ayres 199). As Weather Bureau leader Bill Ayres later reflected, the group had not yet been able to “resolve the question of how militant, how far would we go. Some people felt, literally, that the bigger mess we could make, the better” (qtd. in Green and Siegel). In the wake of its failure to mobilize the masses, the group increasingly saw those who were not with it as being against it and thus, some members argued for expanding the set of acceptable targets (Green and Siegel). Moreover, the Weathermen were operating in an overall environment of escalating violence in the United States. Leftist, ethno-nationalist, and other “national liberation” militant groups were proliferating. From September 1969 to May 1970, there was, on average, one bombing in the United States everyday (Berger “Outlaws” 116). The Weathermen was one of the more well-known and visible militant organizations, but it was by no means the only such group operating during this period.

Then, on March 6, 1970, an explosion leveled a townhouse in Greenwich Village. Two women emerged from the wreckage and were assisted by neighbors. They then fled without a trace. Three Weathermen members—Theodore Gold, Diana Oughton, and Terry Robbins—did not survive the blast. The New York collective was using the townhouse, owned by the parents of one of the women who escaped, as a bomb-making factory. A nail bomb being fabricated by Robbins short-circuited and detonated while he was working on it (Ayres 191-3). Although the bomb’s purpose was unclear at the time, it subsequently emerged that the collective was preparing to attack a non-commissioned officers’ dance at Fort Dix in New Jersey—an attack that would have deliberately targeted people and almost certainly have caused causalities. The attack was justified as a “pre-

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a There is uncertainty about the culprit of a bombing at the Park Place Police Station in February 1970, which killed one.
emptive strike against those who would soon drop bombs over Vietnam” (Berger “Outlaws” 129).

Because of the compartmentalization of the information across collectives, most members were unaware of the plot (Jacobs 97). Although the FBI did not know the intended target, the explosion and quantity of explosives found in the townhouse—fifty-seven sticks of dynamite and thirty blasting caps—caught the attention of the highest levels of the U.S. Government (Green and Siegel).

After the explosion, remaining above ground was no longer an option for the group. In its haste to go into hiding, some members were even left behind (Varon 179). However, the townhouse explosion precipitated the kind of reflection that the Days of Rage had not. One Weathermen member concluded that a calamity like the townhouse explosion was inevitable. “There were just too many people doing too many things with too little political and technical preparation,” he lamented (Berger “Outlaws” 131). The remaining members of the newly-submerged group were badly shaken by the death of their friends and the implications of the plot. They paused to re-evaluate the Weathermen’s direction at a secret meeting in California the following month. On the verge of a serious escalation in violence, the Weathermen reversed course and decided to engage in what it called “armed propaganda.” In practice, this meant that the group would refrain from targeting people and would undertake precautions so that people would not be harmed as a result of its attacks. The Weather Bureau expelled a hardline leader who continued to advocate for greater violence. From this point forward, it vowed to conduct attacks against symbolic targets, while undertaking measures to ensure that people were not harmed (Ayres 213-5). These events forced the group to more fully develop an identity, narrative, and organizational culture that would shape its future actions and its alliance behavior.

6.4 Weathermen’s Identity and Organizational Characteristics

The Weathermen’s Ideology and Narrative
The Weathermen saw itself as playing a critical role in the worldwide revolution against imperialism. Victory over imperialist forces was, it believed, inevitable. The nature of this worldwide revolution was conceptualized differently by various organizations, but as leftist historian Ron Jacob summed it up, for the Weathermen "revolution meant to fight in support of wars of national liberation in the third world and to eventually install a socialist government in the U.S. in support of third world revolutions" (69). The Weathermen was not responsible for leading the revolution—that was the prerogative of the oppressed minorities—or leading the post-revolution society, but sought to use its privileged status to undermine the existing system from within (United States Congress Senate *The Weather Underground* 9). In other words, as White youth operating in the "heartland," the Weathermen were ideally positioned to fight behind enemy lines.

At home, the Weathermen recognized the Black liberation movement as the vanguard of the revolution, as it was actively resisting "internal colonization." In contrast to its Black Power and Third World counterparts, the group did not conceive of itself as a self-defense force protecting its people; rather it was an offensive force and a provocateur. Through its actions, the Weathermen wanted to both retaliate and awaken White America to the "inherent" injustices of the existing imperialist system (Ayres 234-5). In addition, it sought to drain the state’s ability to wage war against the Third World and oppressed minorities in the United States (Berger “Outlaws” 149, *Weather Underground Organization* 1-2).

The Weathermen went to great lengths to explain its narrative in a steady stream of propaganda. At times, one leader admitted, “the group was practically taken over by words” (Ayres 240). As a result, its narrative was much more accessible to outside audiences than other groups’, like the JRA, which did not expend significant energy articulating its viewpoint. The title of the Weathermen’s founding 1969 communique, “You Don’t Have to Be a Weatherman to Know Which
Way the Wind Blows," communicated the signatories' conviction that the revolution was ongoing and that their strategy was the correct course. In it, they brazenly called for:

- the destruction of U.S. imperialism and achievement of a classless state: world communism.
- Winning state power in the U.S. will occur as a result of military forces of the U.S.
- overextending themselves around the world and being defeated piecemeal; the struggle within the U.S. will be a vital part of this process (Ashley et al 2)

In the opening of its seminal 1974 publication, *Prairie Fire*, the Weathermen expanded on this premise and openly declared its goals and purpose.

- Our intention is to disrupt the empire, to incapacitate it, to put pressure on the cracks, to make it hard to carry out its bloody functioning against the people of the world, to join the world struggle, to attack from inside.
- Our intention is to engage the enemy, to wear away at him, to isolate him, to expose every weakness, to pounce, to reveal his vulnerability.
- Our intention is to encourage the people, to provoke leaps in confidence and consciousness, to stir the imagination, to popularize power, to agitate, to organize, to join in every possible way the people's day to day struggles.
- Our intention is to forge an underground, a clandestine political organization engaged in every form of struggle, protected from the eyes and weapons of the state, a base against repression, to accumulate lessons, experience and constant practice, a base from which to attack (Weather Underground Organization 1).

To do its part to weaken the United States, thereby achieving its most pressing immediate goal of ending the Vietnam War, the Weathermen vowed to "bring the war home." The Weathermen did not only seek a U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam; it actively promoted an NLF victory (Federal Bureau of Investigation *Foreign Influence* 32). This stance set it apart from other anti-war activists who were primarily concerned with ending U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, but did not align with the adversary.

Like its West German counterparts, the Weathermen regularly invoked Holocaust metaphors to describe U.S. actions in Vietnam and to convey the necessity of resistance. For example, the group regularly referred to the United States as "Amerika" and its opposition to the war as an unwillingness to be "good Germans" (Varon 100). This reflected the group's conviction that it faced an enemy as ruthless as the Nazis as well as the intensity of the conviction of the
predominantly Jewish organization. It also condemned those who stood idly by and did not resist the injustices of the system as culpable for the atrocities, and ultimately in so doing, siding with the enemy (The Reminiscences of David Gilbert 271).

The Weathermen used its attacks to reinforce its narrative by selecting targets that represented American “imperialist” power and striking the institutions that oppressed the people and operated the “war machine” (Ayres 235). The Weathermen classified its bombings being driven by three motives: 1) retaliation for crimes committed against Black and Third World people; 2) a desire to “disrupt and agitate against U.S. aggression and terror against Vietnam and the Third World;” and 3) an effort to draw attention to the forces that oppress the people. Its “armed propaganda” was closely synched with its printed propaganda. The Weathermen issued a communiqué to explain its rationale and justification for every attack. Operations were typically attributed specifically to a recent event, a “crime” perpetrated against oppressed people by imperialists. The group also executed attacks on symbolic anniversaries to highlight its messages. Weather Bureau leader Bernadine Dohrn described the group’s desire that its attacks, although always accompanied by a communiqué, “speak for themselves...and be immediately understood and timely, fire the imaginations of young people, inspire the movement, and make anyone of goodwill smile” (Ayres 234).

Despite its brash pledge to “bring the war home,” the Weathermen demonstrated targeting restraint beyond what was typical even for leftist groups during this period. With a few important exceptions, the group did not conduct attacks targeting or endangering people. Thus it did not employ tactics seen elsewhere during this period, such as hostage takings, hijackings, kidnappings or assassinations. It primarily conducted small-scale bombings of symbolic targets.

*The Weathermen’s Ethnic Identity*
The Weathermen’s strong ethnic identity inhibited the formation and perpetuation of alliances with non-American groups. The group had an identity as a White, American organization. All its members were Americans, and it was an organization totally rooted in the American context and American society. The Weathermen made a deliberate decision from an early point to be a homegrown, American movement. These were core features of the group’s collective identity. Therefore, while it could cooperate with foreign entities, it was in a limited, ad hoc way (Dohrn). This aspect of the group was poorly understood at the time, and the FBI searched in vain for years to find a foreign power behind the actions of the Weathermen (Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 10-60).

This identity also had unforeseen consequences. Some Weathermen recognized that the group’s decision to limit its violence and eventually disband with minimal consequences was at least in part a consequence of the members’ privileged White status. As one member explained:

[t]here’s a way in which the Weather Underground, compared to what the Black Liberation Army was dealing with and what the FALN had to deal with, was still the white, middle-class underground. It wasn’t a situation in which our own communities were being killed. And so there was a way in which we comfortably limited the level of violence we took on… which limited the amount of solidarity we provided Third World struggles (“The Reminiscences of David Gilbert” 218).

There was another component to the Weathermen’s ethnic identity. The Weathermen had a significant number of Jewish members, including in leadership positions. Most identified with their heritage as an ethnic identity, describing themselves and their upbringing as “culturally Jewish” (Rudd “The Deaths of SDS” 2). The Weathermen did not identify itself as a Jewish organization or use Judaism as a form of guiding ideology. Interestingly, the prevalence of Jewish members was not a fact that was readily acknowledged or discussed within the group. One former leader of the Weathermen remarked that “[o]ut of all the uncountable hours of discussion in SDS meetings, at the West End Bar over beer, and in our dorm rooms and apartments over joints, I don’t remember one
single conversation in which we discussed the fact that so many of us were Jewish. This glaring lack alone might serve as a clue to what we were up to: by being radicals we thought we could escape our Jewishness” (Rudd “The Deaths of SDS”). It was not a collective or active identity. Yet it was important identity for influential members of the group and created a potential obstacle between the Weathermen and the PFLP/PFLP-SOG, as the latter’s rhetoric and actions regularly strayed from being narrowly anti-Zionist—a position the Weathermen also held—into being anti-Semitic, which was unacceptable.

_The Weathermen’s Organizational Dynamics and Relationships_

The Weathermen was a self-styled “White revolutionary organization,” and its composition clearly reflected that characterization. It was made up almost entirely of white, middle-class students, despite concerted—and often clumsy—efforts to entice working-class youth to join. The group warned other Whites that they must be “either be on the side of the oppressed or be on the side of the oppressor” (Green and Siegel). This dichotomy contributed to the group’s isolation over time as more and more of society was deemed to be siding with oppressor, and few new converts joined the fight on the behalf of the oppressed (Jacobs 48).

It was a small, completely clandestine and underground group with no political or charitable wings. Later, it would foster an aboveground mobilizing organization and forge more connections with outside sympathizers and friends (Ayres 243). But overall, it saw reform as insufficient to address the systemic flaws embedded in the current system. No alternative to revolution existed, and thus it was organized by the need to forcibly destroy the existing system.

The group was comprised of America’s “darling children” (Berger “Outlaws” 150). For example, SDS education secretary and Weather Bureau leader Bill Ayres described his childhood home as “straight off the cover of _The Saturday Evening Post_... oak-lined streets, the volunteer fire department, the Busy Bee Barber” (197). Like their Japanese counterparts, Weathermen members
were overwhelmingly intelligent and promising college students or recent graduates from prestigious institutions. In an open letter to the group in which he cautioned it against the use of violence, a prominent anti-war activist and Jesuit priest heralded the Weathermen members’ decision to abdicate their upbringing, saying “your lives could have been posh and secure; but you said no. And you said it by attacking the very properties you were supposed to have inherited and expanded—an amazing kind of turnabout” (qtd in Berger “Outlaws” 150-1).

Like the RAF and JRA, the Weathermen had a number of women in its ranks. The group had a separate women’s unit that conducted several actions. Bernadine Dohrn, in particular, was the most well-known face and voice of the organization. For example, the group’s “Declaration of a State of War” was issued in her name. She was also the most influential female in the leadership committee, known as the Weather Bureau (Ayres 231). A graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, Dohrn was the first Weathermen member to be put on the FBI’s list of 10 Most Wanted List as she was deemed “the most dangerous woman in America” by J. Edgar Hoover (Ayres 202). Despite the role of women in the group, it grappled with how to respond to the emerging feminist movement and was criticized for its “macho tendencies” as well as failing to fully address sexism in its agenda or within the organization.

The Weathermen’s organizational culture was rigid and severe, requiring members to renounce all of their “bourgeois” ways (Varon 57). As one Weather Bureau leader explained, they believed that this was necessary in order “to transform a group of relatively privileged groups of students into fighters and steel ourselves for what we saw as the upcoming upheaval” (qtd. in Green and Siegel). Most members lived together in sparse, minimal housing with few amenities. All property and money was collectively owned. Like the RAF and JRA, the Weathermen conducted intensive and lengthy self-criticism sessions that required individuals to recognize, confront, and be disparaged for their “revolutionary shortcomings.” These sessions—brutal, destructive, and
unrelenting by all accounts—went on for hours at a time. They were one way for the group to break down individual members and then indoctrinate them, in a quest to build stronger revolutionaries (Varon 59).

In the earlier years, monogamous relationships were not permitted. Not surprisingly, drug use and sexual experimentation was rampant. Individuals were even moved among the collectives in part to prevent attachments between individuals from forming (Varon 58). Members severed friendships and other connections outside of the group in order to go underground and ensure complete loyalty to the group, though these lines of communications gradually re-opened (Berger “Outlaws” 105; Ayres 227). While this posture had benefits in terms of operational security, Varon pointed out that “[t]he self-imposed isolation of the members in tight-knit collectives, where doubts were taken as a sign of weakness, served to reinforce their questionable assumptions” (109). The organizational culture gradually softened over time, although it remained firmly hierarchical—consistent with the principle of “democratic centralism” (Varon 294).

Unlike the RAF, the Weathermen did not regularly engage in armed bank robberies and other high-risk criminal actions to acquire money, which is probably one reason that it did not suffer from as many arrests. It also took pains to avoid crimes that might draw unnecessary attention, like speeding. It occasionally conducted petty thefts and other comparable criminal schemes, like passing fake checks, lifting wallets, and low-level drug sales (Ayres 226). The group could often get money from sympathizers, friends, and family, another perk of the relatively privileged background of its members (Ayres 201). For example, the group would sometimes stage faux marriages among members. The gifts and money provided by well-wishers were then donated to the group (Rudd Underground 161).

The Weathermen drew heavily from the foco theory propagated by French intellectual, Regis Debray in his 1967 book “Revolution in Revolution?” and popularized by Argentinian
revolutionary Che Guevara (Berger "Outlaws" 101). Leftist author Ron Jacobs wrote in his work on the group that "[t]he importance to the Weathermen of Debray's book is impossible to overstate" (34). It provided an ideal ideological and organizational framework for the Weathermen and other New Left groups attempting to ignite a revolution without popular backing or a mobilized working class (Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 50). In the absence of these "ideal" revolutionary conditions, small, elite groups could instigate a revolution through direct action (Varon 57). In accordance with the foco theory, the Weathermen was organized into small, semi-autonomous cells dispersed in major cities mainly on the East Coast, West Coast, and in the Midwest. This geographic distribution also reflected internal divisions within the group; the East Coast advocated an all-out military struggle, the West Coast urged caution and emphasized politics, and the Midwest fell somewhere in between (Ayres 206). The Weather Bureau tightly controlled the flow of information flow between the collectives. They were not aware of one another's plans and virtually all communication with the leadership was done verbally (Jacob 95). For security reasons, the "need to know" principle governed access to all information, but this also contributed to the group's vulnerability, paranoia, and hierarchical culture, despite its small size (Ayres 205, 228).

Membership numbers are difficult to provide with much precision or confidence. One scholar estimated that the number of members was around 300 in 1969, 150 in 1970, and then well under 100 by the end of that year (Varon 182). While some followers left the group when it decided to go underground or were discomfited by the group's move to violence, its decreasing size was, in some respects, a deliberate decision. Prior to going underground in 1970, the Weather Bureau purged the group of members it deemed inadequate, insufficiently committed, potential informants, or in some cases, simply out of contact or in prison at the wrong time (Varon 171). It was largely led by the same leadership—a small clique of individuals who drafted the group's original founding
declaration and who were faced with a fundamental decision about the group’s direction following townhouse explosions.

The Weathermen had ties with organizations operating within the United States, including Native American groups, Puerto Ricans separatists, and most importantly Black liberation organizations, particularly the Black Panthers (Ayres 250). They were not full alliances; collaboration tended to be more ad hoc and circumstantial. These relationships were consistent with its identity as a homegrown American group (Berger 2011). However, the group was much more cautious in forging ties with foreign elements. It did not have state sponsors. Weathermen representatives fostered the closest ties with the NLF and Havana, but it did not create full-fledged alliance relationships with either entity. Access to Cuban officials was facilitated by the presence of a Cuban mission in New York, so further travel was not necessary to maintain these contacts (Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 146; Dohrn). The group declared solidarity with an array of other movements, particularly in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and to a lesser degree, the Middle East, even issuing a call for alliances amongst “anti-imperialist forces.” But this posture did not translate into a policy of forging partnerships with groups outside of the United States (Varon personal interview; Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 22; Berger “Outlaws” 137; Dohrn).

6.5 Going Underground

After the 1970 townhouse explosion, the group implemented precautions to insure that no one was harmed in its future operations. It was remarkably successful at conducting dozens of attacks without inflicting collateral damage or injuring any of its own members (“The Reminiscences of David Gilbert” 217). Its attacks generally consisted of small explosive devices timed to detonate in the middle of the night when people would not be present. Targets were
surveilled during business hours to determine the layout and appropriate spot to place the explosive device and then cased again after hours in order to ensure no one would be in danger when the bomb was timed to detonate—a process that required the group to undertake risks to its own personnel in order to avoid risks to others (Berger “Outlaws” 154). As an additional safeguard, the group phoned in warnings to both the police and the media prior to the bombs’ detonation. However, there was still an element of luck in the group’s ability to avoid fatalities, even its leaders subsequently admitted (Ayres 199).

Now underground and hunted by authorities—and badly shaken by the townhouse explosion—this was a pivotal juncture for the group in terms of its alliances. Rather than concluding that the group needed greater technical expertise or training, which could have potentially pushed it into the PFLP-SOG’s orbit, the Weathermen decided to self-reform and engage strictly in “armed propaganda acts.” The Weathermen was therefore able to be self-sufficient in terms of its operations. The group had an advantage over the RAF and JRA because weapons and explosives were not difficult to acquire in the United States, especially the relatively simple kind required for the Weathermen’s attacks. Criminal organizations abounded and were a source of materiel or weapons (Varon 2011). Dynamite was relatively inexpensive and readily available through commercial outlets (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 134). For example, on several occasions, the group acquired—or attempted to acquire—dynamite by having members pose as construction workers or home builders who needed dynamite to clear land (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 133). Failing that, the group could—and did—steal dynamite from places like construction sites (Grathwohl and Reagan 156; Ayres 198).

In terms of its bomb fabrication skills, the group was primarily self-taught (Green and Siegel). Perhaps not surprisingly, given that most members were fairly successful students prior to joining the group, they learned the requisite skills by studying, relying on books such as Abbie
Hoffman’s *Steal this Book*, Carlos Marighella’s *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, *The Anarchist Cookbook*, and publicly available U.S. Army manuals (Berger “Outlaws”155, Varon personal interview). Select members were proficient at building the devices, including a Vietnam War veteran who was also an FBI informant (Grathwohl and Reagan 140). Disgruntled veterans and military personnel were willing to help when additional instruction was required (Berger “Outlaws” 155). One leader remarked that had the group needed weapons or explosives training, it would not have turned to an organization like the PFLP-SOG with which it had no solid contacts because: 1) there were plenty of knowledgeable individuals close to home and known to the group; and 2) such an action was simply too risky from a security perspective, given the U.S. Government’s persistent efforts to infiltrate the group (Rudd “Re: Dissertation”). One scholar speculated that the group’s failure to acquire more sophisticated training also reflected its ambivalence about the level of violence it was willing to conduct (Varon personal interview). The timing of the Weathermen’s decision in 1970 closely coincided with the PFLP’s decision—at Haddad’s behest—to escalate and expand the scope of its operations. Despite ostensibly sharing overarching ideologies, when confronted with their respective environmental and organizational challenges, the two organizations made different targeting and tactics decisions, which sent them on diverging trajectories.

Instead of seeking sanctuary from a likeminded organization or government in a place beyond the U.S. Government’s reach, the Weathermen decided to stay within the United States. It found ample places to hide within the United States and lost very few members to arrests while underground. When it initially made the decision to stay in the United States, the group did not know how successful it would be. But it could not compromise its identity as a homegrown group without creating significant internal dissension. This identity was so engrained, so fundamental that one leader asserted that the group did not—perhaps could not—even consider leaving the
United States to find safe haven (Dohrn). Within the group’s identity and organizational culture and frames, this was an option that it simply could not pursue.

When asked whether being underground impeded the group’s ability to forge alliances, one Weather Bureau leader minimized the importance of logistical hurdles (Dohrn). Prior to 1970, Weathermen members travelled internationally—to Cuba on several occasions, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Sweden, and Japan, among other places—trips carefully documented by the FBI (Foreign Influence 65). The group had plenty of trusted aboveground sympathizers that it could have deployed had it decided to pursue alliances (Dohrn).

While issuing an ominous “Declaration of War” that promised to bomb symbols of American injustice, the Weathermen lived up to its April 1970 pledge to pursue “armed propaganda” (Ayres 227). It became adept at striking targets associated with current grievances while avoiding fatalities and injuries. In 1970 alone, it conducted about a dozen small-scale bombings in response to “imperialist oppression.” In May, the group bombed the National Guard headquarters after the shooting of four Kent State University students by Guardsmen who were deployed to quell unrest on campus (Berger “Outlaws” 133). On the eleventh anniversary of the Cuban revolution, the Weathermen conducted bombings at the Presidio Army Base in San Francisco and a Bank of America branch in New York City, causing minor damage (Berger “Outlaws” 138). The group then bombed the Marin County Hall of Justice. This attack was in retaliation for a shooting of the brother of George Jackson, a well-known prison reform activist. Jackson’s brother was fatally wounded by law enforcement while trying to escape a Marin County courtroom after taking hostages (Jacobs 120). Other targets the Weathermen struck that year included the New York Police Department Headquarters, courthouses in Long Island and Queens, the San Francisco Hall of Justice, and a bank in New York City (Green and Siegel; United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 36-7). The group also destroyed the Haymarket Square statue in Chicago again shortly after it was rebuilt.
In 1970, the Weathermen helped Timothy Leary escape from a minimum-security prison. Leary was a well-known counter-culture figure and former psychology professor at Harvard University who extolled the benefits of the drug LSD. The Weathermen’s main role was facilitating his travel to Algiers after he scaled the fence and met with a Weathermen getaway car. Its ability to hide him for several days before moving him to the Black Panther compound in Algiers demonstrated the effectiveness of the group’s network (Ayres 255-6). The Weathermen—paid $20-25,000 for the job by a group of Leary followers—built support among hippies and counter-culture elements in addition to getting a quick influx of cash. Labeling Leary as a “political prisoner,” the Weathermen characterized its assistance as a “revolutionary act” (Berger “Outlaws” 139). Its communique also made a rare reference to its Palestinian counterparts, which is discussed below. In reality, Leary’s political commitment was hazy, at best, although he did issue a statement after his escape extolling the revolutionary qualities of LSD.

The Weathermen’s last action in 1970 was conducted by its women’s brigade. In October, it struck Harvard University’s Center for International Affairs. The Center conducted counter-insurgency research for the U.S. Government and was a previous employer of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Berger “Outlaws” 143). It was timed to protest the arrest of Black Panther activist and professor Angela Davis on inter-state flight and conspiracy charges, of which she was later acquitted (Jacobs 122). Her case had attracted international attention. The charges against her stemmed from the hostage taking in Marin Country by George Jackson’s brother, who used weapons in the hostage taking that were registered to Davis. Her advocates argued that the pursuit of Davis was unjust and racially motivated.

The attack at Harvard concluded a pivotal year for the group. Over the course of those twelve months, the Weathermen shut down SDS, went underground, lost several comrades, re-evaluated its tactics and strategy, and then executed bombings in major U.S. cities. Its
organizational and identity features matured commensurately in a short period of time. The FBI announced “one of the most intensive manhunts in FBI history” for the group’s leaders (United States Congress Senate *The Weather Underground* 28). The government increased security at facilities throughout the country. Threats—real, hoaxes, and imitations—shut down hospitals, airports, and subway stations throughout the United States. Yet there were no significant arrests of Weathermen.

The Weathermen reflected on its actions and the events of 1970 in a December communiqué named after another Bob Dylan song “New Morning, Changing Weather.” It acknowledged that the group’s “tendency to consider only bombings or picking up the gun as revolutionary, with the glorification of armed action as a ‘military error’ and also confessed mistakes due to its ‘technical inexperience’ (Jacobs 123). Despite dismantling SDS less than a year earlier, the group returned to the idea that mass mobilization was an essential component of the struggle (Berger “Outlaws” 146).

This statement coincided with a shift in the group’s organizational dynamics. The group had previously discouraged close or monogamous relationships, even within the group. Now it moved away from the impersonal, controlled concept of collectives as the primary organizational unit to “families.” Families were still groupings of Weathermen who lived together, though members were encouraged to share bonds deeper than their revolutionary politics within families (Jacobs 124). It perceptibly relaxed its rigid, angry posture.

*Continuing the Program*

The group persisted in this direction in 1971 and 1972. Its attacks continued to be largely retaliatory, framed as responding to a recent crime perpetrated by the “capitalist establishment” (Berger “Outlaws” 149). The Weathermen—now calling itself the more gender neutral “Weather Underground Organization” (WUO)—continued to focus on two primary issues, the war in
Southeast Asia and discrimination against Blacks and other minorities in the United States. Its attacks were an effort to “highlight who the enemy is and the nature of the enemy,” as one member reflected (Berger “Outlaws” 149). During this period, the WUO expressed its ongoing opposition to U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia by striking two of the most coveted symbols of American power. It bombed the Capitol in February 1971, causing $300,000 in damage, to protest the U.S. invasion of Laos. Then in May 1972, the group detonated a bomb in the Pentagon—causing tens of thousands of dollars of damage—after former President Nixon ordered a bombing campaign in North and South Vietnam to subdue a renewed insurgent offensive (Ayres 264-5). These two acts improved the group’s reputation in radical left circles as well as increased its overall notoriety.

In addition to responding to events overseas, the WUO struck institutions that it deemed to be tools of oppression and racism domestically. Prisons in particular were seen by the WUO as a way for a society “run by white racists to maintain its control” (Berger “Outlaws” 169). Therefore, symbols associated with the prison system were prime targets for the organization, especially when prison unrest made headlines in 1971. The group struck the Office of California Prisons in Sacramento, San Mateo, and San Francisco in retaliation for the killing of Black Panther member and prison reform figure George Jackson by prison guards at San Quentin prison during an alleged escape attempt (Berger “Outlaws” 166). It then hit the New York Department of Corrections following the state’s forceful response to the uprising at Attica prison in September 1971.

While its targets were high profile, the overall tempo of the WUO’s attacks slowed during this period (Ayres 267). A significant amount of time, attention, and resources were spent simply living and functioning underground. In the spring of 1971, the FBI nearly captured most of the group's West Coast membership, including Dohrn and several other founding members. Having barely slipped the FBI's noose, an episode called “the encirclement” by the group, the West Coast
collective was forced to re-establish its entire underground network and heighten its security posture. This corresponded with a decline in the frequency of attacks (Ayres 259).

In March 1971, a group calling itself “The Citizen’s Commission to Investigate the FBI” broke into an FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania, and stole reams of files. The contents of the files revealed a secret program called COINTELPRO (short for counter-intelligence program), which was a domestic surveillance and harassment program conducted by the FBI between 1956 and 1971 (Public Broadcasting Service “COINTELPRO Again?”). After a series of Supreme Court rulings in 1956 and 1957 challenged the activities of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee as well as the constitutionality of Smith Act prosecutions and Subversive Activities Control Board hearings, the FBI created COINTELPRO, a program designed to “neutralize” those who could no longer be prosecuted through those entities, but were still deemed a threat to domestic security by the FBI. The WUO was one such organization. In Congressional testimony, former FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover, reported that the FBI had investigated “1544 individuals who adhere to the extremist strategy of the Weathermen” (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 11). More importantly, the WUO were among the groups that the FBI used dubious and sometimes illegal means to track and disrupt under the guise of COINTELPRO, including activities involving “another government agency”—often thought to be a reference to either the Central Intelligence Agency or National Security Agency—that did not have the authority to engage in domestic spying on American citizens. This revelation would have important ramifications for the group in the coming years.

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<td>“Free Students”</td>
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<td>1969</td>
<td>Haymarket Square Statute</td>
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<td>Bombing</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>National Guard’s Headquarters</td>
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<td>New York City Police Department</td>
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<td>Presidio Army Base</td>
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<td>1970</td>
<td>Bank of America</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
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<td>1970</td>
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<td>Build support among hippies and acquire funds</td>
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<td>Retaliation for the deaths of 3 hostage takers who seized the courthouse in solidarity with prison reform efforts</td>
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<td>Protest of the Center’s research for the Vietnam War</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>U.S. Capitol Building</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>In response to the U.S. military action in Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>California Department of Corrections</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retaliation of the killing of prominent figure in the prison reform movement during an escape attempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>New York Department of Corrections</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retaliation for the forceful response to an uprising at Attica prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for War Research</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retaliation against personnel who advised the U.S. Government on the Vietnam War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>Pentagon</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retaliation for the bombing of Hanoi/Ho Chi Minh’s birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>New York City Police Precinct</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>In response to the fatal shooting of a 10-year Black child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>ITT Latin American Headquarters</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Accusing the company of supporting the military coup in Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Offices of Health, Education, and Welfare</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>In support of feminism and in protest of forced sterilization of minority women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Governor Rockefeller</td>
<td>Stink bomb</td>
<td>Protest of the Governor's drug policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Office of the California Attorney General</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Retaliation for the death of 6 SLA members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Gulf Oil</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest of the company's support for Portugal in Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Anaconda Copper Company</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest of company's support for coup in Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Department of State</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest of the government's continued actions in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Department of Defense Supply Agency</td>
<td>Bombing (unsuccessful)</td>
<td>Protest of the government's continued actions in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Banco de Ponce</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>In support of striking cement workers in Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Kennecott Corporation</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Protest of the company's business in Chile and support of the military government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>Immigration and Naturalization Services</td>
<td>Bombing</td>
<td>Solidarity with Mexican workers and in opposition to border policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>State Senator in California</td>
<td>Bombing (unsuccessful)</td>
<td>Protest of the policies of the senator, especially towards gay rights issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1

### 6.6 Broadening the Agenda, But the Middle East Still an Ancillary Concern

By 1973, the consequences of the fallout from COINTELPRO for the WUO were becoming clear. Unwilling to disclose details of the authorities' investigative tactics in order to use the evidence they had acquired in court, federal prosecutors dropped most of the major charges pending against WUO members (United States Congress Senate *The Weather Underground* 41). The FBI and local authorities continued to pursue the organization, but with less secure legal footing, its methods were less aggressive. The COINTELPRO scandal provided a critical opening for WUO members to come above ground, but they were not yet ready to surrender. The group's numbers further dwindled to around fifty members during this period (Jacob 151). However, they had become fairly adept at functioning underground and remained committed to their cause as well as to one another (Jacobs 144-5).
During this time, with the Paris Peace Treaty and the cessation of the draft, the Vietnam War lost some of its urgency (Ayres 275). The WUO then turned its attention to issues that had been a lower priority to date, reacted to events in other parts of the world, and sought a mobilizing cause to replace the Vietnam War. In 1973, a U.S.-backed military coup installed General Augusto Pinochet in Chile and removed the elected Communist government from power. International Telephone and Telegraph (ITT) was among the American companies that had agitated for such a change after its $200 million investment appeared to be in jeopardy with a Communist government in power. In the fall of 1973, the WUO struck ITT's headquarters in New York City, accusing the company and the U.S. Government of subverting democracy in Chile (Berger “Outlaws” 169). While it had consistently voiced sympathy and support for Third World struggles, especially in Latin America, this was the first attack that the WUO attributed specifically to an event in the region. The group later punished the Anaconda Corporation (part of the Rockefeller Corporation) for its role in the Chilean coup, bombing the company on the first anniversary of the coup. The WUO similarly weighed in on events in Africa. It bombed Gulf Oil’s Pittsburgh Office in protest of the company’s “imperialist” policies in Portuguese-controlled Angola, where an independence struggle was on the verge of succeeding after thirteen bloody years of conflict (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 42).

The 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East and subsequent oil embargo did not produce any action from the Weathermen. American involvement in the conflict was growing; nonetheless, it did not make it onto the Weathermen’s operational agenda. The PFLP-SOG’s selected some similar targets around this time, such as its attack on the Shell Oil facilities in Singapore in 1974. Yet the two groups continued to operate in different orbits with no acknowledgement of or interaction with one another.
In contrast, the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA)—a small, multi-racial, urban militant group with the motto, “death to the fascist insect that preys on the life of the people”—made the headlines in 1974, and the WUO opportunistically embraced it. The number of groups still pursing the “armed struggle” was dwindling, so the Weathermen may have seen a potential new ally in the SLA (Jacobs 149). The SLA gained notoriety for kidnapping Patty Hearst, the granddaughter of press magnate William Randolph Hearst, in February 1974. A subsequent attempted robbery by SLA members eventually led authorities to the group’s safe houses in Los Angeles’ predominantly Black South Central neighborhood (Federal Bureau of Investigation “Famous Cases and Criminals”). LA police then surrounded the SLA safe house and a massive shootout ensued, killing six SLA members inside. The confrontation was a media sensation, shown live on television and attracting a crowd of more than 10,000 people (Suellentrop). The WUO bombed California’s Attorney General shortly thereafter. Despite some reservations about SLA’s conduct, the Weathermen heralded the group as “frontline fighters” in its communique claiming the attack (United States Congress Senate The Weather Underground 42; Varon 295).

The WUO’s Women’s Brigade conducted its second operation: a bombing of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in San Francisco in 1974. The damage was minimal. The group justified the attack by describing welfare as a means to oppress women and force them to relinquish control of their bodies to imperialist powers. This Department was thus an instrument of “male supremacy” (Federal Bureau of Investigation “Prairie Fire” 1).

In 1974, the WUO took stock of the situation, publishing its analysis in a book titled Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism (Federal Bureau of Investigation “Weather Underground” 1). It was a blend of reflection, analysis, theory, history, and current events. Prairie Fire was a treatise on the WUO’s “political ideology—a strategy for anti-imperialism and revolution inside the U.S.” after years of revolutionary struggle. It was an effort to update the group’s thinking
on the state of affairs after four years underground and to explain its view of the history of relevant conflicts (Ayres 240). It included sections on Vietnam, Black resistance, Native American resistance, Third World resistance, and feminism/sexism. Notably, in the section on Third World resistance, the group discussed the Israel-Palestinian conflict—an issue that had received scant attention from the group up until that point. The title was a nod to Mao’s famous quote—"a single spark can set a prairie fire" (Weather Underground Organization). The manifesto presented a toned down, “kinder and gentler” WUO than the strident group that had seized SDS five years earlier (Ayres 240-1).

*Prairie Fire* served both an internal and an external purpose. The group’s semi-autonomous cells were still responsible for their own activities, survival, and relationships, but publication helped renew sense of overall unity within the group (Ayres 243). It was a product of extensive internal collaboration, debate, and discussion—something sorely lacking within the rigidly hierarchical group during its earlier years (Berger “Outlaws” 190). It was also the group's attempt to reinvigorate and re-connect with the broader New Left by acknowledging the necessity and value of both violent and non-violent components of the struggle, including mass mobilization and party building (Berger “Outlaws” 187). “Without mass struggle, there can be no revolution, without armed struggle, there can be no victory,” the group now acknowledged (qtd. in Varon 292). An above-ground support and mobilization apparatus, called the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, was then created (Federal Bureau of Investigation “Yet Another Weather Underground” 2). Donations, support, and recruits all increased following the unveiling of *Prairie Fire*, which sold 40,000 copies at $1.50 a copy (Berger “Outlaws” 192).

The WUO built on the concepts laid out in *Prairie Fire* and increased its focus on propaganda by publishing a quarterly magazine, *Osawatomie*, and being featured in a 1976 documentary film (Ayres 240; 260; Federal Bureau of Investigation ”Weather Underground Claims Four Bombings” 2). The first conference of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee met that summer.
While its pace of operations slowed to a crawl, the WUO demonstrated a continued willingness to conduct symbolic attacks when it set off a stink bomb at a hotel. The hotel was planning a reception for Nelson Rockefeller, where he was to receive a humanitarian award. Rockefeller was an existing target of the group’s ire due to his role in quelling the Attica prison riots by force in 1971, but the group attributed this attack specifically to Rockefeller’s hardline drug policies (Berger “Outlaws” 193). While the WUO appeared poised for a comeback, it was, in fact, on the verge of collapse.

*The Beginning of the End*

1975 was the last year that the WUO functioned as a cohesive organization. Its attacks in 1975 were motivated by a combination of established grievances and a desire to be relevant in emerging areas. Still the Palestinian cause was largely absent from its agenda. Its tempo of operations slowed, but it retained the ability to penetrate hardened targets. The group struck the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense offices in Oakland, California to protest “the government’s continued aggression” in Vietnam and Cambodia (United States Congress Senate *The Weather Underground* 3; Federal Bureau of Investigation “Weather Underground Seeks Revolutionary” 2). A third company, Kennecott Corporation, was targeted for its role in the 1973 Chilean coup. In support of the Puerto Rican independence movement and striking workers in Puerto Rico, the WUO bombed Banco de Ponce (Berger “Outlaws” 225). But these attacks masked a group in turmoil.

By 1976, fissures in the organization were showing and discontent on several levels threatened its precarious unity. An effort to unify various American radical groups under one umbrella at an above-ground conference held in Chicago hosted by the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee was beset with disagreements among participating groups over issues of gender and race (Berger “Outlaws” 297). Without the Vietnam War as a common, central mobilizing issue, it was difficult to forge a shared agenda among these disparate groups with differing priorities and...
objectives. Tensions also emerged between the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee and the WUO, a typical problem in relations between above ground and clandestine factions. The Prairie Fire Organizing Committee was no longer content to be an above ground support apparatus for the WUO and began asserting its own identity and independence (Jacobs 175). Within the WUO, divisions between factions of the group based on the West Coast and the East Coast grew more pronounced, and the Weather Bureau leaders came under intense criticism (Varon 298). Members began to question the wisdom and necessity of remaining underground, especially given the lack of government recourse against the group. In the midst of this growing internal crisis, the WUO did not conduct any attacks in 1976. Its main underground activity was to increase the frequency of Osawatomie from quarterly to bi-monthly—essentially dedicating itself to a publication that was not illegal, published by individuals with few charges still pending against them (Berger “Outlaws” 207-10).

However, the Weathermen avoided the organizational pitfall that bedeviled the RAF and many other militant groups. “The Weathermen,” as Varon argued, “never saw militancy as an autonomous value, fully divorced from political goals. It remained a means to a revolutionary end, not an end in itself” (102). While its attacks did not supplant its political objectives, to some degree, the group’s underground survival became an end onto itself. When many members were no longer technically fugitives and doubts were growing about the need to continue its armed campaign, the group struggled to relinquish its status as an underground organization. Indeed, the Weathermen’s ability to evade the authorities was viewed as one of its important accomplishments because it pierced the government’s image of omnipotence (Green and Siegel). In an era when “the FBI always got its man,” the group did come to view its own existence as a meaningful achievement and took pleasure in goading the authorities about their failure to catch their members (Ayres 227).
6.7 The Point of No Return

Internal tensions could no longer be contained in 1977. The Prairie Fire Organizing Committee split, and the West Coast chapter broke away to become the May 19th Communist Organization. Within the WUO, a faction anointed itself as “the Revolutionary Committee” and expelled the Weather Bureau leaders, who were isolated by this time (Berger “Outlaws” 334). The Revolutionary Committee then attempted to re-invigorate the armed campaign. In the process, two FBI agents were recruited into the group (Berger “Outlaws” 235). Shortly thereafter, the WUO conducted a bombing of the Immigration and Naturalization Services offices in San Francisco in solidarity with Mexican workers and in protest of the government’s “racist” immigration policies, (Berger “Outlaws” 334). Then a plot against the office of California state senator John Briggs was disrupted when five WUO members were arrested with the help of the newly recruited FBI informants.

Those insisting that the group remain underground were dealt a blow in the fall, when Mark Rudd emerged after seven years underground. While he had not been active in the group for several years, he was a well-known figure because of his public profile and leadership position in the early years, especially during the takeover of Columbia University and as national secretary of SDS. His re-emergence, especially the minimal consequences he faced, demonstrated the possibility of relinquishing life underground. Three other members surrendered to police that year and then two more the following year. All received light sentences, but they steadfastly refused to provide any information about their colleagues still in hiding (Jacobs 181).

This marked the end of the Weathermen. The group would not conduct any further attacks after 1977. Some WUO members subsequently participated in operations under the auspices of other organizations, most notably the 1981 robbery of a Brinks armored car by the Black Liberation Army during which a guard and two policemen were killed. Over the course of the next few years,
other central figures would come out of hiding, including the highly sought-after Weather Bureau leaders Bernadine Dohrn and Bill Ayres. Others would remain underground while ceasing militant activity. But the Weathermen never again functioned as an “armed struggle” organization (152).

6.8 Situating the Palestinian Cause in the Weathermen's Agenda

The paucity of references to the Middle East, Israel, or the Palestinians in the preceding sections is indicative of the lack of relationship between the WUO and its Palestinian counterparts. After the 1967 Six Day War, the New Left in the United States grappled with whether the Palestinian cause was one of the “national liberation” struggles underway. Given the esteem with which Third World liberation movements were held, this was not a trivial consideration. The Israel-Palestinian conflict proved to be a controversial and divisive issue within the American New Left, particularly given the preponderance of Jewish activists involved in the civil rights movement and anti-war efforts, including in SDS (Berger “Outlaws” 42). In his essay on the topic, Rudd cited the following statistics:

- two-thirds of the white Freedom Riders who traveled to Mississippi were Jewish;
- a majority of the steering committee of the 1964 Berkeley Free Speech Movement were Jewish;
- the SDS chapters at Columbia and the University of Michigan were more than half Jewish;
- at Kent State in Ohio, where only 5 percent of the student body was Jewish, Jews constituted 19 percent of the chapter (Rudd “Why Were There”).

Nonetheless, some were deeply critical of Israel, to the point that it created schisms within the Left. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s (SNCC) caused controversy when it accused Israel of committing atrocities and terrorism in its decisive victory in the 1967 Six Day War. This position turned out to be extremely costly in terms of financial and public support (The Reminiscences of David Gilbert 230). Black Power groups, including the Black Panthers, also roundly condemned Israel and issued statements in support of “Arab guerillas.” While SDS also denounced Israel’s actions in the 1967, this stance was a source of internal debate and dissension.
One SDS and former Weathermen member recounted a meeting he attended of SDS activists where attendees debated whether to recognize the PLO. After hours of discussion, they were unable to come to a consensus about undertaking such a gesture (Kazin).

For its part, the Weathermen took a stance against Israel, but the issue did not feature prominently in its narrative. In its founding manifesto, the group characterized Israel as among the enemies supporting imperialism (Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 40). When asked about the group’s view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a Weather Bureau leader argued that the group had to sympathize with the Palestinians as “our anti-imperialism was nothing if not totally pro-national liberation” (Rudd “Re: Dissertation”). Another leading member explained that

[I]t is hardest to get people to oppose their own imperialism... I think for those of us with Jewish background, in some way that contradiction got played out with Israel... for many of us from Jewish backgrounds and who became revolutionaries, the conclusion of the experience of racism against Jews was that you have to side with oppressed people and fight all forms of oppression. Zionism was the opposite conclusion (The Reminiscences of David Gilbert 231).

Despite these sentiments, the Weathermen’s attention was consumed with areas where American involvement was direct, prominent, and coercive, which relegated the Israel-Palestinian conflict to the periphery (Dohrn). One member who left the group in 1970 remarked that he did not recall ever having a conversation about the Israel-Palestinian conflict with his compatriots (Kazin). A Weather Bureau leader agreed, but characterized the issue as a concern for the group that grew over time. She acknowledged that it was not an initial priority, due to the urgency of the Vietnam War, but the group increased its attention to events in the Middle East after the Vietnam War ended (Dohrn).

As detailed in the preceding chronology, the WUO attributed its operations to a variety of causes. Most often, the group cited domestic or Vietnam War-related grievances. Yet it also conducted several attacks in response to developments in Latin America and Africa. In contrast, the
Weathermen never linked an operation to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, although there was no shortage of high-profile incidents or events that might have captured the Weathermen’s attention and motivated it to weigh in with its bombs. This issue was simply absent from its operational agenda.

**Rhetorical Support for the Palestinian Cause**

The Weathermen occasionally expressed solidarity with the Palestinian “resistance” in its propaganda. The group intermittently praised Palestinian militant figures, including the notorious female PFLP operative and hijacker, Leila Khaled, or specific Palestinian organizations. As discussed earlier, in 1970, the Weathermen helped Timothy Leary—a prominent counterculture figure known for his ardent belief in the transformative powers of the drug LSD—escape from prison and go into exile in Algeria. In the communiqué issued after Leary’s escape, the Weathermen declared that it:

> had the honor and pleasure of helping Dr. Timothy Leary escape from POW camp in San Luis Obispo, California. Dr. Leary was being held against his will and the will of millions of kids in this country. He was a political prisoner, captured for the work he did in helping all of us begin the task of creating a new culture on the barren wasteland that has been imposed on this country by democrats, republicans, capitalists, and creeps. LSD and grass… will help us make a future world where it will be possible to live in peace. Now we are at war. With the NLF and North Vietnamese, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and al Fatah, Rap Brown and Angela Davis, with all black and brown revolutionaries, the Soledad Brothers, and prisoners of war in Amerikan concentration camps, we know that peace is only possible with the destruction of US imperialism (The Weather Underground “Communiqué #4” 1; emphasis added).

At first glance, the reference to the two Palestinian militant organizations in this communiqué, the DFLP and Fatah, is puzzling. It was the first time the Weathermen had specifically invoked Palestinian groups in one of its statements and the political connection between that issue and someone like Leary was tenuous, at best. The inclusion of specific Palestinian militant groups makes more sense in light of events transpiring at that time. The Weathermen’s statement was issued on September 15, 1970, as the crisis was unfolding in Jordan over the PFLP’s hijacking of multiple aircraft to Dawson’s Field. The very next day, Jordanian King Hussein declared martial law...
and then began the forcible ouster of Palestinians from Jordan. Just as the PFLP had intended, the Palestinian issue had caught the world’s attention. This, in addition to Leary’s escape to Algeria where the fedayeen had a presence, accounts the inclusion of Palestinian groups in this particular Weathermen’s statement.

But why would the Weathermen pay tribute to the PFLP’s two biggest rivals, while omitting the PFLP? Was this a backhanded way of expressing disapproval for the PFLP’s hijacking? No, it was not, according to a Weather Bureau leader involved in the drafting the communique. She unequivocally denied that the omission of the PFLP was an attempt to slight the group or denounce the PFLP’s recent hijacking (Dohrn). The Weathermen did not pass judgments on the tactics of other groups, as it believed that it could not judge from its position what tactics were appropriate in other revolutionary situations. The group’s policy was to recognize an array of “revolutionary” organizations in various conflicts while carefully avoiding the appearance of selecting favorites or anointing a certain group as the vanguard within a given conflict (Berger personal interview). Recognizing Fatah and DFLP in this statement was an extension of that approach. Those two groups were selected primarily because they represented two important players and ideological strains within the Palestinian resistance movement (Dohrn).

When Leary was safely ensconced in Algeria, Jennifer Dohrn, the sister of prominent Weather Bureau leader Bernadine Dohrn, held a press conference. She played a recording from Leary for the media and made a statement. The younger Dohrn claimed that the trip to Algeria was also an opportunity “to bring revolutionary greetings to the Palestinian rebels” (Federal Bureau of Investigation Foreign Influence 312). However, this mini-flurry of attention to the Palestinians at the time of Leary’s escape was fleeting and did not produce any deeper ties with Palestinian counterparts.
Several years later, the WUO offered a more deliberate treatment of its view of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In the 1974 publication, *Prairie Fire*, the WUO lamented that the issue had been neglected by the American Left. The group dedicated five pages to analyzing the conflict in a section titled “Imperialism in Crisis: The Third World,” which also discussed the circumstances in Puerto Rico and Guinea-Bissau. In those five pages, the WUO unequivocally aligned itself with the Palestinians against Israel. The inclusion of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in *Prairie Fire* did not reflect a change in the group’s thinking on the issue per se, but it marked the first—and only—time that it laid out its views on the subject so explicitly. The WUO heralded the Palestinian fedayeen as leading one of the premiere liberation movements active at the time (Weather Underground Organization 107). Conversely, the group characterized Zionism as “a racist, imperialist, expansionist, and classist ideology.” While the WUO had condemned Israel from its inception, this section was the product of a great deal of discussion within the group, according to a leader charged with drafting it, including a flurry of last minute edits and revisions (Dohrn). Given the intensity of the discussion around even writing this section, perhaps it is not surprising that this is an issue that the group would be hard pressed to engage operationally.

The phrasing of sentences was examined and re-examined. For example, in the initial draft a sentence read “[i]n spite of the Holocaust, Jews must understand the suffering of the Palestinian people.” It was changed to “[b]ecause of the Holocaust, because of their historic suffering, Jews have a special responsibility to understand the predicament of the Palestinian people” (Ayres 241). The group sought to convey a message that endorsed the Palestinian resistance without trivializing the seriousness of anti-Semitism (Dohrn).

The white movement in the US has failed to give clear and open support to the Palestinian struggle. We have not taken on the necessary task of exposing the myths about Israel which cloak the true situation and disarm many people. The nature of the state of Israel is protected by intense passions and by the real memories of Nazism and anti-Semitism. But despite ancestors at Auschwitz and relatives in Israel, we cannot escape the responsibility of opposing the crimes of the Israeli government and the consequences of Zionist
ideology..... The Palestinian strategy has been to carry out operations against the Zionist state and Israeli-held territory and to remind the world of the Palestinian people’s cause. Their solution is a democratic secular Palestine that will accommodate all Palestinians: Jews, Moslems and Christians. The Palestinian Liberation Organization is the umbrella organization which coordinates policy of the liberation forces.... The Palestinians have educated masses of people, opened up the revolution to women and demonstrated fearless determination to win. Their proposal of a democratic secular state stands in marked contrast to rhetorical threats to annihilate the Jews or reactionary expressions of anti-Semitism. The Palestinians make a firm distinction between Zionism and Jews (Weather Underground Organization “Prairie Fire” 107-8).

The WUO thereby acknowledged the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian resistance—a gesture that SDS had been unable to agree upon several years prior. However, the WUO did not intend for this statement to be such an endorsement. Rather, it was an effort to describe the existing dynamic for its readership, not a gesture of alignment with Arafat. Unaware of the Rejectionist Front, which included the PFLP, that formed the same year that Prairie Fire was published, WUO viewed the PLO as the representative organization that encompassed various Palestinian factions beyond just Fatah. WUO members had some familiarity with the different Palestinian organizations, but did not have an in-depth understanding of the fractious landscape or a grasp of the constantly-shifting rivalries, like the one that produced the PFLP-SOG (Dohrn).

The WUO’s main objective in including the section on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was to foster greater awareness about the issue among the American Left. It did not seek ties with the Palestinians or promote armed actions on behalf of the Palestinians. Instead, it urged “a campaign to educate and focus attention on the true situation: teach-ins, debates, and open clear support for Palestinian liberation; reading about the Palestinian movement” (108). In its final paragraph, the group warned that “[t]he US people have been seriously deceived about the Palestinians and Israel.... Our silence or acceptance of pro-Zionist policy is a form of complicity with US-backed aggression and terror, and a betrayal of internationalism” (108).

In the dozens, even hundreds, of communiques that the Weathermen issued from 1969 to 1977, these were the handful references to the Palestinian issue or specific Palestinian groups. It
maintained a clear position on the issue when it did address the conflict, but it was rare. One Weather Bureau leader involved in drafting many of the communiques expressed dismay when she realized that the PFLP was never mentioned in any of the group’s writings. It was an inadvertent oversight, not a judgment against the PFLP, she insisted (Dohrn). But it does demonstrate that the Palestinian cause was not a pressing priority for the Weathermen nor was the PFLP a group that the WUO seriously considered cultivating.

But No Relationship with Palestinian Groups

The Weathermen’s view of the Palestinian issue was not based on firsthand knowledge or direct contacts with Palestinians, although there were some sporadic encounters. In contrast to the situation in West Germany, no accessible representative in the United States could provide easy entrée to the Palestinian groups. The FBI conducted investigations into Palestinian student unions throughout the 1980s and found no institutionalized relationships with the PFLP (“Investigation”). The WUO was rarely in close proximity with Palestinians, and thus there were few opportunities for interaction. Prior to going underground in 1970, Weathermen members traveled to Cuba, where the FBI speculated that they may have crossed paths with “the occasional Palestinian commando,” but this did not spur additional contact (Foreign Influence 65). While the Weathermen expended significant effort to learn about, understand, and get to know its North Vietnamese and Cuban comrades, it did not demonstrate a comparable interest in its Palestinian brethren.

The Weathermen had an international orientation; the enemy was broadly construed as the global capitalist world order (Varon 24). But the group enacted its opposition solely within its domestic context (Berger personal interview). It never conducted attacks outside of the United States nor did it target foreign targets within the United States. Although the group often linked its attacks to international events in its propaganda, its actual operations were only against the actors within the United States’ system deemed responsible for oppression. The PFLP attacked U.S.
interests overseas, but never conducted an attack on American soil and did not have a network in the United States at that time. This meant that the PFLP-SOG and the Weathermen's theatres of operations did not overlap, and thus the two did not cross paths nor would they have a need for one another's networks to conduct their respective activities.

Sporadic claims of connections between the Weathermen and different Palestinian groups existed, but are vague or of poor credibility, at best. A lengthy report on the WUO by the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary in the United States Senate opened, bizarrely, by citing a *Penthouse* magazine article:

Weathermen smuggled arms and explosives in various parts of the country. They established contacts with terrorist organizations abroad including al Fatah and the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Weathermen trained, in al Fatah camps in the Middle East, in use of weapons and explosives (1).

However, despite its prominent placement, there is nothing in the 175-page report to corroborate or elucidate this assertion. The original *Penthouse* article, “The Politics of Death,” consisted of profiles of nine militant groups active at the time, including the Weathermen. The article’s profile on the Weathermen claimed that “[f]raternal contact was established with Al Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Irish Republican Army. Weathermen traveled abroad for weapons and explosive training in Fatah camps in Jordan and Lebanon” (Norden 150). The author does not cite any sources for its content, so the origins of these claims remain unclear, and they are not borne out by any other sources. When specifically asked about these assertions, two Weather Bureau leaders denied that any such training or contacts occurred.

The only other evidence of ties between the Weathermen and Palestinian militant organizations comes from an FBI informer who infiltrated the group. He claimed in his memoir the Weathermen attempted to contact unspecified “Arab guerillas” and that a Weather Bureau leader met with a Fatah representative in Canada on one occasion. However, this latter meeting was an
effort by the FBI or possibly the CIA to infiltrate and entrap the group, rather than a genuine outreach effort (Grathwohl and Reagan 171). Either way, neither initiative appears to have led to substantive ties.

Interaction between the aboveground entities was exceedingly rare as well. The only known instance of possible contact was at the first meeting of the “Palestine Solidarity Committee” in New York City in 1976. High-profile PLO representatives and members of the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee were both in attendance (Federal Bureau of Investigation *Foreign Influence* 257). While some individual ties may have been initiated at this event, by 1976, the WUO was grappling with both internal discord and tensions with the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, so it was not well positioned to capitalize on any new contacts and still did not have a demonstrable interest in doing so. In summary, no credible indications demonstrate anything beyond sporadic and incidental contact between the WUO and any Palestinian militant groups.

*Inhibitors to a Relationship*

What were the main factors that inhibited the WUO from initiating ties with the PFLP or PFLP-SOG, in particular? One, the WUO did not require the assets that they could provide. The Weathermen was able to secure its own haven within the United States when the group's members were fugitives; therefore it did not pursue sanctuary options outside of the United States—a move that theoretically could have spurred outreach to the PFLP-SOG. In addition, the relatively early decision to conduct simple bombings aimed only at property limited the group's need for more advanced or sophisticated training. As noted earlier, one can imagine an alternative scenario where the New York collective conducted the attack against the non-commissioned officers’ dance in 1970 or another similarly destructive operation, which could have dramatically changed the trajectory of the organization. In such a scenario, the attractiveness of the PFLP-SOG as an ally may have been different as the WUO may have felt compelled to acquire additional skills or haven quickly.
Second, the group possessed an idiosyncratic identity that inhibited this type of alliance. The decision to remain in the United States despite being pursued by authorities and to forgo more advanced training was not simply a tactical decision. While the WUO supported Third World liberation efforts, it made a deliberate decision to preserve and protect its status as a homegrown, American organization grounded in the United States context. The group knew that it had options to go abroad for sanctuary or training because it had some foreign contacts, but it viewed doing so as a compromising this identity (Dohrn). Given the emphasis on this component of its identity, the PFLP-SOG would likely have been hard-pressed to co-opt or subordinate the Weathermen as it did the JRA or Revolutionary Cells. One might have expected that the predominance of Jewish members in the WUO would have been another identity impediment to an alliance with the PFLP/PFLP-SOG, given the Palestinian group’s proclivity to move beyond anti-Zionism into anti-Semitism. Yet if that was the case, it was not a factor that the WUO acknowledged, even to itself.

Third, the differences in the two groups’ tactics would have inhibited the level of cooperation, but not necessarily the creation of an alliance. Conscious of its privileged status as a White organization, the Weathermen was careful not to judge the actions of its “oppressed” minority comrades. But it encouraged other similarly-situated White leftist groups in the United States to restrain their use of violence following the townhouse explosion (Ayres 250; Dohrn). Given the restraints on its own operations, the WUO would have been reticent to be involved in any PFLP-SOG operations, which was sometimes the price for receiving assistance or training. Yet it was willing to work with groups that conducted lethal actions. Ayres described the group as building “alliances with several other fully realized underground groups for specific purposes or goals or actions—for example... the Black Liberation Army for all kinds of insurgent mischief” (250). The group lent support the Puerto Rican independence group Fuerzas Armadas de Liberacion, which engaged in lethal attacks (Varon 193). One member admitted that the group thought that the PFLP
hijackings were "cool" and that Lela Khaled was a "rock star" (Kazin). Tactical differences were, therefore, not the primary reason the groups did not ally.

For their part, generally, the PFLP-SOG was on the receiving end of advances by outside organizations, rather than actively seeking out partners. Due to its receptive posture and alliance hub position, the PFLP-SOG became a magnet for groups. It then selected allies from that pool. But it did not express any particular interest or curiosity about the American organization. It did not publicly acknowledge the Weathermen in any communiques or attempt any outreach. Given its willingness to accept organizations of all stripes for training, it is very likely that the PFLP-SOG would have hosted the Weathermen had the group sought assistance. Wadi Haddad would have undoubtedly recognized the WUO’s enormous publicity value and potential operational benefits. Exposure to the PFLP or PFLP-SOG could also have had the effect of radicalizing the Weathermen further, as it did in the case of other allied organizations. However, given that the development of trust is something of a “wild card,” this remains in the realm of speculation.

Much would have depended on the WUO members’ conduct at the training facilities. The fedayeen sometimes disdained their First World counterparts’ actions and trainees who came through the Palestinian camps. For her part, Leila Khaled did not express much respect for the Westerners that her group “entertained” at their camps in Amman. Some unidentified Americans trained at the PFLP camps. Based on Khaled’s description of these Americans’ focus on class and eschewing of nationalism, they were probably Progressive Labor adherents. She remarked that:

[w]e found it very amusing that they honestly believed they were making ‘revolution’ if they undressed in public, seized a university building, or shouted an obscenity at bureaucrats... Though we were impressed by their moral integrity and personal dedication, we felt their ideology and strategy had little to do with the making of revolution. Some Americans were quite serious and believed in the historic mission of the working class and were making plans to integrate themselves with the masses. What astonished us most about this group was that they were opposed to nationalism, a doctrine we hold dearly as a colonized and dissipated people. Some believed in violence for “the hell of it” and in students as revolutionary agents of history. But the majority were inclined towards guerilla theatre as a means of ‘making revolution.’ They performed a little for us.
6.9 The Weathermen’s Threat

The Weathermen viewed the United States as its greatest threat throughout its lifespan. The U.S. Government possessed the greatest aggregate power, most offensive power, closest geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions. The PFLP-SOG viewed the U.S. as a threat because of its support Israel, but the United States did not have greater geographic proximity, offensive power or aggressive intentions than Israel. Thus the U.S. remained a secondary threat to the PFLP-SOG compared to Israel. The two groups’ greatest threats did not clearly encourage an alliance, though their degree of shared threat was, at a minimum, comparable to the PFLP-SOG’s level of shared threat with the RAF and greater than the threat the PFLP-SOG shared with the JRA. Thus, the lack of shared greatest threat is consistent with the absence of an alliance between these two groups, but cannot explain why the other alliances in this section occurred.

6.10 Conclusion and Finding: The Weathermen and PFLP-SOG—A Non-Barking Dog

The PFLP-SOG was an alliance hub with important assets to offer. The Weathermen shared many of the qualities of the groups with which the PFLP-SOG allied. Like the PFLP-SOG’s allies, the two groups operated during the same period, had commonalities that would likely have met the identity affinity threshold, and seemingly shared the mutual interests that come with balancing against a powerful common enemy. In light of these characteristics, it seems the two groups should have allied or at least attempted alliance initiation. Which theoretical frameworks offer insight into the absence of this alliance?

The United States was considered a threat by virtue of its support for Israel and leading role in the world order, but the PFLP-SOG was not directly threatened by the United States to the same degree it was threatened by Israel, some Arab Governments, and even competitor organizations.
The United States had the greatest aggregate power and offensive power, but not the other two major components of threat. It was not the most proximate threat to the PFLP-SOG, which did not have a presence in the United States or find the U.S. presence in the Middle East to be more threatening than Israel. Nor did the PFLP-SOG perceive the United States as demonstrating more aggressive intent towards the group than Israel or other adversaries. The PFLP-SOG's perception of threat was heavily influenced by the direct actions governments took against the group, such as targeted killings and arrests. Unlike Israel and several European and Arab Governments, the United States did not actively pursue or imprison PFLP-SOG members.

Most importantly, the Weathermen did not experience organizational learning or adaptation needs that: 1) could not be addressed primarily through self-reform; and 2) merited the risk of forging a relationship with an unknown group outside of the United States. In spite of the privileged background of its members, the group engaged in extensive self-reform efforts to learn how to operate as an underground group within the United States. This reflected a core value of its organizational culture—that it remain a homegrown, American group within “the belly of the beast.” This was not an organizational need that the PFLP-SOG could assist with, given its foreign composition and lack of presence in the United States. The alternative that the PFLP-SOG could have offered—safe haven in the Middle East—was not a permissible option within the Weathermen’s organizational frames, routines, and culture. There were more proximate foreign sanctuary options for the Weathermen, such as Canada and potentially even Cuba, that the group also did not pursue. Individual members occasionally hid in Canada, but usually this coincided with their decision to leave the group. The need to stay a solely American group was an organizational value agreed upon early in the group’s lifespan that became so thoroughly embedded in the group’s culture and problem-solving frame that it was never seriously revisited.
The lack of reexamination of this organizational norm reflects several inter-related organizational characteristics that militated against alliances. First, the group retained many of the same core leaders throughout its lifespan. Due to this leadership consistency, the group did not seriously reevaluate core organizational frames and routines—a process that often occurs after a change in leadership or another exogenous shock. The Weather Bureau’s composition did not vary significantly until the last year the group existed, but by then the group was barely operational.

Second, other than the 1970 townhouse explosion less than a year after the group formed, there were no other points in its lifespan when its organizational age was reset such that fundamental organizational processes were reexamined. Third, early in its lifespan, the organization decided not to pursue outside alliances in order to protect its status as a homegrown entity. Therefore, relationships did not become part of its organizational problem-solving mechanisms. Lastly, as an underground organization, there was a strong sense of intra-group dependence which did not lend itself to questioning such fundamental values.

In addition, no countervailing organizational learning or adaptation needs prompted the Weathermen to re-consider this value. For example, the group did not experience organizational learning requirements that required outside training—another organizational need the PFLP-SOG would have been well positioned to fill. The operational skills required to conduct its “armed propaganda” were fairly basic after its 1970 decision to limit its attacks to property damage using timed explosive devices. Therefore, when the group had needs associated with its simple operations that it could not address on its own, it could readily turned to fellow American radical groups with which it had contacts or disgruntled war veterans in the United States, problem-solving tactics that were consistent with its organizational value of maintaining its “American-ness.”

The WUO was ultimately unable to adapt to the post-Vietnam war environment in the United States when its *raison d’etre* was gone and its support base was dwindling. Even then, it did
not question its decision to remain a wholly American group, so its growing organizational adaptation needs could not be served by external alliances. This was a time of organizational turmoil when the leadership was changing and the existing organizational processes were in question. But the newly anointed leaders were not in charge long enough to foster a revised set of organizational processes because they were arrested soon thereafter. The group was in the midst of deterioration at that point and soon lost all cohesion. The ability of many members to resurface without significant penalty alleviated any organizational compulsion to seek an alliance when the group grew increasingly irrelevant in the changed environment. Thus the organizational need hypothesis provides a compelling explanation of how, in the absence of reciprocal organizational needs, there was insufficient reason for the groups to overcome the hurdles that typically prevent alliances. In this case, the Weathermen’s organizational culture added another obstacle.

The Weathermen and PFLP-SOG shared two identity characteristics—ideology and a common enemy and victim narrative. While these affinity qualities were the same as those that existed between the RAF and the PFLP-SOG, the similarities in the common enemy and victim narrative were not nearly as salient as for the Weathermen. Its narrative overwhelmingly focused on victims in conflicts in which there was extensive U.S. involvement, which did not include the Israel-Palestinian conflict at that time. They did not share an ethnic identity. With their common ideology and narrative similarities, they would likely have had a sufficient identity affinity basis to initiate an alliance, had other factors provided the impetus.

The two groups’ tactics differed significantly in ways that may have ultimately inhibited their ability to form a shared identity or constitutive norms. The Weathermen, which employed a deliberately restrained “armed propaganda” approach to its attacks, had an explicit policy of not judging the tactical decisions of other “liberation” organizations, even those of the PFLP-SOG, which were much less constrained in their violence. Given the Weathermen’s norm on its own use of
violence and the PFLP-SOG’s resistance to accommodating its allies in matters of identity or norms, this was a potential source of friction. At a minimum, these differences may have limited the level of inter-dependence in any partnership, failing significant adaptations by either group.

The two groups may have had enough affinity to build trust, but they did not have pre-existing reasons to trust one another. The PFLP-SOG could have provided opportunities for interaction at its haven, as it did with other organizations. There were no known reputation obstacles. On the other hand, no personal relationships existed that could have supported an organizational partnership. The WUO did not have ready access to the PFLP/PFLP-SOG or its Palestinian counterparts. Moreover, it did not seek out opportunities to interact with them, as it did for the NLF. Nor did the PFLP/PFLP-SOG reach out to the Weathermen. Therefore, the groups did not have chances to create or build trust. Thus trust would have to be built from scratch, and it is difficult to predict the outcome in the absence of any connections.

The group's ability to come aboveground without major consequences when the “armed struggle” was no longer necessary further reduced the necessity of an alliance with the PFLP-SOG. Groups without that option are more likely to pursue an alliance as a strategy to survive, even when they have a shrinking support base or are becoming obsolete. This is a point at which an alliance may be a tactic to improve a group’s credibility or prestige in order to remain relevant. Instead, the WUO case, members had the option of re-joining society with minimal consequences.

In summary, there were insufficient incentives to overcome the hurdles that plague these relationships. Balancing considerations, which seemingly should have existed, did not instigate an alliance effort. There was a lack of specific shared threat to stimulate an alliance, though a general threat existed. The Weathermen’s organizational dynamics not only did not prompt it to seek an ally to address learning and adaptation needs, but actively discouraged such relationships. This was in part because it was able to manage such needs through self-reform. Equally important, its
organizational culture prohibited it from becoming too close to foreign elements. While sources of identity affinity exist, these were necessary, but not sufficient, for an alliance to form. With the lack of existing basis to trust, it is unclear whether trust would have developed.

This case demonstrates the limitations of conventional wisdom about alliances. The presence of both a shared ideology and a common enemy was not sufficient for the WUO and PFLP/PFLP-SOG to create a relationship. They did not naturally gravitate towards one another to combat their shared foe or in an act of ideological solidarity. The two groups could have potentially benefited from cooperation, but the hurdles—most notably, the lack of organizational requirements as well as an identity impediment on the WUO’s side—that explain rarity of these types of relationships were present in this case as well.
CHAPTER 7:

PFLP-SOG AS AN ALLIANCE HUB: FINDINGS AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

7.1 Introduction

At first glance, the alliance activity of the PFLP seems consistent with conventional wisdom. The leftist Palestinian organization worked with an array of like-minded organizations as well as other groups that opposed the same “imperialist” enemies, particularly Israel and the United States. In other words, ideological solidarity and balancing against threat imperatives appeared to guide the PFLP’s alliance behavior and be responsible for its position as an alliance hub. The RAF and JRA were both fellow leftist groups that opposed the United States and its imperialist allies, including Israel. Thus it would seem that the PFLP selected partners and grew into an alliance hub based on its ideological appeal and willingness to work with fellow terrorist groups to combat mutual adversaries.

However, upon closer examination, the relationship between these variables and the outcomes is not nearly as straightforward as it first appears. Although its ideology and threat did not change, the PFLP was not the primary entity creating and managing alliances after 1970, but it is often credited with doing so. Instead the PFLP’s clandestine and terrorist-focused “special operations” unit, with its murky ties to the larger PFLP, forged and sustained these alliances. Once this distinction, the timing and duration of the alliances, and the absence of an alliance with the Weathermen is accounted for, the limitations of conventional wisdom pointing to ideology and balancing needs becomes apparent, and the explanatory power of other causal forces, particularly organizational needs and identity affinity, comes into focus.

This chapter presents and summarizes the findings and results of Section II, which examined the PFLP-SOG’s behavior as an alliance hub as well as its relationships—or lack thereof—
with politically relevant, non-competitor terrorist organizations. The first section of this chapter describes the results of the individual alliance relationships discussed in Chapters 4 through 6, analyzing the collective results against the theoretical frameworks. The second section tests the PFLP-SOG's alliance behavior against the relevant alliance hub hypotheses to determine how this small, covert group dedicated solely to terrorism was able to forge an array of alliances.

7.2 Drivers of the JRA, RAF, and Weathermen's Relationships with the PFLP-SOG

Of the available allies, why did the PFLP-SOG choose to ally or not ally with the JRA, RAF, and Weathermen, and what influenced these groups' alliance decisions vis-à-vis the PFLP-SOG? In the preceding chapters, by process tracing the groups' evolutions, ideologies, conceptualization of their enemies, and organizational dynamics, complex causal pathways and a number of similarities were revealed. This section will discuss what the commonalities and differences in the cases of the PFLP's relationships with JRA, RAF, and Weathermen, and what these findings suggest about the utility of the theoretical frameworks offered in Chapters 1-2.

As the product of the same overarching environment, it is not surprising that these three groups shared some traits. Holding these variables constant offers the opportunity to examine how they operated in different contexts and pinpoint the causal factors that drove their alliance decisions. The JRA, RAF, and Weathermen were all small organizations with single nationality members—many of them students—hailing from “First World” countries. Ideologically, the RAF, JRA, and Weathermen were part of the “New Left” movement, which was generally an ideology conducive to alliances because it promoted international unity among “revolutionaries” and privileged revolutionary struggles underway in the “Third World.” Nationalist agendas were central to their activities and goals, though all situated these parochial concerns within a broader internationalist framework. While the three groups saw Israel as among the “imperialist” powers,
none targeted Israel or Israeli interests, except the JRA, and it only did so on one occasion after allying with the PFLP-SOG. All three groups viewed the United States as an important enemy because of its leadership role in the international system. Their relationships—or the lack thereof—with the PFLP-SOG were often attributed to common enemies and ideological solidarity. The examination in the preceding chapters detailed the shortcomings of these approaches in illuminating the causes of these individual relationships.

To review, there are four theoretical frameworks—balance of threat, ideological solidarity, organizational needs, and identity affinity—and an intervening variable, trust. Each has a hypothesis that deals with alliance creation and one that deals with alliance perpetuation.

*The Role of Balance of Threat*

H (Alliance Formation: Threat) 1.A: Terrorist organizations are motivated to ally when they face a common, greatest threat.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Threat) 1.B: Alliances will endure until the threat subsides.

While these groups did not share a specific shared threat, balance of threat theory predicts that the JRA, RAF, and the Weathermen all should have allied with the PFLP-SOG in order to form counter-balancing coalitions in opposition to their more powerful, threatening and allied “imperialist” enemies. They should have been motivated to combine their resources and form a counter-coalition. The alliances should have lasted as long as these threats lasted. However, this does not square with the empirical record of the cases examined in Section II.

The need to balance against a common threatening enemy is insufficient to explain the PFLP-SOG’s alliances with the JRA or RAF for two main reasons. First, no change in shared threat precipitated the JRA and the RAF’s alliance searches, so threat cannot explain the timing of alliance formation. Both the JRA and RAF felt consistently threatened by their primary adversaries and “imperialism” writ large, but the threat did not discernibly increase and prompt their alliance searches. Two, while the JRA and RAF shared an overarching threat with the PFLP-SOG, this did not
determine their partner selection. Many groups shared this overarching threat. At the time of alliance formation, Israel was a tertiary threat for both the JRA and RAF. For its part, the PFLP-SOG viewed West Germany as a secondary enemy, and it had not demonstrated any particular antipathy towards Japan. All viewed the U.S. as a common threat, as did many other organizations. Thus, threat cannot explain the JRA or RAF’s decision to ally specifically with the PFLP-SOG. Of these groups, the PFLP-SOG and JRA’s shared threats offered the least compelling rationale for alliance formation, so that relationship should have been the most difficult to initiate or least likely, yet they formed a highly interdependent relationship for several years.

In addition, balancing considerations fail to predict the lack of alliance between the Weathermen and the PFLP-SOG. The need to join a coalition to balance against a common threat was the most acute for the Weathermen because it faced the greatest power disparity in its efforts to overthrow the United States Government. The Weathermen shared enemies and threats with the PFLP-SOG to a greater extent than the JRA or the RAF. The Weathermen’s power was comparable to that of the JRA and RAF, so it should have been an equally desirable partner and equally prone to require an alliance. Yet, contrary to the predictions of this theory, neither side instigated an alliance.

A constant, overarching sense of threat existed in both the alliance cases and the non-alliance case, so variation in threat cannot readily explain the different outcomes. The greatest level of shared threat existed between the Weathermen and the PFLP-SOG, the case in which an alliance did not occur. In addition, threat cannot explain the timing of the alliances, as no changes in shared threat occurred to stimulate alliance searches. Threat did not determine the duration of the alliances; threat remained constant yet the JRA opted to downgrade relations and alliances dissipated in the wake of Haddad’s death. In sum, these alliances did not function as a balancing-derived theoretical framework would predict. Balancing needs were not the primary motive for groups to ally with an alliance hub nor was a common threat sufficient for an alliance to form.
Overall, the causal processes posited by a theory focused on common enemies insufficient to explain the presence or absence of alliances among groups with shared adversaries or the level of inter-dependence over the course of the alliance.

The Role of Ideological Solidarity

H (Alliance Formation: Ideology) 2.A: Terrorist groups are drawn together based on the degree of their shared ideological tenets.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Ideology) 2.B: Alliances last as long as a high degree of ideological compatibility endures.

The JRA, RAF, and Weathermen were all likely cases for the theory that ideological solidarity draws like-minded groups into alliances. In all three dyads, a sense of ideological solidarity existed without areas of significant ideological dissension. The overlap in common enemies discussed earlier was in part a product of this ideological similarity. If ideological solidarity played a causal role in alliance formation and/or perpetuation, these cases were well-positioned to detect its influence.

Instead, the three case studies consistently demonstrated that ideological solidarity did not play a primary role in alliance formation or perpetuation. The posited magnet effect that ideological solidarity theory predicts will occur among groups of a common ideological disposition was noticeably absent. In the alliances that formed, none of the groups were driven to form alliances solely or primarily by a need to connect with their ideological brethren to establish in-group/out-group identities and codify stable social neighborhoods, as posited. Equally significantly, the Weathermen and PFLP-SOG shared an ideology to the same degree as the other dyads, yet there neither party felt compelled to form an alliance.

Like common enemies, ideology did not vary over time, so it is inadequate to explain the timing, duration, level of inter-dependence or fluctuations in the alliances that occurred. The in-depth case studies did not expose any events or changes that impacted the allying groups’ ideology.
and thereby precipitated the formation or cessation of any of the alliances. Therefore, ideological solidarity does not shed light on the timing of the alliances, particularly the variation in timing. In addition, the levels of inter-dependence were not correlated with levels of ideological solidarity, i.e. the groups with more ideological commonalities were not necessarily closer allies. Ideology cannot explain the fluctuations over the course of the alliances because the groups’ ideologies did not co-vary with changes within the relationship.

Moreover, if ideological solidarity was the glue holding alliances together, Haddad’s death would not have been as detrimental to the relationships as it was because his death did not change the PFLP-SOG’s ideology. Admittedly, some cooperation continued, but the alliances were unable to fully function after his death. Organizational changes should not have been so disruptive to the relationships, if ideological solidarity was the driving force of the alliances.

Relatedly, the RAF, JRA, and Weathermen failed to ally with one another during this period, despite their high levels of ideological solidarity. When the resonance of their ideologies waned in the late 1980s, the RAF and JRA cooperated for a short period (Hoffman “Creatures” 80). But that alliance effort did not coincide with a change in ideology that increased their level of solidarity. The lack of relationships among these three groups provides further evidence that ideological solidarity is not the primary impetus for alliances.

The Role of Organizational Needs

H (Alliance Formation: Organization) 3.A: Terrorist groups seek alliances to address organizational learning and adaption requirements; they look for partners that they believe can fulfill these needs.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Organization) 3.B: The duration of the relationship is based on the type of organizational needs being addressed and the ability of the allying groups to fulfill each other’s respective needs.

As an alternative to the conventional wisdom, this dissertation proposed an organizational need-based theory to explain alliance formation and perpetuation of relationships involving an alliance hub. The case studies in Section II offer support for this theory, as organizational needs
were central to alliance formation as well as the absence of an alliance. Organizational learning and adaptation needs were the primary impetus that caused both the RAF and the JRA to seek an alliance with the PFLP-SOG and shaped the PFLP-SOG’s willingness to accept them as partners. Furthermore, the Weathermen’s ability to self-reform in response to limited organizational needs was at the core of its choice not to pursue an alliance with the PFLP-SOG.

In the Red Army/JRA and RAF’s relationships with the PFLP-SOG, a combination of organizational learning and adaptation needs spurred their initial outreach. Organizational learning needs—both discrete and continuous—were dominant in the alliance formation process, while continuous organizational adaptation needs perpetuated the alliance. Both groups approached the PFLP/PFLP-SOG at young organizational ages in order to acquire more advanced operational skills that were not available through self-reform. They sought training from the PFLP-SOG in particular for two reasons. First, the PFLP-SOG had a reputation as a capable organization able to conduct sophisticated and high-profile attacks. Second, and equally importantly, the PFLP-SOG was able and willing to fulfill others’ needs for training, safe haven or other resources.

The training experience provided the initial basis for cooperation that developed into alliances. As the JRA and RAF distinguished themselves by their performance at the camp, the PFLP-SOG was persuaded that they would be useful allies to fulfill its continuous organizational needs to conduct its international operations campaign. The training experience was valuable for the JRA and RAF not only because it addressed their organizational learning needs, but it also fulfilled acute adaptation needs for haven. Both groups sought training at times when counterterrorism pressure was mounting and intense, so the training opportunity doubled as an opportunity to gain respite.

Furthermore, the training experience offered an opportunity for both parties to assess the degree of fit between their respective organizational needs, i.e. determine the level of complementary knowledge, skills, resources, as well as develop shared expectations. The PFLP-
SOG’s willingness and ability to tailor training programs for its partners’ needs increased its desirability as an ally. Simultaneously, the PFLP-SOG could assess the degree of fit the JRA and RAF could offer to address its organizational needs.

In both the JRA and RAF cases, their learning and adaptation needs occurred during formative periods and times of organizational crises. The re-building Red Army initiated the outreach following a series of setbacks, which the organizational theory identifies as an opportune time for alliance creation. Likewise, the JRA was in a period of crisis following the Red Army’s implosion, and it faced significant changes to its environment as it was displaced in Lebanon and the Red Army was defeated in Japan. In a sense, the alliance with the PFLP-SOG actually predated JRA’s formation, which reflects how “young” the JRA was at the time of alliance creation.

For its part, the RAF appeared to be nearly seven years old when it created an alliance with the PFLP-SOG, if its age is dated to the group’s first act of arson in 1968. But the RAF was actually about a year old at the time of alliance initiation. Its organizational age was reset by the arrests of the entire group in 1972. The next generation did not form until 1974, at which point the group was “reborn.” Like the JRA, the second generation of the RAF was soon in crisis following the failure of its first attack on the West Germany Embassy in Stockholm, a failure which created immediate and acute organizational needs. In addition, in the RAF case, the introduction of alliances early in the original RAF’s lifespan helped embed such partnerships in the groups’ problem-solving frames, culture, and routine, paving the way for the alliance effort in 1975.

Rather than differences in ideological compatibility or common enemies, the lack of organizational learning and adaptation needs distinguished the Weathermen’s situation from its peers. Due to its early decision to conduct only simple operations against property, the Weathermen did not have a need to learn how to conduct more sophisticated or lethal operations, which was the main learning need that stimulated alliances in the other cases. It also did not have
an adaptation need for safe haven because of its commitment to stay in the United States and its ability to find sanctuary there. Therefore, its learning and adaptation needs were addressed through self-reform.

Organizational age also played a role in the lack of alliance between the Weathermen and PFLP-SOG. At an early age, the Weathermen decided it would not pursue alliances with non-American entities in order to protect its homegrown identity. Therefore, alliances were not a part of the group’s problem-solving routines, culture or frames from an early point, making it more difficult for the group to engage in them at a later point. Therefore, when the Weathermen was faced with organizational needs or periods of crisis, it engaged in self-reform or pursued limited cooperation with other American entities.

In addition to explaining alliance formation, including the timing of relationships, organizational learning and adaptation needs provide insight into the level of dependence and duration of these alliances that the other theoretical frameworks cannot. During periods when they experienced high-levels of organizational needs, the JRA and RAF were more dependent on the PFLP-SOG. As the PFLP-SOG imparted ways for JRA to fulfill its discrete and continuous needs, the JRA became less dependent. The alliance did not abruptly end, but the frequency and extent of cooperation gradually decreased over time as the JRA’s needs decreased. In the case of the RAF, the trajectory was the opposite. The RAF’s needs increased following each failure to get its leaders released. As the RAF grew more desperate, it relied more on the PFLP-SOG to fulfill its needs.

In summary, the organizational needs framework largely captured the considerations that drove the alliance behavior analyzed in Section II. Rather than abstract ideological beliefs or common enemies, tangible organizational needs stimulated reform, either through internal change or seeking external relationships. While organizational needs theory offers significant insight into alliance behavior, on its own it is insufficient to explain all aspects of alliance decisions. Ideology
and enemies factored into the PFLP-SOG and its partners’ alliance decisions, but their influence was more subtle than typically formulated.

The Role of Identity Affinity

H (Alliance Formation: Affinity) 4.A: Identity affinity sets the parameters of acceptable alliance partners. Organizations must satisfy an identity affinity threshold in order to forge an alliance with one another.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Affinity) 4.B: Identity affinity that evolves into a shared identity and the construction of constitutive norms supports the sustainment of an alliance.

While organizational needs were the stimulating cause for alliances, as identity affinity hypotheses predict, identity factors shaped the search and partner selection. The PFLP-SOG was identified as a prospective partner by groups with which it shared ideological and some narrative affinity. The RAF and JRA’s efforts to identify an acceptable ally to address their organizational needs were consistent with this overall pattern. The PFLP-SOG was positioned to assist with their organizational needs, and it was also acceptable from an identity affinity standpoint. The JRA explicitly sought another leftist group to fulfill identity affinity requirements, and found the PFLP-SOG after several dead ends. For the RAF, ideological affinity was less critical because of the high-level of narrative affinity with the Palestinian cause, but a shared ideology did bolster affinity with the PFLP-SOG, which helps explain the alliance success of that dyad as compared to the RAF’s experience with Fatah. In the case of the Weathermen, the PFLP-SOG was acceptable from an identity affinity standpoint, but without organizational needs, this sentiment alone did not lead to an alliance. Identity affinity thus appears to be necessary, but not sufficient, for alliances to form.

Despite its position as an alliance hub, the PFLP-SOG was not particularly adept at building shared identities and constitutive norms. This may be a product of its ethno-nationalist tendencies, which tend to be exclusionary from an identity standpoint. This was a limiting factor in the PFLP-SOG’s alliances, and in practice, it meant that the groups with which it had the longest and most inter-dependent relationships were those that were largely willing to adopt the PFLP-SOG’s identity
and norms. Yet the PFLP-SOG demonstrated an ability to create affinity that sustained the alliances with the JRA and RAF for several years. This was illustrated by the PFLP-SOG’s willingness to help the JRA when its operative was detained in Paris, even though the JRA was agitating for more independence. The PFLP-SOG’s assistance was not entirely altruistic, but it was in part rooted in a sense of affinity with the JRA. Likewise, Haddad was willing to let the RAF remain under the PFLP-SOG’s protection in Iraq even when the group had collapsed followings its leaders’ suicide, probably due in part to the sense of identity affinity that had developed over time.

**The Intervening Variable: Trust**

H (Alliance Formation: Trust) 5.A: In order for alliances to form, groups must have a willingness to build trust with one another or pre-existing reasons to trust one another.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Trust) 5.B: Trust is necessary for an alliance to endure.

As these hypotheses suggest, trust was the essential glue that held the PFLP-SOG’s relationships with the JRA and RAF together. In both of the alliances cases, trust developed during the training period and persisted throughout the relationship. The period of co-location at the camps was critical to trust creation. One of the reasons the PFLP-SOG decided to pursue an alliance with these groups in particular was the quality of their interactions at the training camps. Both groups’ conduct at the camps demonstrated their trustworthiness to the PFLP-SOG.

Simultaneously, personal relationships developed during their tenure at the camps, which reinforced the organizational-level trust building. Haddad’s willingness to trust non-Arabs was limited; but he trusted individuals in both the JRA and RAF that Haddad more than most foreigners. Nonetheless, he still applied the compartmentalization principles that governed all of the PFLP-SOG’s behavior to his group’s allies. At times this was a source of tension, more so with the JRA than the RAF, which limited the depth of trust that could be developed between the groups.

The PFLP-SOG’s reputation as an alliance hub created a sense that it was a trustworthy ally. In essence, the more allies the PFLP-SOG had, the more others viewed it as trustworthy. It also
benefited from a reputation as an operationally sophisticated group. That did not directly translate into trust, but helped to reinforce it.

In the case of the JRA and RAF, reputation was not a particular hindrance, but neither had a reputation that offered an initial basis for trust, except for the shared ideology. Neither had a reputation for being infiltrated, which eliminated a barrier to trust. The RAF’s reputation was a double-edged sword. It inherited the notoriety of the previous generation. This was an asset in that the RAF was a well-known group, and Haddad saw value in its infamy. It was a drawback because the RAF’s behavior at the Fatah camp in Jordan had left the negative impression that the group was more trouble than it was worth and not a desirable ally. Neither directly addressed the trustworthiness of the second generation, which may have been why Haddad was willing to overlook its antics in 1970, especially when Fatah referred the RAF to the PFLP, and by extension, to the PFLP-SOG. The Red Army/JRA’s reputation was not well known in the Middle East, perhaps with the exception of its 1970 hijacking attempt, so its reputation was not influential from a trust standpoint. It had to start largely from scratch and prove itself. The JRA soon developed a good reputation because of its conduct in the training camps that supported the formation of trust.

The PFLP-SOG’s alliances with the JRA and RAF did not end because of the dissolution of trust. Given Haddad’s central role in making judgments about trust and his cultivation of the accompanying personal relationships, in his absence, trust had to be reinforced among key individuals. This did not occur at an organizational level, and thus the organizational alliances dissipated after Haddad’s death. However, personal relationships and some cooperation continued for the next decade.

As discussed in Chapter 6, it is difficult to predict whether the Weathermen and PFLP-SOG would have developed trust. The Weathermen did not have a reputation for being infiltrated, so the PFLP-SOG would not have had cause to distrust them on that basis. No existing personal
relationships could have paved the way for organizational trust. While Haddad was suspicious and cautious about such matters, he was not emotional or rash. He had a calculating approach and could have used the camps to vet the Weathermen. The Weathermen’s cautiousness about foreign influence would have been doubly tested by the relationship with the PFLP-SOG and the PFLP-SOG’s state sponsors. Ultimately, it is hard to predict the outcome with any confidence. It is not really necessary to do so because trust was not the cause of alliances, though it is necessary for them to form and sustain.

Conclusions about the JRA, RAF, and Weathermen’s Alliance Behavior

The findings for the case studies of the JRA, RAF and Weathermen’s were generally consistent with the same theoretical frameworks—organizational needs theory and identity affinity theory. While the outcomes of the JRA and RAF relationships with the PFLP-SOG initially appear to support the balance of power/common enemy and ideological solidarity theories, closer examination revealed that these were not the primary causal mechanism that produced their alliances with the PFLP-SOG. All three groups’ alliance behavior was largely a product of organizational dynamics and needs. Identity considerations shaped decisions and narrowed the options of partners that could address organizational needs. Lastly, trust was a necessary intervening variable in alliance creation and perpetuation.

7.3 The PFLP-SOG: Breaking New Ground as an International Alliance Hub

The PFLP-SOG’s ability to emerge as the most consequential alliance hub of this period has not been adequately explained to date. Drawing from the process tracing and structured case studies in Chapters 3-6, this section will examine how the PFLP-SOG became an alliance hub in light of the five theoretical frameworks and the intervening variable of trust.

Alliance Hubs as a Product of Efforts to Balance against Threat
1.C: An alliance hub seeks numerous partners to improve its balancing position vis-à-vis a common threat.

The balance of threat argument predicts that hubs acquire their alliance position in response to threat. Alliance hubs seek partners to improve their balancing position against a threat. Alliance hubs entice groups into a counter-balancing coalition in order to narrow their relative power disadvantage vis-à-vis a shared threat. Hubs operate at the core of a coalition against threats that other groups seek to balance against it as well. An alliance hub therefore possesses an enticing power base and a definition of threat shared by others. Each alliance improves the hub’s position and in effect, makes it a more desirable ally—creating an ongoing cycle that draws in more partners. Balance of threat paradigm ultimately falls short in its ability to explain the PFLP-SOG’s rise to become an alliance hub, although aspects of the theory are consistent with the results.

From a balancing standpoint, the PFLP-SOG clearly needed allies. The group had no illusions about its relative weakness compared to Israel and turned to terrorism in part as a result of that weakness. Palestinian groups were also often as concerned about their relative power position vis-à-vis one another as they were about their position compared to Israel. In addition, the PFLP-SOG defined threat more broadly to include the imperialist powers that supported Israel. Therefore, it shared a sense of threat with many organizations operating at the time. This more expansive view of threat was also consistent with the PFLP/PFLP-SOG’s belief that allies were necessary to combat its enemies.

On its own, the PFLP-SOG did not seem to have an enticing power base that would position it at the epicenter of a counter-balancing coalition. However, its small size belied its actual power, as the assets acquired through its state sponsors vastly improved its materiel capability. Therefore, the PFLP-SOG’s power position was generally consistent with the predictions about which groups would become an alliance hub. With this power base, the PFLP-SOG was an attractive ally choice for
fellow terrorist organizations that sought a way to increase their power in order to more effectively balance against threat.

However, the PFLP-SOG’s approach to alliances was inconsistent with an effort to build a counter-coalition. The PFLP-SOG tended to wait for other groups to approach it, rather than seek out partners. This meant that it did not search for groups that bolstered its coalition or shared its view of the threat. Nor did it evaluate prospective partners based on their ability to contribute to its effort to balance against threats. The PFLP-SOG’s allies examined in the preceding chapters were generally relatively weak, did not tangibly add to the group’s power base, and had different threat emphases. The JRA and RAF did not enhance the PFLP-SOG’s power by joining its coalition, nor did they narrow the power disparity between the PFLP-SOG and Israel, let alone between it and the broader “imperialist” enemies aligned with Israel. In fact, by taking them on as allies, the PFLP-SOG was adding to power of the threatening coalition without acquiring a commensurate amount of power. The Japanese Government did not feature at all on the PFLP-SOG’s agenda prior to its alliance initiation with the JRA, and the inclusion of Tokyo to the threat agenda increased the power disparity, while the JRA had a negligible effect on the PFLP-SOG’s power base. Similarly, the Nicaraguan Government was not a threat to the PFLP/PFLP-SOG when it agreed to ally with the Sandinistas in 1969-1970. Adding the Sandinistas to the balancing coalition did not offset adding Managua to the enemy coalition. Lastly, the PFLP-SOG had a tacit arrangement with the West German Government to eschew targeting its interests in exchange for “protection” payments, yet the PFLP-SOG still agreed to ally with the RAF. These choices do not square with balancing predictions.

Conversely, the PFLP-SOG did not cultivate alliances with powerful groups that were engaged in efforts against governments already considered pressing threats, like the United States. It did not approach the Weathermen, for example. It also did not ally with one of the largest and
most powerful groups operating in Europe at that time, the Red Brigades. If balancing considerations were driving its alliance decisions, larger, more powerful groups operating at the time would have been more advantageous allies.

In summary, the vast power differential between the PFLP-SOG and threatening enemies contributed to the group's belief that it required allies. A desire to counter-balance against threat fostered its overall desire for allies. Yet if the PFLP-SOG’s alliance hub behavior was primarily a product of the need to balance against threat, it would have been more proactive in finding alliance partners that could improve its power position, rather than waiting for groups to approach it for assistance and then allying with small, weak groups that faced powerful adversaries that posed little direct threat. Despite the ostensible balancing imperative of its situation, balancing considerations were not a central factor in the PFLP-SOG’s development into an alliance hub.

Alliance Hubs as a Product of Ideological Solidarity

$H_{(Alliance\ Hub: Ideology)}$ 2.C: An alliance hub seeks partners that share its ideological orientation and many tenets of its ideology.

According to the ideological solidarity paradigm, alliance hubs are those groups that hail from an ideology that is shared with many other terrorist organizations. Hubs attract groups of the same ideological persuasion out of a sense of solidarity. Hubs’ formulation of their ideology generates a sense of solidarity with many groups and shares many facets within that ideology. Alliance hubs may even achieve a position of authority in defining an ideological platform, which increases the number of other groups that adopt it and then become alliance partners.

While many other groups felt a sense of solidarity with the PFLP/PFLP-SOG’s overarching leftist orientation and Palestinian ethno-nationalist sentiments, this was not the primary reason the group became an alliance hub. These ideologies were indeed prominent at the time, which placed the PFLP-SOG in a position where many groups felt a sense of ideological solidarity with it, but this sentiment was not sufficient to create any of the individual alliances, let alone put the PFLP-SOG in
an alliance hub position. In fact, the PFLP-SOG was not an ideologically-nuanced or ideologically-sophisticated organization. The PFLP was more “tinged with red” than committed to a doctrinaire interpretation of its ideology, and the PFLP-SOG still chaffed at its attempts to inject more ideological considerations into its operations. Its ideological positions were not complex or rooted in nuanced understandings of Marxism, Maoism, or other even Debray. Its ideology was predicated on action and antipathy towards Israel.

The PFLP-SOG did not closely scrutinize other groups’ ideology or evaluate the degree to which prospective allies’ ideological views coincided with its own when making alliance decisions. Furthermore, it did not seek out groups that shared its ideology as allies. This is not to say that ideology was irrelevant. Though it was willing to cooperate with groups across the ideological spectrum when necessary, it allied primarily with groups with which it shared an ideological affinity. Yet ideological solidarity was not the PFLP-SOG’s motive for forging relationships; it was more of a precondition. The group did not ally with numerous organizations with the same ideology, even in instances when it engaged in ad hoc cooperation or transactional relationships with them. It rejected alliances with some groups with which it “should” have felt ideological solidarity, such as the Red Brigades, and failed to ally with other groups that expressed a sense of ideological solidarity towards the PFLP-SOG, such as the Weathermen.

The PFLP-SOG’s position in the Palestinian landscape reinforces the conclusion that ideological solidarity was not the primary factor responsible for its position as an alliance hub. The PFLP’s decision to reduce its involvement in alliances in 1971 did not coincide with a change in its ideology. If ideological solidarity was the primary causal variable, this change in the PFLP’s alliance posture cannot be explained. Ideological solidarity would have continued to operate and produce alliances. Ideology also cannot explain why the PFLP-SOG would be the alliance hub instead of the
mainline PFLP as there were no major differences in their ideological positions. If anything, the PFLP-SOG was less committed to ideology.

In addition, the PFLP and PFLP-SOG were not the only leftist Palestinian groups, so ideology alone cannot explain why groups were attracted to the PFLP-SOG. The PFLP’s other splinters, the DFLP and PFLP-GC, were also leftist groups. Both engaged in alliances during the same period, but not to the same degree as the PFLP-SOG. The PFLP-SOG should have had largely the same alliances as the DFLP and PFLP-GC. Most non-Palestinian groups—and even the Palestinian groups themselves—would have been hard-pressed to identify the ideological differences that distinguished these groups, let alone use such a difference to explain why they chose to ally with one leftist Palestinian group over another.

In addition to the leftist Palestinian group options, the Palestinian ethno-nationalist group, Fatah, was an alliance hub on par with the PFLP-SOG in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The ideological patterns of the two alliance hubs’ relationships did not differ significantly. Like the PFLP-SOG, Fatah’s allies included both fellow nationalist groups and numerous leftist organizations. Although Fatah was not leftist, many leftist groups were willing to ally with it. When the two alliance hubs operated simultaneously, their alliance patterns did not differ in accordance with their ideological orientations. Like the PFLP, Fatah's decision to cease operating as an alliance hub did not coincide with any changes in its ideology.

Ultimately, ideological solidarity did not create a magnet effect that drew like-minded groups to the PFLP-SOG and thereby cause it to become an alliance hub. Nor did the PFLP-SOG seek allies out of a sense of ideological solidarity or ideological obligation. In the specific alliance cases and the examination of the PFLP-SOG as an alliance hub, ideology did not function as a force that caused solidarity and alliances.

*Alliance Hubs as a Product of Organizational Needs*
4.C: An alliance hub has both the ability to fulfill other groups’ organizational learning and adaptation needs as well as its own organizational needs that are fulfilled by alliances.

From an organizational perspective, alliance hubs are groups that are well positioned to fulfill other organizations’ learning and adaptation needs and simultaneously have ongoing organizational needs that are addressed through alliances. They have knowledge, skills, and/or assets that are in demand in the prevailing conditions, which prompt others to seek it out for partnerships. Alliance hubs integrate relationships into their organizational frames, routines, memories, and culture as a part of their organizational processes. Alliance hubs have ongoing or regular organizational requirements that they use allies to fulfill, and, when new needs arise, they use alliances to address them. These groups are adept at anticipating how allies can assist with their organizational learning or adaptation needs.

This theoretical framework is consistent with the PFLP-SOG’s development into an alliance hub. The PFLP-SOG attracted allies because of its ability to fulfill important organizational needs and its perpetual organizational needs that required alliances. The PFLP-SOG was willing and able to provide guerilla and terrorist training to other organizations—and its operational capability was prominently displayed in its sophisticated, high-profile terrorist attacks—which enticed numerous prospective allies. More than just symbolic training, the PFLP-SOG offered instruction that was tailored and responsive to its allies’ particular needs and circumstances (Charbel 75). Furthermore, the PFLP-SOG provides other valuable assets, such as safe haven, funds, weapons, materiel, and logistical assistance. Less tangibly, allying with the PFLP-SOG—or any Palestinian group—gave groups’ additional credibility and stature. Rarely did connections with the Palestinians cause harm a group’s reputation, given the Palestinians’ status as revolutionaries par excellence during this period. In essence, the PFLP-SOG was willing to fulfill an array of continuous and discrete needs that other groups most often needed, but were often unable to acquire through self-reform. Altogether, these offerings made the PFLP-SOG a highly attractive alliance partner.
Groups typically initiated cooperation with the PFLP-SOG by seeking training. Therefore, its training facilities were the ideal forum for the PFLP-SOG to evaluate groups’ utility and desirability as partners. Over the course of a training session, the PFLP-SOG systematically singled out groups that were sufficiently capable and committed to pursue alliances. Its efforts to tailor training to the needs and requests of its prospective allies helped to establish an initial “fit” between trainee groups’ organizational needs and the PFLP-SOG’s ability to fulfill them.

The PFLP-SOG’s singular focus on international operations created a continuous adaptation need for allies. Not only was the PFLP-SOG operating in perpetual exile—a predicament that reinforced its organizational needs for alliances—it took this a step further and focused on operations throughout Europe, East Africa, and the Middle East. For the small, predominantly Arab group to operate in numerous countries and evade the ever-vigilant Israeli security services, the PFLP-SOG needed allies.

Alliances served two important adaptation purposes for the PFLP-SOG. First, since publicity was a central goal of its international operations, the PFLP-SOG sought to conduct attacks in places and in a manner that would garner attention. After its first headline-grabbing attacks, one way to increase the shock value of an operation was to include non-Palestinian operatives. Foreign participation in PFLP-SOG attacks heightened the publicity value of attacks. Second, foreign operatives could more readily access targets that got the desired international attention. It became increasingly difficult for the PFLP-SOG’s Palestinian or Arab members to operate and conduct international attacks as they were likely to arouse the attention of authorities, particularly Israeli security services. Foreign operatives, on the other hand, were more able to evade detection. In order to adapt to this environment, the PFLP-SOG needed allies.

The PFLP-SOG and other groups’ attacks caused Israel to respond with its own adaptations. Israel proved a formidable adversary, which required the PFLP-SOG to constantly adapt in order to
strike its interests and evade it. The PFLP-SOG also had to constantly evaluate the environments in its numerous operational theatres, such as the various countries in Western Europe, and adapt to those constantly-shifting security conditions. Allies facilitated the PFLP-SOG’s continuous adaptations.

The PFLP-SOG built alliances into its organizational routines, frames, and culture from an early point in its lifespan, when it was still a unit within the PFLP. It began training allied operatives and groups shortly after formation. The PFLP-SOG’s organizational age was never reset such that it questioned the role of alliances as a problem-solving technique. Like other organizations, as the PFLP-SOG matured, it grew resistant to change and continued to rely on alliances. For example, it did not abandon hijackings even after that tactic was no longer effective. Similarly, as the group matured, it maintained its belief in the utility in alliances, as opposed to self-reform.

Perhaps most importantly, Haddad believed in the efficacy of alliances. He remained the group’s unrivalled leader throughout its lifespan and alliances were a solution that he endorsed. His view was not unchallenged. Some of his lieutenants objected to the role of foreigners in the group’s activities (Charbel 191). But as the leader of a highly-centralized organization throughout its lifespan, his imprint on the group’s culture was immutable. As long as he dictated that alliances were the way to address the organization’s needs, they remained a part of the organization’s frames, routines, and culture. Indeed, the group and its alliances never recovered from his loss.

Thus the PFLP-SOG’s ability to act as an alliance hub was highly consistent with an organizational theory framework. Prospective allies were drawn to it because it was able and willing to fulfill their discrete and continuous organizational learning and adaptation needs. Simultaneously, it had its own continuous organizational adaptation needs that could be filled through alliances. Alliances were embedded in the PFLP-SOG’s organizational routines, frame, and culture. These organizational processes were continually reinforced by the preferences of the
group’s leader. Organizational needs were the primary impetus for the PFLP-SOG to attain an alliance hub position.

The Role of Identity Affinity in Alliance Hubs’ Desirability as a Partner

H4. An alliance hub seeks allies with which it shares identity affinity, while simultaneously meeting that threshold for numerous other organizations.

From an identity affinity standpoint, alliance hubs are the purveyors of an identity that is salient in the environment. They propagate a compelling ideology, promulgate a narrative with resonance, and/or hail from an ethnicity that unifies beyond a narrow constituency. Hubs are in a position to affirm or discredit others that also ascribe to the same identity. They do not necessarily define the identity, but they are credible authorities or representatives of their identities. They are a desirable partner for groups that share facets of their identity, but seek alliances for other reasons. Hubs continually bolster their credibility as a representative of an identity through alliances with groups with shared identity characteristics.

The PFLP-SOG accomplished an identity status commensurate with its alliance hub position. The esteem with which the Palestinian cause was held by leftist and “self-determination” groups—in part due to the PFLP/PFLP-SOG’s activities—enabled the PFLP-SOG to establish its position as an identity authority. In general, the fedayeen campaign situated the Palestinian cause at the center of the radical identity currents of the day. Their “national liberation” struggle against imperialist Israel resonated with left-wing and ethno-nationalist groups alike. Among fellow “revolutionary” forces, the Palestinians were revered for resisting an imperialist aggressor. Rivaled only by the Vietcong, the Palestinians’ struggle was viewed as a central battleground where the war against imperialism was being waged.

For the PFLP-SOG specifically, its identity status was mainly derived from its ideology and narrative. As both a leftist and Palestinian ethno-nationalist group, the PFLP-SOG hailed from the predominant ideological currents of its time. The PFLP-SOG had a powerful narrative that
emphasized the Palestinians’ victimization at the hands of “imperialist” Israel, and it also propagated the view that the broader U.S.-led world order was to blame for oppression of Third World people. Its narrative was simultaneously consistent with existing narratives, shaped others’ narratives, and was even featured in some organizations’ narratives. Ethnic affinity qualities were not prominent in the creating affinity between the PFLP-SOG and its allies, despite its importance for its in-group identity.

Rather than acting as a magnet, ideology operated as the primary identity affinity basis in the PFLP-SOG’s alliances. The group’s adherence to a vaguely-defined leftist ideology with a central ethno-nationalist goal gave it significant and broad appeal as a partner from an identity affinity standpoint. Unlike a narrow ethno-nationalist agenda, the combination of leftism and ethno-nationalism meant that its struggle was viewed as part of the same broader revolutionary cause. The PFLP-SOG mainly attracted fellow left-wing groups as allies, though it also cooperated regularly with some ethno-nationalist groups. While it proved divisive among states, leftism was advantageous for terrorist group alliances because it prescribed international solidarity. As part of one of the premier “national liberation” struggles, the PFLP-SOG further benefitted from the recognition and solidarity such causes invoked in other left-wing organizations.

In terms of the three criteria that shaped groups’ ideological affinity assessments, the PFLP-SOG adopted an accommodating posture. First, as the interpreter and arbiter of what was sufficient to meet its ideological affinity threshold, the PFLP-SOG was flexible in its judgments. Consistent with its approach to its own vaguely-defined ideology, the PFLP-SOG did not closely interrogate the intricacies of other groups’ ideological beliefs prior to initiating cooperation. Second, its ideology was not rigid or narrow; accordingly, its ideological affinity threshold was not stringent. Lastly, the PFLP-SOG was very much in synch with the ideological currents of the day. Therefore, it had numerous ally options, and many groups satisfied the PFLP-SOG’s ideological affinity threshold.
Once an alliance was forged, there was minimal revisiting of ideological considerations, though the PFLP-SOG provided some general ideological training for trainees.

Despite the conventional wisdom about common enemies provoking alliances, the PFLP-SOG did not become an alliance hub as a result of the shared interests derived from sharing adversaries with other groups. Yet common enemies factored into its alliance decisions. Instead of being based on materiel interests or balancing against a more powerful adversary, sharing an enemy factored into groups’ sense of affinity. All terrorist groups have narratives that explain who the victims are and why their enemies have been designated as such. The PFLP-SOG’s expansive enemy narrative created a degree of common enemy affinity with many organizations. This was sometimes reinforced by ideological affinity, as affinity with groups with both a common conceptualization of enemies and a shared leftist ideology often went together.

The Palestinians’ status among “revolutionaries” and place in the broader victim narrative provided the PFLP-SOG—with its posture receptive to alliances—with another avenue of narrative affinity. The emphasis on “Third World” struggles—and the Palestinian cause as a central battlefield within the Third World—made the Palestinians a premiere victim in other groups’ narratives. The PFLP-SOG was perhaps the most willing and adept at capitalizing on the sense of affinity the Palestinian cause invoked in other organizations, though it did not always fully reciprocate. It imbued in its allies a sense that they were contributing to the Palestinian cause, which reinforced that narrative affinity. The prospective alliance partners examined in Section II were all “First World” organizations that professed affinity for their Third World counterparts. The PFLP-SOG allied with fellow Third World groups as well, and in some of those cases, the shared victim narrative compensated for weaker shared enemy narrative affinity.

Ethnicity was a strong component of the PFLP-SOG’s in-group identity, but it did not play a commensurate role in the group’s alliances. Though it had a strong ethno-nationalist Palestinian
identity and Arab ethnic identity, it did not share ethnic affinity with most of its allies. It sporadically cooperated with other Arab groups, but these were not its closest or longest-lasting partners. It trained and worked with a handful groups with an Arab ethnic identity, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Dhofar, the Front for the Liberation of Eritrea, and a group from the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (Charbel 75).

The PFLP-SOG proved capable of overcoming ethnic identity differences, and allying with groups from virtually all major ethnic groups. The PFLP-SOG created ways to deal with the differences that came with an absence of ethnic affinity. For example, it taught training classes in English as well as Arabic. Overall, ethnic affinity played a minor role in the PFLP-SOG’s alliance hub behavior, but ethnic identities did not serve as a major hurdle either.

The PFLP-SOG was fairly flexible about its affinity threshold at the time of alliance initiation, but this minimalist approach to affinity sometimes had consequences for alliance sustainment. The PFLP-SOG built limited shared identities and norms with its partners. Instead, it imposed its identity and norms on its partners or limited the level of interdependence in the relationship such that each group largely retained its own identity and norms. The PFLP-SOG valued its identity and protected its independence. Overall, identity affinity was an important enabling variable for the PFLP-SOG’s ability to act as an alliance hub. It made the PFLP-SOG an acceptable, even desirable, alliance partner for many organizations, but the group’s inflexibility about its identity and norms limited the depth, and sometimes the duration, of its relationships.

**Alliances Hubs’ Need for Trust & Trustworthiness**

$H_{(Alliance\ Hub:Trust)}$ 5.C: An alliance hub is adept at building trust with other organizations through its reputation, accessibility, and ability to create supporting personal relationships.

The PFLP-SOG took building trust very seriously in all of its alliances. It was extremely wary about the possibility of infiltration, especially by Israeli services. The PFLP-SOG refused to engage in any cooperation with groups it believed had been infiltrated and ended relationships if it suspected
infiltration. There was a limit to how much Haddad was willing to trust non-Arabs. His inner circle was entirely Arabs and non-Arabs rarely rose to senior positions within the group. Haddad’s cautious approach to trust was the main reasons that information was kept so tightly compartmentalized.

Despite the PFLP-SOG’s lack of transparency and cautiousness, it was adept at building trust. Due to its safe haven and training facilities, it was accessible, which created ample opportunities for interaction that it exploited to the fullest extent possible while protecting its security. It had a well-known reputation for conducting high-profile operations and engaging in alliances, which conferred a sense of trustworthiness. Lastly, Haddad created personal relationships that bolstered organizational alliances.

Because of its access to safe havens, natural geographic proximity was not a major hurdle to building trust. The PFLP-SOG was able to readily interact with prospective allies in close proximity, which provided an ideal forum to build trust. It grew more cautious about providing entrée to its haven over time, but the group still had ample opportunities for interaction, vetting, and trust-building that would have been much more difficult without this valuable asset.

The PFLP-SOG had a reputation of being receptive to alliances and willing to offer assistance to other organizations, which further facilitated trust building. It is probably more accurate to say that the PFLP had this reputation and the PFLP-SOG was able to capitalize on the ambiguity surrounding its association with the PFLP. After the PFLP’s initial well-publicized external operations, groups flocked to it seeking alliances. These relationships were then featured in subsequent operations, which reinforced the reputation and generated more allies. Since the PFLP-SOG did not publicly break from the PFLP, it continued to benefit from the PFLP’s well-known reputation. The PFLP facilitated this by referring potential allies to the PFLP-SOG when it was approached. The PFLP-SOG was very conscious of other group’s reputation when deciding whether
to initiate an alliance. Its refusal to work with groups that had a reputation for being infiltrated, which, for example, prevented it from working with the Italian leftist group, the Red Brigades.

Lastly, a micro-manager in all respects, Haddad had to approve every ally. Once his people had confirmed a group’s seriousness and intentions, Haddad would personally meet with its members. Similar to his insistence on conducting post-mortems after every attack, he interviewed trainees after each training cycle and evaluated their experience. Then he interviewed the trainers and listened to their views and their evaluations of the trainees. This information factored into his subsequent alliance decisions, particularly evaluations of trustworthiness. Everyone who was in or worked closely with the PFLP-SOG had a personal relationship with Haddad, so they had to earn his trust (Charbel 77). He did not have a particularly idiosyncratic or erratic personality, and there are very few references to him having personality clashes with potential allies, though he was certainly a controversial figure within the PFLP. While willing to build adequate trust to initiate and sustain an alliance, he insisted on a level of compartmentalization such that no individual knew more than what was required. His trust had clear limitations, but his approval in the realm was essential for his group to initiate an alliance and to sustain it.

The PFLP-SOG had an ability to build and cultivate trust—one of the more problematic aspects of terrorist alliances—befitting an alliance hub. It had the requisite assets through its state sponsors to provide opportunities for interactions that could lead to trust. The group was receptive to creating trust with outside organizations. It had a reputation of being trustworthy. Lastly, the PFLP-SOG had a leader with a system that both created opportunities to forge trust while protecting his group in the process.

**Conclusions about the PFLP-SOG as an Alliance Hub**

The PFLP-SOG’s alliance hub position was primarily driven by the interaction of organizational needs, identity characteristics, and an ability to cultivate trust. First, the group’s
constant receptivity to alliances was a function of its reliance on international terrorism, despite
the difficulties of effectively employing the tactic independently. It created incentives for others to
view it as an advantageous ally by addressing critical organizational learning and adaption needs,
particularly through training, the provision of safe haven, and operational support. Its ability to
provide haven and training doubled as opportunities for it to vet and build trust with the most
capable partners from among the groups that sought its assistance. Alliances were an integral part
of the PFLP-SOG’s organizational culture, constantly reinforced by its strong leader’s preference.
Some groups’ culture precluded them from seeking an alliance with the PFLP-SOG because they did
not have exposure to the option during formative periods. The PFLP’s visible use of allies in the
early 1970s—a period when it also was providing training for outside groups, many of which were
recently formed—demonstrated the possibility of creating alliances at an early point in many
groups’ lifespans and positioned the PFLP-SOG to emerge as an international alliance hub.

Identity affinity both shaped the PFLP-SOG’s alliance preferences and influenced which
groups sought it out for assistance. The PFLP-SOG generally had identity affinity qualities viewed as
desirable in the prevailing environment, and thus many organizations deemed the PFLP-SOG to be
an acceptable partner from an identity affinity perspective. The PFLP-SOG was able to find
sufficient identity affinity with an array of actors because it also had a fairly flexible standard.
Overall, it tended to ally with groups that shared ideological and narrative affinity features. Identity
affinity thus shaped which groups the PFLP chose to assist and to use to fulfill its organization
needs. But these two variables still cannot fully explain the PFLP-SOG’s alliance without factoring in
trust.

Lastly, the PFLP-SOG’s ability to build trust in a systematic way was integral to its ability to
act as an alliance hub. Extremely security conscious, it used its organizational assets to
methodically evaluate the trustworthiness and conduct of its prospective partners. Every ally had
to be vetted by the PFLP-SOG, particularly Haddad, to ensure they could be trusted. Reputation was considered prior to allowing a potential ally access to the PFLP-SOG’s havens. The PFLP-SOG demonstrated an exceptional ability to cultivate trust, even with groups that could have reasonably been suspicious of the PFLP-SOG. For example, the PFLP-SOG worked with Kurdish groups and Iraqi Communist elements while maintaining its close relationship with the Iraqi Baathist regime (Charbel 65). The PFLP-SOG struck a balance between providing opportunities to build trust and protecting its security.

The next section will examine al-Qaida’s development as an alliance hub as well as the causal pathways that led to alliances or failed to produce alliances in its case. This offers an opportunity to determine if the PFLP-SOG findings will apply in a different environment, era, and among groups adhering to a different ideology. The commonalities and differences will be instructive for building a comprehensive theory about alliance hub behavior.
Section III: Al-Qaeda and its Allies, Friends, and Acquaintances
CHAPTER 8:  
AL QAIDA: BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALLIANCE HUB

The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. This is in accordance with the words of Almighty God, fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together—Usama bin Laden, 1998 World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders Declaration

8.1 Introduction

Over the course of more than twenty-five years, al-Qaida systematically built an alliance network that rivaled that of many nation states in its complexity and breadth. In addition to two state sponsors, virtually all Sunni jihadist groups of this era had at least some interaction with al-Qaida. In a sense, al-Qaida’s alliance behavior even predated its formation as an organization. From the outset, alliances were at the core of al-Qaida’s mission because of its goal to be the vanguard of a unified movement to overthrow the existing world order and re-establish a caliphate. Alliances shaped al-Qaida throughout its lifespan; conversely, al-Qaida influenced the jihadist landscape through its partnerships.

Al-Qaida’s tenure as an alliance hub can be roughly divided into four periods based on its environment and alliance behavior: 1) a jihadist facilitator during the anti-Soviet jihad, which predated al-Qaida’s formation as an organization; 2) a jihadist lender in Sudan from 1991 to 1996; 3) a terrorist provider in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001; and 4) a terrorist brand name from 2002 to present. While al-Qaida’s desire to acquire allies remained constant, it offered prospective partners different incentives during each phase, and thus it attracted different partners and formed different types of alliances during each period.
This chapter is comprised of nine sections. It begins with a discussion of the scope of the chapter, which is narrowly focused on al-Qaida’s alliance behavior. The second section examines the seminal period in the evolution of the Sunni jihadist milieu, the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, and how it shaped al-Qaida’s future alliance ventures. The third section presents al-Qaida’s identity features, many of which were established in the wake of the Soviet defeat. The fourth section analyzes how al-Qaida’s time in Sudan contributed to its development into an alliance hub as it concurrently cohered into an organization. The fifth section dissects how al-Qaida flourished as an alliance hub in Afghanistan and the limitations to its alliance efforts, even at its peak. The sixth section assesses how the 9/11 attacks fundamentally changed the alliance environment, forcing al-Qaida to develop new alliance arrangements, including ones of dependence on its partners. The seventh section discusses the introduction of the al-Qaida “brand” following the U.S. war in Iraq and how that development impacted al-Qaida’s alliance behavior. The eighth section examines why some of al-Qaida’s attempts to acquire affiliates fell short when applied to groups that no longer could speak with one voice. The final section addresses the impact of bin Laden’s death on al-Qaida’s alliance position and behavior.

8.2 Scope Note

Unlike the PFLP and the PFLP-SOG, al-Qaida’s background and history has been told and re-told countless times, particularly since 9/11. Issues, such as at what point al-Qaida developed its global ambitions, its level of involvement in various attacks or when it grew into a fully functioning organization are still a source of debate among scholars, policymakers, pundits, and even members of the group itself. The goal of this chapter is not to recount its history already ably told elsewhere or engage these debates; instead, it is to examine al-Qaida’s development narrowly in terms of its
alliance behavior and development into an alliance hub. Not all of al-Qaida’s alliances or attempted relationships are covered in this chapter or in Section III. Instead, select relationships that illuminate the dynamics at work during various periods are given more extensive treatment. Cases examined in depth in subsequent chapters—al-Qaida’s relationships with Egyptian, Algerian, and Pakistani groups—are discussed, albeit briefly, in this chapter in so much as they illustrate al-Qaida’s alliance behavior and dynamics at various junctures.

The focus of this chapter is to analyze how al-Qaida’s approach to partnerships with other terrorist groups developed and evolved over the course of more than twenty years, from its formation in Afghanistan and Pakistan until bin Laden’s death in Pakistan in 2011. As a result, events are discussed—or not discussed—based on their impact on alliances or as context needed to understand how they fit into al-Qaida’s partnerships. For example, unlike the PFLP-SOG, al-Qaida rarely engaged in joint attacks with its allies; therefore, al-Qaida’s attacks are examined only as they impacted its alliance behavior. In addition, some issues are discussed only briefly in this chapter, and then given more complete treatment in Chapters 9-11, which examine al-Qaida’s relationships with militant groups in Egypt, Algeria, and Pakistan. Thus while the scope of this chapter is robust, it is also narrower than other accounts, both by design and by necessity.

Some argue that al-Qaida is more than an organization, that it is—or at least was—a movement and a source of inspiration. But for many years, al-Qaida was also an organization with a defined chain of command, identified leaders, and members who swore fealty (Bergen *The Osama bin Laden I Know* 100-101). This entity, often called al-Qaida Central, engaged in partnerships with other militant groups and became a full-fledged alliance hub. This dissertation thus looks selectively at al-Qaida Central, i.e. al-Qaida Core. This refers to the organizational structure subordinated to bin Laden, which has been primarily based in Afghanistan and Pakistan for more
than fifteen years, and includes members who adhered to his instructions and usually swore an oath of loyalty. Bin Laden even acknowledged the validity of the idea of an “al-Qaida Central” in a 2010 letter to one of his subordinates. He wrote that “[t]his term was coined in the media to distinguish between al-Qa’ida in Afghanistan and Pakistan and al-Qa’ida in the other territories. In my opinion, there is no problem with using this term in principle in order to clarify the intended meaning” (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019” 17). Al-Qaida Central is primary group that made the decisions and implemented al-Qaida’s alliances, and thus is the organizational unit relevant to this dissertation.

8.3 The Landscape: The Rise of Sunni Militancy, Defined by Anti-Soviet Jihad

More than any other event, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 shaped the trajectory of Sunni Islamic militancy and alliances within that movement for the decades to come. The Soviet Union—an important state sponsor of the PFLP-SOG—took on a dramatically different role as the first shared adversary for the burgeoning Sunni jihadist milieu. The Shia revolution in Iran coupled with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ushered in an Islamic revival from which virulent militant strands emerged and thrived. Fawaz Gerges, a Middle East expert, cogently argued that “[i]t is doubtful that transnational jihad would have materialized without the prolonged Afghan war and its socializing and mobilizational effects on Arab jihadis” (85). Unlike their leftist predecessors, the religiously-motivated fighters who emerged from this conflict were not as constrained by a desire to represent “the people.” They saw themselves as God’s warriors. As a result, their violence—both more lethal and less discriminate—was qualitatively different than the previous era.
The resistance to the Soviets was overwhelmingly Afghan, loosely divided into seven factions. Amongst themselves, the Afghan factions differentiated themselves based on ethnicity, tribe, personal charisma, and ideology, although all were Sunni. To promote its own interests, Islamabad backed its favored proxy, an Islamist hardliner named Hekmatyar Gulbuddin. Pakistan’s effort predated the United States’ surreptitious foray into the conflict (Jones and Fair 10; Coll 165). Volunteer Pakistani fighters who wanted to participate in this state-sanctioned jihad soon followed, at the encouragement of Pakistan’s military ruler (as will be discussed in Chapter 11). In the early 1980s, the first few Arab volunteers journeyed to Peshawar, where they mostly helped Afghan refugees and injured fighters and provided logistical assistance for them. A small fraction of them actually participated in combat in Afghanistan. By 1984, slightly more than a dozen Arabs were involved in combat (Bergen The Osama bin Laden I Know 29; Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 16-7). Despite these modest numbers, the cause was beginning to garner more attention in the Middle East, bolstered by a fatwa issued by a Palestinian cleric named Abdullah Azzam, who declared joining the jihad against the Soviets to be an individual obligation for all able-bodied Muslims (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 16-7; Bergen The Osama bin Laden I Know 26-7).

From the Services Bureau to an Islamic Army

Given al-Qaida’s progression into an alliance hub, it is fitting that Usama bin Laden’s earliest involvement in jihad was as a financier of Maktab al-Khidamat, or the Services Bureau, in Peshawar during the anti-Soviet conflict. The Services Bureau was the product of the combination of bin Laden’s money and Azzam’s religious credentials (Bergen The Osama Bin Laden I Know 24-9). It was based in a house that doubled as a hostel and a publishing press in the University Town neighborhood in Peshawar (Wright “The Master Plan” 103). The Service Bureau’s main purpose was to assist the Arab volunteers who sought ways to contribute to the jihad; therefore, it also

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served as an ideal venue to forge connections. Initially, the few "Arab Afghans," as the volunteers who came from the Middle East were called, who fought did so alongside the Afghan mujahidin, acting as supplemental manpower. Their battlefield contribution was negligible, and they were vastly outnumbered by the Afghans (Tawil "Brothers in Arms" 18).

Supported by the Saudi religious establishment, Azzam became the most prominent religious authority for the Arab Afghans (Coll 155). In addition to his charisma and credentials, the Palestinian cleric’s long-standing connections to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Saudi religious establishment bolstered his standing. But it was bin Laden—his indispensable Saudi partner—who held the purse strings. In addition to his personal fortune, bin Laden’s family and his connections in Saudi Arabia made him a conduit through which millions of dollars in donations flowed. Bin Laden’s willingness to pay volunteers’ travel, housing, and living expenses perfectly complemented Azzam’s fatwa (Coll 155-7). The combination of religious prestige and a healthy treasury was powerful, and soon the Services Bureau was a focal point for a growing number of Arab Afghans, donations, propaganda efforts, as well as relationships. Bin Laden’s treasury created a magnet effect, drawing others and giving him an influence that far surpassed his religious or battlefield credentials. These relationships were largely individual-level friendships, rather than organizational alliances, because many groups had not yet fully coalesced or were in the midst of recovery.

Though they had a shared objective of ousting the Soviets from Afghanistan, nationalist fissures, theological differences and other infighting bedeviled the Arab Afghans. Existing disagreements traveled with them to South Asia, and other grievances developed over the course of their time in Pakistan. Rivalries flared both within and across nationalities as factions jockeyed for positions, money, and recruits (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 36). Beyond the immediate goal of expelling the Soviets, the agendas and ideology of the foreign fighters were not uniform. Debates
were sometimes fierce, particularly between those who advocated jihad as the only correct path to achieve broader change and those who adhered to the Muslim Brotherhood’s more accommodationist approach, which condoned jihad under limited circumstances (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 44). Even among those who agreed on the necessity of jihad, there was not unanimity about where jihad should be conducted, against whom, and how to prioritize these efforts.

Some Arab Afghans had no allegiance to a group. This was particularly true of volunteers from the Gulf, where, unlike North Africa, little organized Islamist agitation was ongoing against the governments (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 36). A subset of these volunteers would form ambitions as a result of their experience in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Arab Afghans hailing from the Maghreb states more often deemed their governments to be insufficiently Islamic and formulated plans to precipitate change at home. For volunteers from existing jihadist groups from Egypt, Syria, and, to a lesser extent, Algeria, Afghanistan was also place to recover from setbacks at home and plot the way forward (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 32-6; Coll 163). It was a jihadist stew, though one in which all the ingredients did not naturally go together.

The Arabs did not frequently participate in combat, and when they did, their inexperience was evident. Their inadequacy was incompatible with bin Laden’s developing vision of building “an Islamic army capable of fighting jihad anywhere in the world” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Historical Background” 1-3; Coll 112-7). To remedy this shortfall and prepare for the future, he, along with a cadre of Egyptians who exerted increasing dominance in bin Laden’s circle, created training facilities in Afghanistan. A facility specifically for Afghan Arabs called al-Ma’sada, or the Lion’s Den, was up and running in 1986 (Coll 157). These segregated training efforts soon extended to the battlefield as well. Some Arab Afghans began to participate in the fighting in their own units rather than alongside Afghans (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 17-8). This endeavor
encountered some resistance. Azzam, in particular, had reservations because it segregated the Arab fighters from the Afghan mujahidin, and he viewed the foreign volunteers’ role as supporting the Afghans (Coll 163-4; Moghadam and Fishman 72-3: Bergen The Osama bin Laden I Know 29). However, fighting together helped solidified bonds and affinity between some Arab Afghans (Director of Central Intelligence “The Rise” 2).

Among the naysayers, some feared that the training facility would be an easy target for the Russians (Wright The Looming Tower 112-3). But these critics were silenced following the 1987 “Battle of Jaji,” during which outnumbered and outgunned Arab Afghan fighters at the Lion’s Den fought off attacking Soviet forces. Against all odds, the Arabs won a highly-touted, week-long combat victory (Coll 162, Brown cited in in Moghadam and Fishman 72-3; Cragin 1055). Bin Laden gained a credential as being more than a financier, although a credible account of the battle indicates he was actually incapacitated during much of the fighting (Coll 162-4). This success reinforced the Arab Afghans’ perception that they were religiously-ordained and garnered them publicity and additional recruits for a burgeoning project that would outlive the jihad in Afghanistan (Cragin 1055; Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 18-9).

This victory aside, no more than 3,000 Arab Afghans were present during the height of the anti-Soviet war, and many did not frequently venture out of Peshawar (Wright The Looming Tower 137). Their presence actually increased as the effort against the Soviets was winding down. By the time the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, volunteers from an estimated forty countries were based in guesthouses in Peshawar (Moghadam and Fishman 71). More volunteers flocked to the region after the Soviets’ defeat. The number of foreign volunteers doubled between 1989 and 1993, the period after the Soviet withdrawal and during which the conflict in Afghanistan devolved
into internecine fighting among the seven major Afghan factions as well as against the Communist regime in Kabul (Wright *The Looming Tower* 137).

An outstanding question concerning the Arab Afghans lingered: how should this manpower be utilized once the Soviets had been defeated? The once-latent differences in agendas and priorities grew increasingly pointed as the Soviet withdrawal loomed. The Egyptian contingent in particular saw Azzam’s stance as a challenge to their vision of toppling “apostate” regimes. They not only contested Azzam’s religious authority, they also attacked his character, accusing him of stealing funds and being an agent of the Americans. At the heart of the dispute was the question of how to define jihad and who had the authority to define it, questions that would guide the future of the movement. Azzam defined jihad as the struggle to expel the non-Muslim “occupiers” of Muslim lands (Cragin 1057). Thus, in his view, the next struggle should be seizing Palestine from Israel. Azzam abhorred the idea of war between Muslims and rejected the idea of going to war against Muslim regimes, even those deemed insufficiently devout (Wright *The Looming Tower* 130). Azzam’s vision had the advantage of having some institutionalized support, including among influential Sunni scholars and the Saudi elite (Gerges 62).

A senior leader of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and vociferous critic of Azzam, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, issued a book, *Bitter Harvest: Sixty Years of the Muslim Brotherhood*, in 1988 that offered a stark alternative to Azzam. Drawing from revered Egyptian ideologues, Zawahiri argued that “fighting against the apostate rulers that govern Muslim lands takes precedence over fighting any others” (qtd. in Moghadam and Fishman 74). It was a clear contradiction of Azzam’s more conventional conceptualization of jihad as a defensive response to aggression against Muslims by non-Muslims. Moreover, Zawahiri denounced the Muslim Brotherhood for its abdication of armed struggle against apostate regimes (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 38). The dividing lines were drawn. As
the Soviet forces pulled out of Afghanistan, it was unclear what direction the nascent movement would go, and the two sides jockeyed for primacy, particularly over the deep-pocketed Saudi (Wright *The Looming Tower* 134).

The hardline Egyptian clique largely associated with Zawahiri and Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) succeeded in wrestling bin Laden further and further from Azzam’s influence. Bin Laden distanced himself from Azzam’s Services Bureau in favor of other projects, like the Egyptian-run training facilities in eastern Afghanistan. Their rival was decisively eliminated when Azzam was killed by a car bomb in Peshawar in 1989, the same year the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan. In Azzam’s absence, the Egyptian coterie solidified their position as bin Laden’s inner circle, and their agenda for violent regime change in Arab states gained traction among Arab Afghans (Bergen *The Osama bin Laden I Know* 92-7). As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9, the Egyptians’ stature was a reflection of their relative experience conducting and organizing jihad against Cairo, skills coveted by bin Laden. Their imprint on al-Qaida was immutable from the earliest days.

**Creating the Foundation of an Alliance Hub**

Al-Qaida’s official beginning occurred at a meeting in August 1988 in Peshawar. A small group of attendees agreed to form an organization dedicated to continuing to wage jihad in light of the announcement of the impending Soviet withdrawal (Wright *The Looming Tower* 132). Joining would consist of two phases, they decided. In order to be eligible to become members of al-Qaida, individuals would be trained, fight in the Afghan conflict, and then undergo more intensive instruction (Wright *The Looming Tower* 133). They would also swear an oath of allegiance (Cragin 1056). The group’s membership initially consisted of a few dozen Arabs with an influential Egyptian core (Wright *The Looming Tower* 134-141; Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 29). The concept of al-Qaida was thus created, though it was not yet a functional organization and only had adherents
from a small minority of the Arab Afghans (Cragin 1056; Gerges 159). Al-Qaida, as it was conceived of at this stage, did not appear to require the sole allegiance of the attendees, and some individuals were members of other organizations as well (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 29). This early posture of partnering with other groups, coupled with the Services Bureau and training camps, was etched on al-Qaida’s organizational frames from an early point and would prove highly conducive to alliances.

Meanwhile, bin Laden and his Egyptian lieutenants pursued their vision of building an Islamic Army. At this early stage, their aspirations vastly exceeded their modest number of committed personnel, which instilled a perpetual organizational need for alliances from the outset. They almost certainly would have preferred self-reform that would have generated this capability within their budding organization. Absent that, allies were an essential to create an Islamic Army, and thus al-Qaida had a need for allies in order to even partially realize their ambitious organizational goals.

Bin Laden departed Pakistan and returned to Saudi Arabia where he soon saw opportunities to operationalize and deploy his “Islamic Army.” Motivated by his antipathy for Communists, bin Laden approached Saudi intelligence with an offer to support resistance against the teetering Communist government and one-time sponsor of the PFLP-SOG in South Yemen (Reidel 47). He funded anti-Communist elements, despite being told by Saudi authorities to desist. This transgression led to the confiscation of his passport, an early sign of emerging tensions between bin Laden and his government (Reidel 47). However, South Yemen was already well on its way to collapse without bin Laden’s meddling, and it merged with its northern neighbor in 1990 (Reidel 47).

The disagreement between bin Laden and Riyadh over South Yemen was a precursor of a much more significant break. In 1991, bin Laden offered the services of his “Islamic Army” once
again, this time to defend the Kingdom against the aggression of former Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein. Again, the Saudi Government dismissed his proposal. This time Riyadh opted instead to rely on the well-established capability of the United States (Reidel 48-9). It was a pivotal moment for bin Laden. Though his Saudi roots ran deep, bin Laden deemed the American presence in Saudi Arabia to be an occupation of two of Islam's holiest places. Bin Laden was already opposed to the United States, particularly its support for Israel. He was now consumed by his opposition to the United States’ presence in Saudi Arabia. The following year, an increasingly disgruntled bin Laden managed to secure his passport from Saudi officials under the pretext of traveling to Pakistan to help mediate between the warring Afghan factions and to settle outstanding debts (Wright *The Looming Tower* 161; Tawil "Brothers in Arms" 92). Though he did not know it at the time, bin Laden would never return to Saudi Arabia.

*A Forum to Build Trust*

While not homogenous or immune from strife, the combination of safe haven, training, and combat among ideologically motivated and compatible individuals offered unprecedented opportunities for trust building among Sunni jihadists (Director of Central Intelligence “Written Statements for the Record of the DCI” 5). Al-Qaida’s time in Afghanistan was thus critical to its future ability to forge alliances as the conflict offered an unprecedented opportunity to “make and strengthen contacts with a wide variety of Islamic extremists of various nationalities” (Director of Central Intelligence “Historical Background” 2). Interactions in this environment were conducive to forging strong personal relationships and establishing reputations, thereby facilitating future organizational-level trust. Simply meeting someone within this context signaled that it was safe to attempt to build trust in the future. Some ties, particularly those created during shared training or combat, ran much deeper.
While some foreign fighters went to South Asia to fulfill a religious duty and then returned to their lives, others were radicalized, transformed, and emboldened by the experience (Gerges 84). *Mujahidin* became a source of unrest wherever they went. Despite their status as “heroes,” many found themselves imprisoned, expelled or unable to return home (Gunaratna 6). Those who agitated for change when they returned home quickly became the target of security services. Others flocked to jihadi conflict zones, like Bosnia and Chechnya, where Muslims were oppressed with aspirations of re-creating the Afghan success against the Soviets (Gunaratna 6). Each new conflict re-invigorated the roaming *mujahidin* and attracted a new tranche of prospective fighters. With this dispersal, the *mujahidin* evolved into a loosely-connected transnational network of groups and individuals with shared identity traits, cross-cutting personal relationships, and a predisposition to trust one another (Hegghammer 99).

As the Afghan jihad drew to a close, al-Qaida was not yet a fully formed organization, let alone an alliance hub. But the individuals at al-Qaida’s core had personal relationships with members of other groups and a reputation as a willing provider based on its involvement in the Services Bureau, the training facilities, and bin Laden’s finances. Yet, its situation was precarious, and its prospects to become an alliance hub uncertain. Still the connections forged, organizational aims created, and identity features established at this stage shaped al-Qaida’s ability to become an alliance hub in the coming years. While its identity was not static, it was molded by events and decisions in these formative years. Therefore, before proceeding to the Sudan years, during which al-Qaida developed organizationally and began to act as an alliance hub, the next section examines these early identity characteristics.

8.4 The Facets of al-Qaida’s Identity
Al-Qaida’s core identity characteristics on the three dimensions—ideology, narrative, and ethnicity—proved enduring and offered a strong basis for identity affinity with other groups. Affinity was by no means seamless, but there were powerful points of affinity that developed from identity features formed during the anti-Soviet period.

*Al-Qaida’s Ideology and Narrative*

Enduring aspects of al-Qaida’s ideology identity were already evident. The anti-Soviet jihad was exclusively a Sunni endeavor. Al-Qaida, too, became a solely Sunni group, and this was part of its identity from the outset. It bounded its ideology around a Sunni identity, rather than forging a broader Islamic identity that would have included Shia, Sufis or other schools of Islam. It made a de facto decision early, later formalized, that only Sunni Muslims were eligible to join the group (Lahoud *Beware of Imitators* 6; “Al-Qa’ida Bylaws” 3). Al-Qaida’s bylaws—written years later—explicitly acknowledged its overarching Sunni orientation, and further specified that it adhered to “[a] sect from the Nation of Muhammad (Islam), God’s blessing and peace be upon him (bpbuh), the Sunnis as it was understood by the salafists” (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 3; emphasis added). Its ideology was “a direct product of this recent marriage between conservative, local Salafism-Wahhabism and revolutionary Egyptian Islamism” (Gerges 59).

The Sunni ideological identity placed al-Qaida firmly within the dominant ideological current of the period. Sunni militant groups flourished, with al-Qaida’s help, as al-Qaida formed and cohered into an organization. Thus while al-Qaida was rigid about its Sunni ideology affinity requirement, it still had numerous potential partners that would meet the ideological affinity requirement. Though it identified with salafism, al-Qaida did not limit its ideology affinity to only other salafist groups. Within these identity affinity parameters, al-Qaida maximized the number of

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potential partners by adopting a non-sectarian view of affinity of others within the Sunni school of Islam.

Al-Qaida levied one other ideological identity requirement on its partners. In terms of forging identity affinity, perhaps of even more concern than which Sunni sect a group adhered to was its commitment to jihad. Al-Qaida's ideology advocated jihad as the sole means to accomplish its goals (Wright *The Looming Tower* 132). It did not seek a way to change the political system through participation or accommodation. Unlike other religious terrorist groups, like Hamas and Hizballah, al-Qaida did not provide social services to the people it purported to defend from “infidels” and apostates (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2). Beyond its propaganda and the indoctrination of members through training and recruitment, which it deemed the “main fuel for combat,” al-Qaida did not engage in organized proselytization efforts to reform the insufficiently devout nor did it engage in service provision for the public (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2).

This disdain for those who worked within the existing system and rejected armed jihad influenced al-Qaida’s ideological affinity requirements. The group even codified these parameters. According to the group’s bylaws, “[w]e shall carry a relationship of love and affection with the Islamic movements who are not aligned with jihad and we shall acknowledge their good deeds and advise them of their mistakes if needed” (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2). Notably, this cooperation did not include alliances. Such relationships were reserved for “truthful Islamic jihadist movements and groups.” With these entities, al-Qaida pledged “to cooperate under the umbrella of faith and belief and we shall always attempt to [sic] at uniting and integrating with them or at least coordinating with them and avoiding their animosity” (2).

Who to wage jihad against and where would be perpetually-debated questions within the group and with its allies. With the Americans’ arrival in Mecca and Medina in 1990, the answer was
clear to bin Laden (Gerges 56). While many agreed with him that the American presence in the Kingdom was unacceptable, this agenda faced stiff competition from the parochial concerns that tended to dominate Sunni jihadists’ activities, especially prior to 9/11. Bin Laden and his burgeoning organization did not dispute the legitimacy of overthrowing apostate regimes, though which governments it considered apostate was not static. As will be discussed below, al-Qaida provided support for these endeavors against so-called apostate regimes for many years. Despite bin Laden’s willingness to back other causes, after 1990, he maintained that expelling the Americans from Saudi Arabia was the most pressing cause.

Al-Qaida thus developed a narrative that embraced the need to combat both the “far enemy” and the “near enemy.” As the CIA characterized it, bin Laden portrayed “the Islamic world as a civilization under siege by a conspiracy of foreign powers and corrupt Islamic regimes that he calls the Jewish-Crusader alliance. The goal of this alliance is the destruction of Islam by territorial conquest and the introduction of corrupting foreign influences” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Bin Laden’s Terrorist Operations” 4). Al-Qaida maintained that destroying the far enemy, the United States, should be the first priority. In so doing, the near enemies, apostate regimes, could then be more readily defeated. These victories would then lead to the re-establishment of an Islamic Caliphate. Al-Qaida maintained its early enmity for the “godless” Russians and other Communists, though this diminished in urgency with the Soviet Union’s downfall. In other words, al-Qaida’s narrative of its enemies and its rationales articulating why these governments were enemies, at least in principle, was sufficiently broad that it had common ground with most, if not all, other Sunni jihadist groups. Similarly, it viewed all Muslims living under the American-dominated world order and the apostate regimes as victims. This inclusive narrative created ample opportunities for al-Qaida to forge both enemy and victim narrative affinity with other groups.
However, al-Qaida’s ability to broadly establish narrative affinity could not indefinitely mask the differences in prioritization of these enemies within the narratives. Al-Qaida’s prioritization of the United States as the primary enemy in its narrative was often not shared by other Sunni jihadist groups. Thus narrative affinity was not seamless, even among fellow Sunni jihadists. Within the milieu, enemy and victim narratives were similar enough, especially immediately after the victory over the Soviets, to create a sense of affinity that could enable the creation of an alliance. Yet these differences sometimes limited the degree of inter-dependence once an alliance was formed.

*Al-Qaida’s Ethnic Identity*

Bin Laden emphasized unity among Muslims and sought to transcend nationalist and ethnic identities. These aspirations ultimately exceeded their results. Al-Qaida itself has a persistent, albeit rarely acknowledged, Arab ethnic identity. The group’s members have hailed from various nationalities, including outside the Arab world. However, the core of the organization and the vast majority of the members have consistently been Arab or of Arab descent. Its leaders have been almost exclusively Arab (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 89-90). Internal documents have typically been written in Arabic, as have the majority of its public statements, unless specifically intended for a different audience. Al-Qaida’s ultimate aim, the restoration of the Islamic caliphate, includes countries that are generally not ethnically Arab, but the Arab states have weighed far more heavily in al-Qaida’s calculations. In addition, militants hailing from those non-Arab countries, like Southeast Asia or South Asia, have tended to create separate groups rather than join al-Qaida.

This Arab identity was not confined to al-Qaida. A sense of Arab centric-ness existed within the broader Sunni jihadist movement. All participants in the anti-Soviet jihad were considered *mujahidin*. Yet within that, there was an ethnic sub-identity. The differentiation of “Arab Afghans”
among *mujahidin* reflected a persistent underlying Arab ethnic identity. Of particular consequence, this Arab ethnic identity shaped al-Qaida's alliance behavior. Al-Qaida certainly had non-Arab allies, but its relationship with fellow Arab groups differed in notable ways, particularly after 9/11, as will be discussed below.

In sum, al-Qaida’s identity offered a number of affinity points, consistent with its position as an alliance hub. The most salient features of its ideology were its adherence to a Sunni interpretation of Islam and commitment to jihad as the only way for change, and accordingly, most of its allies were fellow Sunni jihadist groups. Because al-Qaida’s rise coincided with a Sunni Islamo revival and it was fairly flexible about its ideological affinity standards for fellow Sunnis, it had numerous options for allies that met its ideological affinity requirement. Moreover, while al-Qaida’s enemy and victim narrative differed in emphasis from many groups, its inclusiveness offered abundant points of affinity. Al-Qaida’s Arab ethnic identity did not preclude alliances with non-Arab groups, but it was a feature that impacted the level of affinity. Overall, al-Qaida’s identity was conducive to alliances from an early point.

### 8.5 Al-Qaida’s Early Activities and Alliances: Building an Islamic Army While Bankrolling Jihad in Sudan

Bin Laden landed in Sudan, after his brief stint in Pakistan, sometime between late 1991 and early 1992 (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Historical Background” 1-2). The environment in Pakistan had grown far less accommodating for Arab Afghans after the Soviet withdrawal. Meanwhile, the National Islamic Front (NIF) government led by Hassan al-Turabi, which had taken power in 1989, invited the Saudi to come to Africa (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Historical Background” 1; United States Central Intelligence Agency “11
September” 1; Wright *The Looming Tower* 164). Turabi aspired to create an Islamic state and make Sudan the headquarters for the international Muslim community. It is was an ideal venue for bin Laden to build the Islamic Army and cultivate alliances, and the NIF recognized bin Laden’s funds as an asset for its project (Wright *The Looming Tower* 164; United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 1).

Sudan quickly emerged as a hub for Islamist militants all over the world (United States Congress Senate *Terrorism, Sudan* 13). Bin Laden was joined by militants hailing from both recently formed and well-established organizations as well as what investigative journalist Lawrence Wright aptly described as a cadre of “free-floating but ideologically charged veterans who were hard pressed to return home after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan” (*The Looming Tower* 163). Sudan was a particularly desirable location for groups that opposed regimes in North and East Africa due to its proximate location (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 90). Soon Sunni terrorist organizations in residence or regularly transiting included EIJ, Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG), the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad as well as burgeoning Islamist groups from Eritrea, Morocco, and Somalia (Scheuer 155). Even the notorious former PFLP-SOG lieutenant, Carlos the Jackal, found sanctuary in Sudan for a time, as did members of the Palestinian nationalist group, Abu Nidal Organization. It was a veritable melting pot of militancy. The NIF Government not only offered a haven, it encouraged cooperation and created additional opportunities for interaction, such as convening jihadists and other anti-Western entities at its Popular Arab and Islamic Conferences, which served as a venue to both create new connections and reinforce existing ones (United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 1-3; United States Congressional Senate *Terrorism, Sudan*).
Yet some notable Sunni militant groups were largely absent from Sudan. The Afghan mujahidin commanders continued to battle one another for control of their war-torn country. Unlike the Arab Afghans, the Pakistani groups that emerged from the mujahidin found ample haven in Pakistan under the tutelage of the Pakistani Army and a new raison d’etre in contesting New Delhi’s control over Indian-Administered Kashmir, so they did not re-locate to Sudan. Militants hailing from the Caucasus, Chechnya, and Central Asia also were minimally represented in Sudan, but still had some access to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Lastly, Filipino extremists had limited representation in Sudan. One feature that these groups shared was that they were not “Arab Afghans,” though many participated in the Afghan jihad. They were not ethnically Arab, and the militants who were resident in Sudan tended to have at least some Arab ethnic identity (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 89-90). While bin Laden provided some financial and rhetorical support to these others groups from a distance, al-Qaida’s relationships with the non-Arab organizations without regular representation in Sudan did not flourish to the same degree as those co-located Arab groups in Sudan during this period.

The bulk of al-Qaida’s efforts during this period were dedicated to two inter-related endeavors that impacted its alliances and development as an alliance hub. First, consistent with the NIF’s goals, bin Laden and his lieutenants wanted to support the creation of a “genuine” Islamic state in Sudan. Bin Laden poured resources into an array of investments in Sudan, including an estimated thirty businesses in industries including agriculture, import-export, banking, construction, and leather tanning (Scheuer 132; Gunaratna 31). Some of bin Laden’s investments helped the NIF government consolidate its hold on power—an undertaking he hoped would help to establish an economically-viable Islamic state—and others built an infrastructure to support the execution of jihad elsewhere. Khartoum gave bin Laden preferential treatment in properties and land deals in exchange for his assistance with ventures like the war in the south (United States
Then, bin Laden used some of the land acquired through deals with Khartoum to construct military training camps in Sudan, which were primarily for Arab Afghans (Scheuer 137).

Critically, from an alliance hub perspective, the NIF’s goal of creating a Muslim headquarters in Sudan dovetailed perfectly with bin Laden and his coterie’s other main goal—uniting jihadist movements throughout the world under the umbrella of an Islamic Army (Scheuer 140-1). Bin Laden and his associates reinforced relationships forged in South Asia, sought new ones, and tried to position themselves as the vanguard of the unwieldy jihadist forces unleashed by the victory over the Soviet Union (Burke 133). Bin Laden’s “Islamic Army” took on a coordinating role, such as forming a consultative shura council with representatives from the Sunni jihadist groups with a presence in Sudan (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaeda in Sudan” 1-2). These individuals were dually-hatted as leaders or senior members of their autonomous organizations and their groups’ representatives on this shura (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaeda in Sudan” 2). Alliances were already embedded in al-Qaeda’s organizational vision and culture. Even at this relatively early juncture, the 9/11 Commission Report assessed that:

[b]in Laden now had a vision of himself as head of an international jihad confederation. In Sudan, he established an “Islamic Army Shura” that was to serve as the coordinating body for the consortium of terrorist groups with which he was forging alliances... The groundwork for a true global terrorist network was being laid (58).

Al-Qaeda was developing as an organization and as an alliance hub simultaneously. Committees and roles within the group grew more defined as did its relationships with other groups. Bin Laden was identified as the leader, or amir, of the Islamic Army, responsible for major decisions and issuing orders. In addition to the broader coordinating shura with representatives from numerous groups, the Islamic Army had its own shura council. The functional committees that reported to the shura council included: a political/sharia committee that issued fatwas and made
judgments on religious matters; a financial and administrative committee responsible for money matters; an information committee that managed propaganda; and a military committee that trained, advised, and prepared operations (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Responsibilities” 1-4; United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Following” 1-2).

Though it was not yet the vanguard of the movement, bin Laden’s treasury served as a lubricant for jihadism and gave the developing group a heft that it could not have otherwise commanded (Director of Central Intelligence “Historical Background” 5). It was the next iteration of the Services Bureau created in Peshawar and training facilities in Khowst. Rather than assisting individuals in their quest to participate in the anti-Soviet jihad, al-Qaida now provided resources for jihadists to enable them to pursue an array of causes. As al-Qaida experts Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank asserted: “[i]n Sudan, Al Qaeda moved from an emphasis on training toward an emphasis on spreading its operations, influence, and know-how to different jihadist fronts across the world” (18). Al-Qaida was nurturing the seeds of jihad wherever there was fertile ground. The main assets it had to offer prospective allies—in their order of importance—were funding, technical assistance, and inspiration.

Bin Laden’s money was still the primary draw for prospective allies. Groups regularly solicited his assistance for various projects and causes, and he funded groups engaged in an array of jihadist ventures (Director of Central Intelligence "Written Statement for the Record of the Director of Central Intelligence” 5). By holding the purse strings, bin Laden sought to guide and nudge groups in the direction he wished them to go, but money alone did not bring control. He encouraged fellow jihadists to join him in Sudan, thereby bringing them into his sphere of influence and earning him their gratitude. For example, bin Laden paid for over 300 Arab Afghans still resident in Pakistan to come to Sudan when Islamabad pressured them to leave the country (Cragin 1059;
An abundance of causes needed cash as conflicts involving Muslims flared throughout the Middle East, Southeast Asia, East and North Africa, South Asia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. Specific accounts of bin Laden’s munificence are of varying credibility, but he was reputed to have given support to Islamic militants in the Philippines, Algeria, Jordan, Eritrea, Pakistan, Bosnia, Lebanon, Yemen, Libya, Chechnya, Somalia, and Egypt during this period (Benjamin and Simon 112; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Activities” 2).

The second resource al-Qaida offered was assistance, primarily in the form of training and advisors. Al-Qaida used this kind of aid to spread its influence and vision to other groups, many of which were relatively young and still formulating their organizational frames. Some of this assistance was still ultimately derived from bin Laden’s money. By 1994, at least four bin Laden-financed camps operated in Sudan with trainers from Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, and even the Palestinian territories, as well as some residual training facilities remaining in Afghanistan (Wright The Looming Tower 189; Director of Central Intelligence “Written Statements for the Record of the DCI 3). In addition to providing training on site, al-Qaida advisors and trainers deployed to conflict zones, for example Algeria and Somalia, which emerged as jihadi hotspots in the early 1990s (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 22). During its tenure in Sudan, the CIA estimated that al-Qaida supported operations conducted by at least eight other groups (United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 4).

Al-Qaida’s services were primarily, though not exclusively, provided to fellow jihadists. One notable exception occurred in 1992 when al-Qaida deployed a team of advisors, including a senior Egyptian lieutenant, Abu Hafs al-Masri, to Somalia to combat U.S. forces deployed there on a humanitarian mission (Director of Central Intelligence “Written Statements for the Record of the
Encouraged by the NIF to thwart the United States’ mission, which was viewed as a bid to establish control in the region, al-Qaida advisors forged ties with Somali jihadists, in particular a group called al-Ittihad al-Islamiyah (AIAI), including creating some training facilities (Bergen and Cruickshank 19-20; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Cooperation” 1-2). Al-Qaida had big ambitions for the collapsing state. It sought “to promote its ideology, gain an operational safe haven, manipulate underlying conditions to secure popular support and have adequate financing for continued operations. It achieved none of these objectives” (Watts, Shapiro, and Brown 4-5). Al-Qaida’s representatives became lost in the labyrinth of Somali clans and culture in the war zone, which, despite having some Arab ethnic identity features, was hopelessly foreign to al-Qaida’s men.

Identity affinity—that is working with fellow Sunni jihadists—soon proved an ineffective strategy to accomplish these goals. One al-Qaida operative deployed to Somalia lamented the role that identity affinity played in al-Qaida’s initial partner selection, arguing that AIAI was a sub-optimal partner, despite the identity affinity. He and his colleagues grew increasingly frustrated with AIAI, which they provided training for, but failed to direct or influence (Watts, Shapiro, and Brown 24). The al-Qaida operative bemoaned that:

[a]l-Qa’ida’s Salafist tendencies have led it to search for a political ally in Somalia with an identical intellectual focus. This is the greatest calamity. Nearly everywhere your situation and ours has no place for the ideal; just for that which is the least bad…. You must find men you can deal with, even if they are not from our venerable forefathers…. I do not mind cooperating with Aideed if you have made sure that what he is doing with the Americans is not staged (as quoted in Watts, Shapiro, and Brown 42-3).

Al-Qaida ultimately acquiesced to pragmatism and concentrated on provided training and support for the referenced Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed—who was decidedly not a fellow jihadist or devout Muslim, though he was nominally Sunni—primarily because he was the target of the United States for his role in the violence and famine in Somalia and had the most
capable force. This common enemy and threat was sufficient for ad hoc, temporary cooperation to occur between al-Qaida’s emissaries and Aideed’s men. It was one of few examples of times when al-Qaida would engage in a partnership that would violate its pledge that “[o]ur position with respect to the tyrants of the world, secular and national parties and the like is not to associate with them, to discredit them and to be their constant enemy till they believe in God alone” (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2). But the relationship did not persist after the immediate threat subsided.

Bin Laden viewed the U.S. involvement in Somalia as another example of Washington’s intention to occupy Muslim lands. At least one senior al-Qaida member deployed to Somali saw the conflict in Somalia as a site for a strategic clash with the superpower.

The American bald eagle has landed within range of our rifles. You can kill it or leave it permanently disfigured. If you do that, you will have saved Sudan, Yemen, Bab al-Mandab, the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and the waters of the Nile. Could you want more magnificent objectives of war than those? (qtd. in Bergen and Cruickshank 20).

Notably, despite the scale of the Somali people’s suffering and bin Laden’s fortune, al-Qaida still did not provide humanitarian relief or assistance to the Somali people. Al-Qaida remained committed to only being a jihadist organization, even when the population-in-need was entirely Muslim. Bin Laden later boasted of the victory in Mogadishu in ways that implied al-Qaida played a key role; however, the extent of al-Qaida’s actual involvement in the downing of two U.S. Blackhawk helicopters and the subsequent firefight that raged in the streets of Mogadishu on October 3-4, 1993 remains contested (Bergen and Cruickshank 21).

Irrespective of al-Qaida’s actual contribution to the events in Somalia, the outcome—a hasty U.S. withdrawal—made an impression and validated al-Qaida’s belief that the United States could be expelled from Muslim lands through a “few well-placed blows” delivered by jihadists and that alliances were a tool towards that end (United States District Court Southern District of New York, Director of Central Intelligence “Historical Background” 4). According to one al-Qaida operative,
“[t]he Somali experience confirmed the spurious nature of American power and that it has not recovered from the Vietnam complex. It fears getting bogged down in a real war that would reveal its psychological collapse at the level of personnel and leadership” (qtd. in Bergen and Cruickshank 21).

Lastly, while in Sudan, al-Qaida propagated a narrative that inspired others to engage in jihad, in a way that was consistent with its vision. The bin Laden-sponsored training camps proselytized a religious worldview replete with virulent anti-Americanism and that urged unity against that enemy. To his followers, in his training camps, and in his relationships with other groups, bin Laden repeatedly hammered home his conviction that Muslims must unite to expel the United States from Muslim lands, beginning with the Kingdom. This would precipitate the destruction of the existing system, including the downfall of the individual regimes that occupied many groups’ attentions (Gerges 150; Hegghammer 107).

In essence, at this stage, bin Laden sought to use his money and a balancing argument to build an anti-U.S. jihadist coalition that transcended nationalist identities. In the process, al-Qaida advocated for alliances, which also encouraged other groups to include alliances in their organizational frames, routines, problem-solving approaches, and culture. This outcome was subtle, but overall, created an environment conducive to relationships. Al-Qaida’s anti-United States “far enemy” narrative promoted unity and underscored the need for Sunni jihadist groups to work together against a common enemy and threat. But it was bin Laden’s assets more than his message that attracted other groups during this period (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Historical Background” 1-3).

Despite this narrative, a robust treasury, and an abundance of appreciative recipients, many of al-Qaida’s relationships would not qualify as alliances during this period. Bin Laden was able to
inspire, teach, and fund others to act on his sentiments and engage in cooperation, but few organizations made adjustments to accommodate al-Qaida’s agenda or reciprocated for what they received. Al-Qaida was still transitioning from a loose entity based on bin Laden’s money into a fully functioning organization. This limited its ability to forge organizational relationships with groups that were not heavily dependent upon it. Moreover, al-Qaida generally offered resources with no conditions or time horizon of continuing cooperation or consultation. Thus other groups were content to solicit and accept al-Qaida’s assistance as doing so required few obligations or requirements to consult al-Qaida or vice versa. Al-Qaida expert Michael Scheuer captured this dynamic when he asserted that “[i]t is impossible to build a time line for bin Laden’s organization, however, because al Qaeda has been more involved in supporting long-term Islamist insurgencies—over which it has little, if any, control” (150).

The combination of money, assistance, and proselytization may not yet have produced full-fledged alliances, but it produced violence consistent with al-Qaida’s agenda. Senior counterterrorism officials in the Clinton Administration Daniel Benjamin and Steve Simon summed up al-Qaida’s situation during its time in Sudan. “There was hardly a battle anywhere involving Islamic radicals in which al-Qaeda was not involved... [I]t created a role for itself as an international clearinghouse and bankroller of jihad” (113; emphasis added). In 1992, a hotel in Aden was bombed. The perpetrators of the attack believed that U.S. soldiers enroute to Somalia were staying there and claimed that they had received financing from bin Laden (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Cooperation” 2). Similarly, the culprits of the bombing of the Saudi National Guard office in Riyadh in 1995 cited bin Laden as a source of inspiration during their televised confessions (Benjamin and Simon 132). Bin Laden fostered an environment where attacks consistent with his vision were increasingly executed, even if the “line of responsibility” for operations did not always lead back to al-Qaida (Scheuer 154).
While al-Qaida supported other groups’ operations, it did not independently execute its own attacks while resident in Sudan. This was a deliberate decision. The group opted to wait several years before conducting its first attack because, as bin Laden explained, “[i]f we wanted to carry out small operations, it would have been easy to do... but the nature of the battle requires qualitative operations that affect the adversary, which obviously requires good preparation” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). In its exhortations to target the United States, al-Qaida largely focused on the need to strike America’s military might and military-related targets, as these were the mechanism through which the U.S. occupied Muslim lands. Though it did not conduct its own attacks yet, operations were still part of the group’s organizational frame from an early point. Al-Qaida commenced the initial preparation for its first operation in 1993, though it did not come to fruition for another five years (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 6; Benjamin and Simon 129-30; Reidel 60).

At this juncture, the Sunni jihadist movement was diverse and far from unified. Bin Laden was primarily regarded as “one of the most significant” financiers in a crowded field of militants pursuing parochial causes, sometimes in fierce competition with one another (Director of Central Intelligence “DCI Testimony” 5, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Usama bin Laden” 1). Al-Qaida was not considered the vanguard of a united Sunni Islamic jihadist movement, but it did succeed in “combining business with jihad under the umbrella of al-Qaida” (Director of Central Intelligence “Historical Background” 3). Despite his goal of promoting unity, gaining access to bin Laden’s treasury was sometimes another arena for rivalry as groups vied with one another for his funds, and interpreted his dispersions of money to reflect his preferences.

Strange Bedfellows
During this period of its organizational and alliance hub development, al-Qaida demonstrated more flexibility in its partner selection than it did in subsequent years. In addition to its temporary assistance to the Somali warlord Aideed, the group also worked with Shia militants in the early 1990s. As early as 1991, Khartoum and Tehran agreed to coordinate their activities in pursuit of their common “anti-imperialist objective.” Upon bin Laden’s arrival, the agreement expanded to include his burgeoning Islamic Army. The three were primarily motivated to balance against their common enemies, which included Israel and the United States, and, to a lesser extent, Arab regimes that supported the United States and Israel (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Financial Support” 2, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Links” 2-4).

Though bin Laden was reticent to cooperate with Shia, Turabi prevailed on bin Laden to engage in cooperation across the Sunni and Shia divide. Turabi tried to expand the parameters of al-Qaida’s identity affinity by arguing they were all Muslims with shared enemies. Al-Qaida was clearly already inclined towards alliances and willing to fulfill other groups’ needs. But as a young organization, like most Sunni groups, al-Qaida had its own learning needs as well, especially in terms of operational capability. For their part, Iran and Hizballah had much more experience and were well-positioned to transfer expertise and fulfill such needs (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Links” 4). This agreement offered al-Qaida a rare opportunity to be the recipient of services, rather than the provider. So it deployed members to Lebanon to receive training from Iran’s proxy, the Shia terrorist organization, Hizballah, in 1993 (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Financial Support” 2, United States District Court Southern District of New York v. Usama Bin Laden et al Defendants 15). While declassified CIA intelligence does not name Hizballah as an independent party in the initial
Khartoum-Tehran-al-Qaida agreement, it was apparently included via its relationship with the Iranian regime.

While al-Qaida had big ambitions, an ample treasury, and a vocal leader, it was still a relatively unknown group, compared to these Shia veterans (Wright *The Looming Tower* 270). From their perspective, training al-Qaida was a low-cost way to impart knowledge and skills to another entity willing to oppose the West and Israel (United States Central Intelligence Agency "Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Links" 3-4). Moreover, from an identity affinity standpoint, Hizballah was much less averse to working with Sunnis than al-Qaida was cooperating with Shia. Hizballah’s identity affinity is inclusive of Muslims more broadly, and it had advocated greater unity between Sunni and Shias (Blanford 450-1).

At this juncture, Hizballah was by far the more “accomplished” organization. Hizballah’s attacks against the U.S. in Lebanon that precipitated the U.S. withdrawal in the 1980s were the model for al-Qaida. Al-Qaida hoped Hizballah would teach it how to inflict a similar blow on the United States. Al-Qaida had yet to conduct any of its own operations, and preparations were underway for an attack that would not be executed until 1998. Al-Qaida learned operational techniques—most notably methods to conduct suicide operations, Hizballah’s specialty—and participated in several coordination meetings with Hizballah in Sudan (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 61).

After al-Qaida acquired these sought-after skills, in the absence of further needs, affinity or trust, the relationship languished. Suicide operations techniques are a relatively discrete skill and do not tend to require extensive follow on training. In addition, al-Qaida had little to offer its Shia counterpart in return. It had provided weapons in exchange for the training, so this exchange was discrete and reciprocal (Wright *The Looming Tower* 173). Thus when al-Qaida’s discrete learning
need was fulfilled, in the absence of ongoing organizational needs, affinity or trust, the relationship dithered.

The argument offered by the advocates in al-Qaida for cooperation with Hizballah emphasized the need to work against a common enemy, rather than a sense of affinity (United States District Court Southern District of New York 2001 286-291). The basis for identity affinity, primarily a shared enemy narrative, proved to be enough to initiate cooperation when coupled with an organizational need, but it was not enough to maintain the relationship absent these other factors. In other words, a common threat was simply not sufficient to sustain a relationship.

*The “Muslim Headquarters” Closes*

Despite bin Laden’s urgings that Sunni jihadis should unite against the United States, it was groups opposed to “apostate” regimes in the Middle East that launched the most audacious operations during this period. In particularly, militants with a presence in Sudan threatened the nearby governments in Egypt, Libya, and Algeria, in particular. However, these militants’ increasing violence were a reflection of their increasing desperation rather than strength, and their attacks led to mounting regional and international pressure on the safe haven in Sudan. The war in Algeria had reached a feverish pitch, and GIA grew increasingly indiscriminate in its violence. Bin Laden, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), EIJ, and others’ efforts to rein in GIA’s behavior were rebuffed and a break soon followed (Filiu “The Local” 219; Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 95-6; Wright *The Looming Tower* 190). In 1995, EIG operatives based in Sudan attempted—with assistance from bin Laden—to assassinate former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak while he was visiting Addis Ababa (Benjamin and Simon 131; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Usama bin Laden’s Financial Support” 2). Cairo demanded that the extradition of EIG members in Sudan, which Khartoum refused. Then five months later, EIJ suicide bombers drove a truck bomb into the Egyptian Embassy.
in Islamabad, killing fifteen people, precipitating even more pressure from Cairo and the international community on Sudan (Benjamin and Simon 132). That same year, a hastily-conceived operation to free an injured operative from a guarded hospital led to Tripoli’s discovery of a vast secret Islamist network throughout Libya. This revelation forced the LIFG to prematurely announce itself publicly in 1995, which resulted in a harsh crackdown within Libya and pressure on Khartoum to cease providing safe harbor to Libyan militants as well (Tawil Brothers in Arms 65-6).

The pressure on Khartoum from its neighbors mounted untenably, and its resolve to be an international jihadist headquarters waned. It refused to hand over the resident EIG or EIJ members to Egypt or extradite any LIFG members to Libya. But to ease tensions with at least one of its neighbors, the NIF Government demanded that the Libyans depart Sudan (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 62). Some of the ousted Libyans were furious at bin Laden for acquiescing to Khartoum—which in their eyes amounted to an abdication of their fight against Tripoli—while others sought protection through joining his group. The loss of the haven in Sudan—at a time when the group was exposed and under siege in Libya—was a serious blow to LIFG. This perceived breach contributed to the debates within the LIFG over whether to ally with al-Qaida nearly a decade later (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 62, Tawil Brothers in Arms 95). Soon thereafter, many Egyptians were also expelled from Sudan and scrambling to find a new base of operations. Some of them also grumbled that bin Laden failed to provide adequate assistance to his ally during this time of need (Higgins and Cullison 2-7). It was clear that bin Laden’s cachet was losing its luster for Khartoum (Wright The Looming Tower 219). Khartoum’s ideological commitment to serving as a hub for militant Islamists was running headlong into realpolitik considerations.
In addition to the censure from its neighbors, international condemnation and isolation of Sudan, spearheaded by the United States and Saudi Arabia, also continued to grow. Riyadh was furious about bin Laden’s open letter to a prominent Saudi cleric criticizing the government and decrying the Saudi religious establishment’s complicity in the U.S. occupation of the Holy Land (Reidel 52). The United States designated Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism, imposed sanctions, and withdrew its Embassy personnel to Kenya (Scheuer 156, Wright The Looming Tower 220). The United Nations passed resolutions calling on all states to reduce their presence in Khartoum, to restrict entrance of Sudanese diplomats, and to ban the Sudanese airline (Reidel 55). Khartoum tried to ward off the pressure by throwing the international community another bone—allowing the French Government to render Carlos the Jackal back to Paris. But it was too little, too late (Wright The Looming Tower 219).

By 1996, Khartoum calculated that the benefits of bin Laden’s presence no longer outweighed the costs. For his part, bin Laden was growing less secure in Sudan, particularly without his Egyptian clique (Benjamin and Simon 133). He was targeted in at least one assassination attempt while in Sudan (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 63). But there were few alternatives for him; his exile from Saudi Arabia was, by then, official and seemingly permanent. The Saudi Government had revoked his citizenship, and Khartoum’s efforts to strike a backroom deal to return him to the Kingdom repeatedly fell apart (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 64). Therefore, when it was time to leave Sudan in 1996, the clearest—perhaps the only—option for al-Qaida was to return to Afghanistan, where it had existing relationships and had maintained limited facilities in the interim. Bin Laden departed Sudan “significantly weakened,” as he left behind his substantial investments, particularly the land and property he had acquired, without adequate compensation (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 63-65). Bin Laden lost an estimated $160 million when he departed Sudan (Wright The Looming Tower 222). Given the
centrality of bin Laden’s finances to al-Qaida’s relationships, this loss had the potential to derail al-Qaida’s progress into becoming an alliance hub.

Although the departure was far from ideal, al-Qaida’s time in Sudan paid dividends in terms of its development into an alliance hub. During the time in Sudan, which the CIA likened to a “Terrorist University,” al-Qaida transformed from “an only partially realized idea to an international organization ready to operate on its own” (“11 September” 1). As Benjamin and Simon explained, bin Laden had fostered a situation whereby:

[i]n return for allying himself with the particular, local agendas of jihadist groups in so many parts of the world, he secured their support for his own evolving vision of the struggle. He was building a coalition, ensuring that he had loyalists operating all over the world as well as fresh recruits streaming into the network for later use (114).

The CIA similarly concluded that “while in Sudan, al-Qaida developed relations with every noteworthy Islamic extremist group” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 3; emphasis added). This included nearly twenty groups in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, and East Asia, and cooperation in areas such as funding, smuggling, training, and operational assistance (United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 3).

The time in Sudan was critical to al-Qaida’s development as an alliance hub. Its prospects suffered a serious blow in the face of jihadists’ expulsion from Sudan and the losses bin Laden incurred in the process. Returning to Afghanistan was one of very few viable options remaining from a safe haven standpoint. The site of such ruin and dashed hopes, located outside the Middle East, Afghanistan did not appear to be a desirable venue to cultivate the position and ties so assiduously built in Sudan (Bergan and Cruickshank 17).
8.6 Al-Qaeda Blossoms into a Full-Fledged Alliance Hub: “Terrorism Incorporated” in Afghanistan

Under duress, bin Laden arrived in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan in 1996 and, once again, was joined by his confidants (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 63). Like his fortune, bin Laden’s inner circle was diminished by the death of one of the Egyptian co-founders of al-Qaeda, Abu Ubaydah al-Banshiri, who drowned in a boating accident in East Africa (Bergen The Osama bin Laden I Know 431). Zawahiri was not yet present in Afghanistan, as he engaged in last ditch efforts to make EIJ self-sufficient (Higgins and Cullison 5). Despite the drawbacks, al-Qaeda’s ability to return was itself a reflection of the group’s carefully cultivated relationships (United States Central Intelligence Agency “11 September” 4). Bin Laden was able to use his contacts with influential Afghan mujahidin-era commanders, such as Younis Khalis, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and Jalaluddin Haqqani, to facilitate his return. He deftly maintained friendly ties with warring and competing factions in the fractious Afghan environment (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65; Scheuer 164; Tawil Brothers in Arms 146).

In addition, a residual jihad training and logistical center functioned in the interim years. A system of overlapping and inter-related training and housing facilities was used by various remaining Sunni jihadist groups, mostly non-Arabs (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Sketch” 15). Afghanistan and Pakistan served as a regional training and recruitment base, particularly for jihadist conflicts outside the Middle East, such as Tajikistan, Kashmir, and Chechnya (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Usama bin Laden’s Financial Support” 2). A modified version of the Services Bureau in Peshawar still operated, raising money for some jihadist conflicts, like Bosnia, and directing manpower towards others, such as Kashmir (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Sketch” 18).
Despite the glory years in the 1980s, the move to Afghanistan did not appear to be ideal for al-Qaida (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 89-90). It went from a situation where the group had robust funds, investments, and haven under the protection of the central government to a country that had been wracked by war for decades. The wars had decimated Afghanistan’s infrastructure, leaving a society that had experienced little progress or development in the intervening years. In the absence of a central government, the conditions in Afghanistan appeared rife with opportunities for betrayal or hostile government action. For its part, the CIA initially believed that bin Laden’s move would be advantageous for its counterterrorism efforts (Lichtblau). But by 2001, the Agency bemoaned the country’s mountainous terrain as a “natural defense against law enforcement and counterterrorism actions” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan: An Incubator” 2).

Al-Qaida left behind in Sudan an infrastructure of businesses, guesthouses, and training camps that drew prospective allies. Much of this was lost in the move to Afghanistan. Khartoum acquired many of al-Qaida’s remaining assets, including land and funds (Rabasa et al 61). Resident militants scattered. Though its ideology and enemies had not changed, al-Qaida’s ability to continue operating as an alliance hub, particularly in so much as it relied on fulfilling other organizations’ needs, appeared seriously damaged.

Yet, even at this juncture, al-Qaida’s new residence had promise. Afghanistan was still a symbolically-valuable venue where Islamist militants could train and gather (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan: An Incubator” 2). While al-Qaida preferred proximity to the Middle East, in Afghanistan bin Laden could more openly propagate his radical message and export it beyond the Middle East (Lichtblau). No longer constrained by the Sudanese Government, bin Laden immediately used his freedom to make a propaganda push for his anti-“Zionist-Crusader Alliance” narrative. Bin Laden fired off a “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the
Land of the Two Holy Places” shortly after his arrival in Afghanistan, in which he heralded his new safe haven in the Hindu Kush, bemoaned the continuing presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, and declared his intent to wage war against the United States (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65; Reidel 57). The statement was overwhelmingly focused on the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia and the Saudi regime’s failure to protect its sacred territory. He also condemned the occupation of al-Aqsa mosque in Palestine and “[m]assacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Kashmir, Assam, Philippine, Fatani, Ogaden, Somalia, Eritrea, Chechnya and in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience” (“Bin Laden’s Fatwa”). But the primary enemy bin Laden focused on in the statement was the “Zionist-Crusader Alliance.” Absent from the lengthy statement were references to the enemies that consumed many of his allies: Cairo, Tripoli, Algiers, and other governments in the Middle East. Instead he focused on conflicts involving Muslims and non-Muslims.

A New Sheriff in Town

By the end of 1996, the situation in Afghanistan had changed dramatically, to the advantage of al-Qaida’s alliance position. With assistance from the Pakistani Army and its intelligence service, the Taliban swept through much of Afghanistan and took over Kabul. Mujahidin commanders Yunis Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani—both consummate survivors—decided to join the Taliban, and with that, the Taliban’s influence extended east into Jalalabad, where bin Laden had been residing (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65, Fair and Jones 15; Tawil Brothers in Arms 149). These opportunistic moves by Haqqani and Khalis aside, the Taliban was an unknown quantity to many in Arab jihadi circles. Its ascension would be a timely gift for the fledging jihadists in the Middle East (Tawil Brothers in Arms 147). While al-Qaida relied on existing contacts to facilitate its return, at the Taliban leader’s request, bin Laden re-located to the Taliban’s stronghold in Qandahar
where he ingratiated himself with the newest power broker in Afghanistan. This turn of events, which al-Qaida had neither anticipated nor caused, improved al-Qaida's alliance hub prospects significantly.

The Taliban proved to be such a willing host that it compensated for its other weaknesses. While inward-looking and consumed with tribal and ethnic affairs in Afghanistan, the Taliban also welcomed roaming and exiled jihadists from all over the world (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Afghanistan” 1). They flocked from the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa, and neighboring Pakistan. Their presence bolstered Taliban claims to be an Islamic Emirate and assisted in its consolidation of control of the country, particularly the ongoing conflict with the North Alliance (Director of Central Intelligence “Written Statements for the Record of the DCI 5; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 66). Foreign volunteers supplemented Taliban forces against the Northern Alliance, serving as “shock troops,” who embraced martyrdom and thus did not fight according to Afghan custom (Burke 171; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan: An Incubator” 2).

Bin Laden, after partially recovering from the financial hit he incurred when he left Sudan, took on his now-familiar role as generous benefactor, providing the Taliban an estimated $20 million a year (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65; Benjamin and Simon 139; Rabasa et al. 61). Though decidedly less cosmopolitan, the Taliban was a more than suitable replacement for the NIF. In Sudan, the relationship was reciprocal, but also clearly hierarchical. While interested in bin Laden’s resources, Khartoum was protective of its position of power and authority vis-à-vis its militant guests. It was, after all, a government with an army and all the trappings of sovereignty. In Afghanistan, al-Qaida was still deferential, but it was an organization sponsoring a state, rather than an organization sponsored by a state (Director of Central Intelligence “Written Statements for the
Record of the DCI” 5). The Taliban and al-Qaida relationship lacked the same degree of hierarchy in part because the Taliban lacked the institutionalized qualities of a government, particularly in the early years. A division of responsibility developed whereby the Taliban generally retained the authority about who could come to Afghanistan and the scope of jihadist groups’ presence, while al-Qaida was an important resource once they were in country.

However, the al-Qaida and Taliban relationship was not without its problems. Bin Laden caused friction with his hosts, repeatedly testing the Taliban’s Pashtun hospitality by contravening Taliban leader Mullah Omar’s instructions to cease his provocative interviews and public declarations (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 1). Some Taliban officials even advocated for bin Laden’s expulsion (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 1). Once again, bin Laden’s antics drew the ire of Riyadh—one of only three governments to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate Government of Afghanistan—and the United States. Bin Laden’s presence stunted any hopes that the Taliban had about gaining international legitimacy or recognition. His actions perpetuated the Taliban’s isolation and set into motion a cycle whereby the more isolated the Taliban became, the more dependent it was on bin Laden for financial assistance and an alternative form of legitimacy (Burke 171). While Mullah Omar tried to rein in bin Laden at various points, unlike the NIF, he steadfastly stood by him in the face of internal criticism and external pressure (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 66).

The timing of the Taliban’s takeover was fortuitous for the ailing Sunni jihadist groups. Their once-promising efforts in places like Algeria, Libya, and Egypt were on the verge of decisive defeat. In their desperation, jihadists engaged in increasingly senseless and counter-productive violence, which further alienated them from their constituents (Hegghammer 99). Gerges argued that, by this juncture, “their insurrection [had] lost momentum and they were dealt mortal blows by
Muslim government security services... [T]hey proved to be no match against the powerfully entrenched security apparatus and could not withstand its counteroffensive” (25, 66). Exile in Afghanistan was a timely option for these groups to recuperate, especially given the expiration of Khartoum’s hospitality. Bin Laden’s narrative also provided an explanation for their defeat; the near enemies could not be destroyed as long as they remained supported by the far enemy.

Many Sunni jihadist groups shared al-Qaida’s organizational structure in that they were solely jihadist groups with no political or humanitarian wings and were led by an *amir*, a *shura* council, and committees dedicated to military, propaganda, and religious matters. Despite these similarities, groups’ decisions about whether to go into exile in Afghanistan varied, falling into three overarching categories. First, in some cases, like the LIFG and EIJ, a critical mass of the group relocated to Afghanistan. Second, other cases, particularly the EIG, only part of the group departed, while others remained at home to continue fighting. Some simply did not have the option to leave because too many members were imprisoned. The third option was not to relocate and instead continue the fight at home, as occurred in Algeria. The GIA had imploded, and its successor, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), was on the verge of eclipsing it. While the jihadists had clearly lost the war, the GSPC elected to stay in Algeria. Some Algerians journeyed to Afghanistan, but the GSPC did not have an organizational presence there the way its peers did.

The option selected had ramifications for these groups’ alliances with al-Qaida during this period and in the future. Co-location in Afghanistan did not guarantee an alliance and even when alliances occurred, the level of inter-dependence differed. But co-location in exile coupled with the organizational weakness that spurred the relocation increased the opportunities for interaction and the likelihood of an alliance. The bifurcation of some organizations—with a portion of groups in hiding, imprisoned, or fighting at home, while other parts operated in exile in Afghanistan—laid the
groundwork for internal dissension about alliance decisions as those co-located tended to favor an alliance with al-Qaida and face opposition from those located elsewhere. Groups that were not co-located in Afghanistan or did not partake in training at al-Qaida-funded facilities, unsurprisingly, tended not to develop the same inter-dependent relationships with Qaida.

Overall, the safe haven in Afghanistan thrived, and al-Qaida flourished with it, as did its alliances with other militant groups (United States Central Intelligence Agency "Al-Qaida in Sudan). As the Director of the CIA reported to the 9/11 Commission, “Afghanistan became something akin to Terrorism Incorporated, a country with a vast infrastructure of camps and facilities for refuge, training, indoctrination, arming, and financing of tens of thousands of Islamic extremists from all over the world” ("Historical Background” 11). The sanctuary in Afghanistan had many of the same features as the safe haven in Sudan—training facilities, guest houses, ample meeting places and opportunities for interaction—but on a larger scale and with less restrictions. If al-Qaida cohered into a functioning group with a plethora of relationships while in Sudan, then it was in Afghanistan that it developed into a complex, multi-layered, and sophisticated international alliance hub. Its organizational structure remained largely the same, with bin Laden as the amir, a shura council, and functional committees. But these structures grew in size and sophistication. A mature organization, al-Qaida now functioned “like a global criminal syndicate or mini-state, with political, financial, administrative, legal, military, security, and intelligence components” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands”1). Between its personnel and its alliances, by 1999, CIA estimated that al-Qaida’s network spanned sixty countries and could manage multiple operations simultaneously (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 1).
By its design, al-Qaida was a focal point for many of the other resident organizations (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). In Sudan, bin Laden’s money was the primary attraction for other groups; in Afghanistan, it was the environment that his money created, particularly the training camps and safe haven, through al-Qaida’s preferential relationship with the Taliban (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 6). Instead of funds, training was the “currency to increase its influence” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1). This training was particularly valuable for new groups and groups seeking to recover and rebuild.

The Director of the CIA explained that “[t]he al-Qaida-Taliban camps formed the foundation of a worldwide network by sponsoring and encouraging Islamic extremists from diverse locations to forge longstanding ideological, logistical, and personal ties” (Director of Central Intelligence “Historical Background” 12). Over two dozen training camps were operating in Afghanistan—some were larger, basic training and indoctrination centers, while others offered more advanced, hands-on training or sophisticated, technical subjects. Not all of the facilities were under al-Qaida’s rubric, but al-Qaida used its training camps to vet allies, attempt to absorb or co-opt other groups, and recruit the most promising trainees. It even provided funding and trainers for other organizations’ camps to create a sense of indebtedness (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan: An Incubator” 1-4; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1-4). A long-time al-Qaida member characterized the training as “a strategic plan on al-Qaida’s part; it provided training to any Muslim, even if he only had one day to spare” (qtd. in Lahoud Beware of Imitators 49). These camps were a venue for al-Qaida to channel the energies of its followers and its allies towards the United States and, equally importantly, and to situate itself as the vanguard of this effort (Scheuer 182; Hegghammer 108).
Declarations and Acts of War

Two years after returning to Afghanistan, al-Qaida was poised to make its “public launch.” Its internal house was in order: its treasury was at least partially re-built; its safe haven in Afghanistan was secure; its links with other jihadists were flourishing; its base was solidified; and preparations for its first attack were reaching the final stages (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 67). Bin Laden laid out his vision and ambitions in a declaration from the “International Islamic Front.” Benjamin and Simon characterized the February 1998 declaration as “canonical bin Laden: a call to action to all Muslims, a summons to overcome imposed divisions, a demand that injustices be set right” (Benjamin and Simon 150). It focused on three main grievances against the U.S.: 1) the continued presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia; 2) the impact of U.S. sanctions against Iraq; and 3) the U.S. Government’s support for Israel (Reidel 59-60).

This declaration represented an important shift in terms of al-Qaida’s justification of its targeting and tactics. It officially expanded the set of permissible targets in its declared war against the United States. Pointing out that civilians pay taxes that support these U.S. Government’s policies, al-Qaida sought to legitimize targeting American civilian targets as well as military ones (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 3). In so doing, it was laying the groundwork for its first strike as well as ones to follow and encouraging others to do the same. The declaration asserted that the United States had declared war on Islam, which created an obligation for Muslims to wage jihad in defense of their religion, and it was thus permissible to strike all facets of American power (Gunaratna 45). These positions were couched in religious justifications, and thus required religious authority to declare. What al-Qaida lacked in credentials to issue such edicts, it sought to acquire through partners.
The 1998 statement was an important development in al-Qaida’s alliance behavior. For the first time, bin Laden used one of his public statements as an alliance-building tool (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). He solicited additional signatories to publicly align with his agenda and form the nucleus of a counter-coalition to the “Zionist-Crusader alliance.” The declaration was intended to be a show of unity and sign of the growing strength of al-Qaida’s alliances. It was also a reflection on al-Qaida’s desire to have other groups come under its banner (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). This was the only occasion that al-Qaida issued a statement with multiple fellow signatories to try to create a public coalition, which suggests that the outcome was suboptimal from al-Qaida’s perspective.

Despite naming themselves the “International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders,” the signatories of this declaration fell well short of a jihadist quorum (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). Despite the presence of dozens of groups in Afghanistan and al-Qaida’s connections to “every notable Islamic extremist group,” there were only four other signatories: Zawahiri as the leader of EIJ, Rifai Ahmad Taha from EIG, Fazlul Rahman on behalf of the “Jihad Movement of Bangladesh,” likely a reference to Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami-Bangladesh (HUJI-B), and Mir Hamza as a representative of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islami Pakistan (JUI-P) (Open Source Center 1, Wright The Looming Tower 260). From a legitimacy and prestige perspective, the Egyptian groups were critical signatories. However, Zawahiri and Taha’s positions were not coordinated with their respective organizations and both experienced significant backlash from their groups. Taha—the head of EIG’s overseas shura—was forced to withdraw his signature as a representative of EIG by the group’s leaders in Egypt (Scheuer 186; Wright The Looming Tower 260). Zawahiri also faced stiff opposition to his signature from an already weakened and divided EIJ, and even offered to resign if the group would not agree to his position. But unlike Taha, he refused to withdraw his signature (Wright The Looming Tower 260). In
addition, the Bangladeshi signatory was not well-known or an influential group within the movement. Perhaps most puzzling, the JUI-Pakistan was an Islamist political party, rather than a jihadist organization. Its signature was particularly unusual, given how critical al-Qaida was of groups that participate in political processes. All in all, it was not a particularly impressive coalition to oppose major state powers, especially given the plethora of groups residing in Afghanistan and cooperating with al-Qaida.

Exactly which groups were asked to join the statement remains unclear, but bin Laden sent envoys to various countries and messages to groups to solicit signatures. LIFG was among the groups that declined to join (Tawil Brothers in Arms 153). While LIFG was not as well-known as its Egyptian counterparts, it was one of the largest groups in Afghanistan, so it could have provided additional heft to bin Laden’s effort. A former member explained the group’s refusal to sign: “[m]erging with another group would have meant the LIFG losing its freedom to operate independently in Libya; it was an idea that we rejected from the outset” (as quoted in Tawil Brothers in Arms 180). The statement also received a lukewarm reception by other sizeable groups, such as the Pakistani group Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, which rejected al-Qaida’s contention about the need to focus on the United States and continued to emphasize the primacy of its parochial agenda against India (Scheuer 187). Although one political party signed, conspicuously absent from the declaration were Islamist organizations with a mass followings, such as the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) or the Muslim Brotherhood, who had been shunned by al-Qaida (Gerges 161).

Al-Qaida’s declaration faced resistance from some of its peers on several grounds. First, some disagreed with the International Front’s emphasis on the United States and Israel as the primary enemies. Second, the decision to openly provoke the United States and thereby jeopardize the Afghanistan safe haven was considered dangerous by groups either in the midst of re-building
or loyal to the Afghan Taliban’s rule there. Third, like LIFG, other groups balked at relinquishing their autonomy by signing onto al-Qaeda’s agenda. Fourth, some questioned whether declaring war on civilians was consistent with Islamic law (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 153-4). As a result of these concerns, few signed on to bin Laden’s statement.

It clearly would have been advantageous for al-Qaeda to get as many signatories as possible, and to get greater clerical buy-in for its positions. Its first attacks did not occur for another six months, so there was time to get more signatures. Taken together, this suggests that bin Laden was simply unable to get additional buy-in for his venture, even from groups receiving assistance from al-Qaeda or cooperating with it. It had an array of informal allies that shared members, received funding, shared facilities and contacts, but they were not willing to join this public coalition (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). Overall, Wright aptly analogized al-Qaeda’s posture in early 1998 to that of a blowfish—an entity deliberately trying to appear larger than it actually was (*The Looming Tower* 270).

This campaign was part of the al-Qaeda preparation to transition from a support role to a major player in its own right. Alliances and operations were inter-related for al-Qaeda. Its web of alliances extended its operational reach and increased its operational capability. In turn, it assisted other groups to conduct their operations through training, funds, and advice. This dynamic was embedded within the training camp system in Afghanistan, which was a way “to build an international network of trained Islamic terrorists to which it [al-Qaida] could later turn for support for its operations” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaeda in Sudan” 1). Though al-Qaeda assisted with other groups’ operations and was assisted by them to prepare its operations, it did not generally conduct joint operations the way that the PFLP-SOG did with its allies (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 7).
Al-Qaida then conducted an operation to match its rhetoric (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 67). In August, two truck bombs navigated by suicide operatives struck the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania within five minutes of each other (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 70). The date of the attack, August 7, marked the anniversary of the day that U.S. troops had deployed to Saudi Arabia eight years earlier (Gunaratna 46). The attacks killed over 200 people, mostly local Africans, and injured thousands more (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks70). Combined with the declaration, al-Qaida hoped that this attack would improve its standing, demonstrate its capabilities to skeptics and fence sitters alike, and strengthen its coalition against “Jews and Crusaders” (Scheuer 188).

Alliances were essential to al-Qaida’s first operation. The local East Africa network al-Qaida had cultivated while in Sudan was key to the preparation and execution of the attacks, but they were largely part of the group. The use of the suicide attackers was an effective implementation of the skills al-Qaida had learned from Hizballah several years earlier. Even more than that, the tactic and target selection reflected al-Qaida’s close alliance with EIJ. EIJ conducted a similar attack on the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in 1996 and plotted one against the U.S. Embassy in Tirana that was disrupted (Scheuer 266). Zawahiri had issued an ominous warning to the United States in the weeks prior to the East Africa operations as well. Given the extensive involvement of dual EIJ-al-Qaida members in the planning of this attack, the Embassy attacks are one of the few al-Qaida operations that could be considered a joint operation.

In response to the Embassy attacks, the United States launched cruise missiles against targets in Sudan and Afghanistan (Wright The Looming Tower 282-3). The missiles struck four training camps in Afghanistan and a medical facility in Sudan suspected of being involved in the production of chemical weapons (Richter 219). Even the U.S. response demonstrated the difficulty
separating al-Qaida from its allies by this point. A number of those killed by the strikes were militants from an allied Pakistani Deobandi militant group, Harakat ul-Mujahidin, who were co-located with al-Qaida at the camps (Richter 220-1; Fair and Jones 16).

Instead of serving as an effective deterrent, the United States’ response generated significant controversy, particularly the legitimacy of targeting the Sudanese facility. Moreover, the strikes increased bin Laden’s mystique, as he flaunted his ability to hit and then elude a super power (Scheuer 252). They also produced a rally around the flag effect within the Taliban that actually improved Taliban-al-Qaida’s ties, though following the attacks, Taliban leadership sought to “keep a watch on him” (United States Department of State 1998c 1-9; United States Department of State, Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: [name redacted]” 1-8). Mullah Omar’s subsequent rhetoric suggested that the Taliban was even absorbing some of al-Qaida’s pan-Islamic jihadist message. He issued statements criticizing Saudi Arabia and the U.S. presence in the Kingdom, a stance that was controversial within the Taliban (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State “Afghanistan” 1, United States Department of State, Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: Reported Activities”).

The timing of the Embassy attacks was problematic for the Taliban because it coincided with period of heightened tensions with neighboring Iran (Hegghammer 110; Fair and Jones 16; Tawil Brothers in Arms 157). During the Taliban’s takeover of Mazar-e-Sharif, Iranian diplomats in the Consulate there were killed. The Taliban’s abuses of Afghan Shia had already raised Tehran’s hackles, but the murder of its diplomats crossed a red line. In response, Iranian announced military exercises and a troop buildup on its border with Afghanistan (Tawil Brothers in Arms 157). While this was of grave concern to the Taliban, the combination of the International Front declaration, the East Africa Embassy attacks, the U.S. strikes, and even the specter of a Shia threat from Iran
attracted a new wave of prospective jihadists to Afghanistan and into the training camps and conflict (Wright *The Looming Tower* 262).

*A State Within a State*

After the Embassy bombings, al-Qaida’s position in Afghanistan continued to improve to the point that the group was effectively a parallel jihadist government in Afghanistan. It was a key nexus for cooperation with an array of Sunni militant groups and had tentacles all over the world (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). In Afghanistan, al-Qaida could provide “training, safe haven, money-making opportunities, access to arms and illicit material, publishing and media facilities, communications, transportation, documentation, technical support, intelligence, counterintelligence, and liaison with other groups” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Sketch” 5). In other words, al-Qaida had developed all the trappings of a state.

It controlled territory, maintained an army and waged war, forged alliances, taxed and spent, and enforced a system of law. The de facto sovereignty it enjoyed in Afghanistan offered great advantages: a territorial base, training facilities, and a secure headquarters (Benjamin and Simon 169).

Al-Qaida was in a position to act akin to a state sponsor as well as a terrorist organization. After the tepid success of its “International Front” declaration, al-Qaida invested heavily in its alliances over the next three years, both forging new partnerships and consolidating existing ones. Burke described how bin Laden and his followers:

had access to huge resources, both symbolic and material, which they could use to project its power and influence internationally. They even had a country they could virtually call their own. They were thus able to offer everything a state could offer to a militant group by way of support (16).

Al-Qaida simultaneously developed its internal capability and pursued multiple operations, including several timed to coincide with the millennium. In December 1999, Jordanian authorities arrested sixteen militants planning to bomb the Radisson Hotel in Amman as well as other tourist
sites (Wright *The Looming Tower* 297). An operative who trained in an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan, Ahmed Ressam, was apprehended at a border crossing into the United States from Canada with a sizeable amount of explosive materiel. He planned to bomb the Los Angeles airport. An attack against the USS *The Sullivans* on January 3, 2000 in Aden failed when the skiff filled with explosives sank because its cargo was too heavy (Wright *The Looming Tower* 318).

Later that year, this latter plan was successfully operationalized when al-Qaida struck the USS *Cole* using suicide bombers in a fiberglass fishing boat that rammed into the warship while it was docked in Aden. Seventeen American sailors were killed and forty-five more were injured in the attack (Wright *The Looming Tower* 320). This attack further improved al-Qaida’s desirability as a partner and its reputation among jihadists. The camps in Afghanistan swelled, and its coffers were restocked (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 161). This influx of money helped appease the Taliban, which continued to come under international pressure to cease harboring al-Qaida (Wright *The Looming Tower* 331).

The relationship between the Taliban and its foreign “guests” was not uniform. Many of the foreign jihadists, including bin Laden, swore allegiance to Mullah Omar as the “Leader of the Faithful.” But the sincerity of that pledge varied as did views about the purpose of Afghanistan. Some genuinely wanted to live under Omar’s rule in a “pure Islamic state,” and viewed the experience in Sudan as a cautionary tale of what happened when foreign jihadists overstepped (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 2). Others derided the Afghan Taliban as an unsophisticated tribal force, and saw Afghanistan primarily as a launching pad for their jihadist campaigns (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 169). While they paid lip service to their hosts, they were not concerned about the ramifications of their actions for the Taliban.
For its part, the Taliban’s hold on power in Afghanistan was expanding and strengthening, and it sought to better regulate the panoply of jihadist groups operating in its territory (Tawil Brothers in Arms 167). As the Taliban grew stronger—in part courtesy of assistance provided by the resident jihadists—it sought to bring its “guests” under greater control. Perpetually frustrated in its efforts to garner international recognition, the Taliban transported the concept to its “guests” and “officially recognized” more than a dozen resident groups. The Taliban then placed many of the Arabs under the command of an Uzbek commander whom it trusted. But relations between the Uzbek groups and the Arab groups, including al-Qaida, were often uneasy, and the Arabs chaffed at being subordinate to a non-Arab (Tawil Brothers in Arms 169). Al-Qaida’s efforts to absorb its allies and recruit their more promising members sometimes ran afoul with other leaders. In one instance, it almost led to armed conflict with members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan when al-Qaida tried to co-opt one of its members (Tawil Brothers in Arms 170).

In addition, the haven in Afghanistan offered space for new organizations to form. Despite bin Laden’s exhortations to transcend nationalist boundaries, groups were typically organized along national lines. For example, the Moroccans banded together to form the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM). Abu Musab al-Zarqawi formed a group comprised mostly of jihadists from the Levant. The Tunisians created the Tunisian Combatant Group. Small groups of Turks and Kurds operated from Afghanistan as well (Tawil Brothers in Arms 170). These groups had ties to al-Qaida at an early organizational age, and immediately benefitted from al-Qaida’s services in Afghanistan. Yet the fact that they formed at all, rather than joining al-Qaida, suggests that al-Qaida was still not able to fully harness the jihadist manpower under its rubric and overcome nationalist identities and parochial aims.
Despite these tensions and shortfalls, this period was the apex of al-Qaida’s alliances. The combination of its resources, safe haven, and two high-profile attacks against the United States created a powerful appeal from an alliance perspective. The 9/11 Commission Report summed up the overall conditions by saying:

The alliance with the Taliban provided al-Qaeda a sanctuary in which to train and indoctrinate fighters and terrorists, import weapons, forge ties with other jihad groups and leaders, and plot and staff terrorist schemes. While bin Laden maintained his own al-Qaeda guesthouses and camps for vetting and training recruits, he also provided support to and benefitted from the broad infrastructure of such facilities in Afghanistan made available to the global network of Islamist movements. U.S. intelligence estimates put the total number of fighters who underwent instruction in Bin Laden-supported camps in Afghanistan from 1996 through 9/11 at 10,000 to 20,000 (67).

Nearly every group that resided in Sudan or Afghanistan or cycled through training camps there was connected to al-Qaida. But all these ties were not equal. Given how pervasive al-Qaida’s influence and money was during this period, there were few ways, other than the 1998 statement and the joint attack with EIJ, to discern how much success al-Qaida was having in shifting groups away from their parochial aims and towards its agenda against the United States. The dynamic in Afghanistan was such that individuals and groups regularly trained together in the camps, fought against the Northern Alliance or interacted simply in day-to-day life, but it was unclear how strong these ties were and which had staying power (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan: An Incubator” 1). Al-Qaeda built relationships in which resources typically flowed from it to its allies, but also sought partners that it could call upon for support and assistance as well (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5).

The First Merger

Al-Qaeda’s preparations to strike in the United States had been underway for several years. Bin Laden was impatient for this attack to occur, but the operational manager of the attack, Khalid Sheikh Mohamed, largely resisted his pressure, and the plot progressed gradually. While few knew
the details, rumor swirled around Afghanistan about an impending “big job” (Wright *The Looming Tower* 356). As was the case prior to the 1998 Embassy attacks, bin Laden wanted to cement some of his organization’s relationships before the attack. Perhaps most important was al-Qaida’s alliance with EIJ. This was not a mere formality, as some have maintained. Zawahiri had signed onto the 1998 declaration, but faced significant fallout within his group for doing so. He even subsequently relinquished the leadership position of EIJ. Back in charge, he aggressively pursued the finalization of a merger.

From al-Qaida’s perspective, the merger with EIJ was the culmination of a well-established organizational relationship, numerous close personal relationships, and multiple loci of trust. Al-Qaida had a strong Egyptian core from the outset, and dual al-Qaida-EIJ members were influential within al-Qaida. Bin Laden’s pressure on EIJ to shift its focus to coincide with al-Qaida’s agenda mounted. The timing of this effort suggests that bin Laden wanted to secure EIJ’s commitment to al-Qaida for the next phase, an escalation in the confrontation with the United States. The once-dominant EIJ was already dependent on al-Qaida in most respects and had no viable way forward on its own (Higgins and Cullison 2-10, Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 24; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Incorporation” 2). From al-Qaida’s perspective, given its intentions and ambitions, it no longer made sense to continue to support a separate EIJ pursuing a failed parochial agenda against Cairo. EIJ’s members in Afghanistan were already essentially part of al-Qaida, but EIJ members elsewhere resisted the merger. Zawahiri insisted and ultimately prevailed in spite of these objections. In June 2001, the announcement was made that two groups had joined forces and would now be known as “al-Qaida al-Jihad” (bin Laden 1). While both names were formally part of the group’s title, it was clear that the once-dominant EIJ had been absorbed into al-Qaida (Wright *The Looming Tower* 336).
The merger with EIJ served as a model of what al-Qaida hoped would occur with other allies. It was not satisfied with alliances; bin Laden wanted to bring allies under al-Qaida’s rubric. The public announcement of the merger with EIJ offered an opportunity to display how the alliance process worked. However, none of al-Qaida’s other allies followed suit. EIJ was the first organization to adopt al-Qaida’s name, but this instance was substantively different than future “franchises,” largely because EIJ was already de facto integrated into al-Qaida when it became part of al-Qaida.

The Apex of an Alliance Hub

Between 1996 and 2001, al-Qaida blossomed into an unparalleled, full-fledged international alliance hub. Its own ranks were robust; it had a hard core of a few hundred well-trained, elite, and vetted operatives—most of whom had sworn bayat to bin Laden—and it was reinforced by a vast network of allied terrorist groups. Unlike in Sudan and the early Afghanistan years, where the assistance largely flowed from al-Qaida to others, some of its relationships were now more mutual. In return for al-Qaida’s provision of services to its partners, al-Qaida acted as “a nexus for varied forms of cooperation with numerous groups…. Allied groups share members with al-Qaida, receive funding from it, and allow al-Qa’ida members to use their facilities and contacts. Bin Laden could call upon these groups for logistical support and, in some cases, assistance with terrorist operations” (United States Central Intelligence Agency “How bin Laden Commands” 5). These relationships varied as some groups were willing to come under al-Qaida’s expansive and well-resourced umbrella, while others remained leery of relinquishing their autonomy (Burke 208).

8.7 Al-Qaida Cashes in its Alliance Debts
On September 11, 2001, nineteen al-Qaida operatives hijacked four planes originating from Boston, Dulles, and Newark airports—flights American 11, United 175, American 77, and United 93. The plan had been in the works for years; as al-Qaida launched its first operation in 1998, it was already planning the 9/11 attacks (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan Camps” 5). It was hatched and managed from al-Qaida’s haven in Afghanistan with aspects of the plotting spanning the globe from Southeast Asia to Europe (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan Camps” 5-9). The attackers were handpicked by bin Laden (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan Camps” 9). After seizing control of the aircraft, two of the planes were flown into the World Trade Center towers and a third crashed into the Pentagon. Upon learning of the fate of the other three planes, passengers on the fourth plane decided to assault the hijackers. A scuffle ensured and the fourth plane went down in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, but was probably intended to hit the Capitol (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 1-14).

Nearly 3,000 people perished during the attack and an unknown number of people subsequently died as a result of complications stemming from the attack. Thousands more were injured. The economic toll of the attack was more than $2 trillion, including $100 billion in property damage and lost productivity (Reidel 1). It was the largest and most destructive terrorist attack ever conducted, and it was the work of al-Qaida operating the international terrorist headquarters unencumbered from a safe haven thousands of miles away (Bergen The Osama bin Laden I Know 88). In Afghanistan, Mullah Omar’s loyalty to bin Laden remained steadfast, and he refused to turn him over, despite the urging of the Taliban’s patron, the Pakistani Government, and some of his advisors.

While the attack was intended to be a direct blow against the United States, the scale of the death and mass destruction on 9/11 even exceeded the expectations of its planners (Reidel 7;
Wright “The Master Plan”). Whether al-Qaida intended to provoke a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan is still a source of some debate. Some maintain that al-Qaida wanted to weaken the United States’ power by drawing it into what terrorism expert Bruce Reidel called “bleeding wars,” at the site of its previous victory against the Soviets. In contrast, prominent journalist and al-Qaida expert Peter Bergen maintained that “there is not a shred of evidence that in the weeks before 9/11, al-Qaeda leaders made any plans for an American invasion of Afghanistan” (The Osama bin Laden I know 90).

Whether it was al-Qaida's intent or not, less than a month later, the United States launched its counter-attack, relying primarily on Special Forces teams working with the Northern Alliance and supported by American airpower. While the Northern Alliance acutely felt the loss of its legendary leader, Ahmed Shah Masood, who had been assassinated by an allied Tunisian Combatant Group operative deployed by al-Qaida two days prior to the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban and al-Qaida were soon on the run (Reidel 8). By November 13, Kabul had fallen to U.S. and Northern Alliance forces (Tawil Brothers in Arms 175). The safe haven had swiftly turned into an all-out combat zone.

With the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida succeeded in defining the jihadist landscape and situating itself at the center of the battle (Tawil Brothers in Arms 173). Overnight, the battle lines were drawn, and everyone in Afghanistan was forced to choose a side. Militants had to decide whether to join the fight against the United States or flee. In many cases, the decision-making process was not rationally deliberated at the organizational-level. Group members simply reacted in the midst of the crisis. They fled or fought based on their circumstances.

One organization faced with this decision was the LIFG. The group had a long-standing, if sometimes rocky, relationship with al-Qaida. In addition to some residual hard feelings over bin Laden’s willingness to forsake the group in Sudan, the group was focused against the Qadhafi regime. While not pro-American, it had consistently resisted al-Qaida's entreaties to join the fight
against the United States, like the 1998 declaration, and the al-Qaida narrative about the U.S. support for apostate regimes did not resonate with the anti-Qadhafi case. LIFG had a large contingent in Afghanistan, as well as influential members in prison in Libya and living under asylum in Europe. Now the Afghan sanctuary was lost, and the Taliban had fallen. An LIFG religious figure issued a statement in October 2001 calling for jihad against the United States “occupation” of Afghanistan, justifying such resistance as a legitimate jihad. His statement focused on the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan and did not praise or validate the 9/11 attacks, though he claimed that the U.S. used the 9/11 attack as “an excuse to initiate a war against the Muslims and Islam and against the Islamic state of Afghanistan” (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group “Fatwah”).

The LIFG weighed its options. Join the fight against the U.S. in Afghanistan or leave Afghanistan and go into hiding? The former option would have likely brought the LIFG closer to al-Qaida. By then, it had already been identified as an al-Qaida and Taliban ally on the U.N. 1267 sanctions list on October 6, 2001 (United Nations Security Council Committee United Nations “Narrative Summaries” 1267 2010). Nonetheless, the LIFG leaders instructed their followers to flee to Iran (Tawil “The Changing Face”). A minority of members—most notably Abu Layth al-Libi and the recent statement’s author Abu Yahya al-Libi—decided to stay in Afghanistan to fight. Most adhered to their leaders’ decision, and made the difficult journey to Iran, where many were promptly arrested (Zelin and Lebovich).

But Tehran harbored no affection for Colonel Qadhafi’s regime. After interrogating the LIFG detainees, Tehran released them and they dispersed across the globe (Tawil Brothers in Arms 180). But hiding proved impossible in the post-9/11 counterterrorism environment. Over the course of the next three years, its emir and senior theologian were detained in Thailand and China, respectively. After a period during which they were allegedly questioned by the U.S., both were
transferred to Tripoli’s custody (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 181). Even the man once dubbed a “mad dog” by former President Regan was somewhat rehabilitated when it came to the GWOT. With the loss of these two leaders and many of its members in hiding, the LIFG was in shambles.

As the LIFG experience demonstrates, the international community had issued verdicts about al-Qaida’s alliances in the aftermath of the attack, and all jihadists in Afghanistan were deemed to be guilty. There was not much interest in nuance, gradations of the association or openings to drive wedges between al-Qaida and other groups. Association with al-Qaida was judged simply and quickly in a dichotomous fashion. Put simply, terrorist organizations with links to al-Qaida were enemies. Given al-Qaida’s activities for the past decade, few groups could avoid being labeled al-Qaida associated, even if they wanted to. Groups with a relationship with al-Qaida equated to being an al-Qaida ally and were pursued accordingly by governments that were keen to avoid underestimating the threat. Al-Qaida association also frequently meant that all actions undertaken by or against the group were viewed through the al-Qaida prism, a lens that was sufficiently broad that many actions could be framed as consistent with al-Qaida’s desire to establish an Islamic caliphate or its unrelenting antipathy towards the West. From this point forward, jihadist actions were subsumed under al-Qaida in the eyes of many, whether that be through past or present direct relationships, indirect inspiration or even assumed connections (Lahoud *Letters from Abbottabad* 7).

One of the shortcomings of viewing al-Qaida’s alliances in this manner was that it assumed that these relationships were static and that the changes in the post-9/11 environment did not impact the degree or existence of an alliance. The U.N. 1267 list, where the LIFG was designated shortly after 9/11, is a prime example. It was first established in 1999 in response to al-Qaida’s attack in the U.S. Embassies in East Africa. Being designated by U.N. 1267 imposes sanctions against
groups and individuals based on their association with al-Qaida or the Taliban. All states are required to:

- freeze without delay the funds and other financial assets or economic resources of designated individuals and entities [assets freeze], prevent the entry into or transit through their territories by designated individuals, [travel ban], and prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale and transfer from their territories or by their nationals outside their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of arms and related materiel of all types, spare parts, and technical advice, assistance, or training related to military activities, to designated individuals and entities [arms embargo] (United Nations Security Council).

The U.N. 1267 list is far from immune from political considerations, and the criteria for inclusion, such as what constitutes “association,” were open to interpretation. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, it was not difficult to be added to the list, but it proved to be exceedingly difficult to be removed from it. Like the LIFG, a slew of groups and individuals were added to the list in late 2001 and early 2002. The United States also undertook a series of domestic designations of terrorist organizations. The Global War on Terrorism was sweeping, and the closer a group was to al-Qaida, the greater the threat it faced from the United States.

A Changed Alliance Environment

While these judgments about al-Qaida’s partners were being made by international organizations and governments, the alliance environment was fundamentally changing. Al-Qaida faced an entirely new set of circumstances, and it was unclear whether it could retain its position as an alliance hub. Al-Qaida long sought to convince other jihadist organizations that it was necessary to unite against the United States under al-Qaida’s rubric; the “head of the snake” must be cut off, which would cause the body, the individual apostate regimes, to weaken and die (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Bin Laden’s Terrorist Operations” 3). Prior to 9/11, it used its training camps and money to imbue this message in its allies and publicly proclaimed this position. While it fostered many alliances, it had only gotten a limited buy-in from its allies for its agenda. Many
agreed with al-Qaida’s anti-U.S. sentiments in principle, but did not meaningfully adjust their agendas or actions to correspond with al-Qaida’s positions. Even among the four other signatories of the 1998 statements—entities that had publicly sided with al-Qaida’s anti-“Zionist-Crusader” agenda—only one ultimately merged with al-Qaida and pursued its agenda. None of the others changed their course and conducted anti-American attacks prior to 9/11. The costs and benefits associated with allying with al-Qaida had now changed.

One unintentional consequence of the United States’ “with us or against us” approach was that it reduced the costs of allying with al-Qaida. This was particularly true for groups that had previously shied away from allying with al-Qaida, in part because they did not want to provoke the wrath of the United States. While some resented al-Qaida’s actions, many picked up their weapons to fight the “infidel” invader that now targeted them. In other words, they unambiguously shared a common enemy with al-Qaida.

Al-Qaida had long warned jihadist organizations that they must ally to balance against the United States because it posed the biggest threat. Prior to 9/11, most allied and associated groups viewed their regimes as the more pressing threat than the United States. 9/11 changed the threat environment dramatically. The United States was now a common threat that possessed the greatest aggregate power, offensive power, proximity, and aggressive intentions. In other words, it was the greatest threat to Sunni jihadi organizations writ large. Even groups with little knowledge or involvement in the 9/11 attacks found themselves at war with the United States. With the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida made its contention that the United States was the greatest threat a reality.

The threat the United States posed was clearest for groups resident in Afghanistan because they directly faced the United States’ military might. Yet the threat from the U.S. was not limited to Afghanistan alone. The U.S. threw its weight behind other governments facing a jihadist threat and
declared all terrorist groups to be its enemy. Some groups outside of Afghanistan publicly expressed their disapproval of the attack, such as the Egyptian Islamic Group and al-Qaida’s one-time trainer, Hizballah (Wright “The Master Plan”). Others tried to take ambiguous stances, such as the GSPC which did not embrace the attack, but instead declared that there was not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that al-Qaida was responsible, and that the U.S. should not rush to blame Islamists (Tawil Brothers in Arms 183). These gestures did not dent the United States’ conviction that it was engaged in a worldwide war against any entity that employed terrorism. Half-hearted efforts by groups to distance themselves from 9/11 were simply not persuasive, and Washington was an increasing threat to these groups as well.

This dramatic change in threat and convergence of a common enemy was accompanied by a decisive change in al-Qaida’s ability to fulfill allies’ organizational needs. Al-Qaida lost the tangible resources it used to entice other organizations. Clearly, al-Qaida could no longer provide safe haven or training. Its actions led to the destruction of the very assets that underpinned its alliance position. The site of its former terrorist empire was now a war zone. The safe haven, training camps or guest houses were all lost. Even al-Qaida’s financial assets—a core feature of its strength—were diminishing.

This changed al-Qaida’s alliance position in two ways. First, it could no longer fulfill other groups’ needs, which was a central alliance motive prior to 9/11. Al-Qaida’s ability to offer training, funds, safe haven, and other assistance gave the group an alliance appeal and heft that it could not have otherwise commanded. Second, its position had reversed—it now had to rely on its allies. As the CIA assessed: “[a]l-Qaida will be increasingly forced to train with other groups—rather than being in the position to offer other groups training—and thus will lose an important source of leverage and influence in Islamic extremist circles” (“Afghanistan Camps” ii). Over time, CIA
predicted that the loss of safe haven where training could be conducted in particular would result in al-Qaida losing standing among its allies (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan Camps” 6). In other words, the provocation of a shared greatest threat from the U.S. precipitated the loss of the very assets that had made al-Qaida into an alliance hub.

For most groups, ideological solidarity did not change. This was the only major variable that was not fundamentally altered. It may have slightly increased for some groups that joined al-Qaida’s war with the U.S. and decreased slightly for those that declined to do so. In general, al-Qaida’s overall ideological solidarity with fellow Sunni jihadists remained constant.

The situation would test the power of identity affinity. The CIA predicted that a sense of indebtedness for past assistance would at least partially offset al-Qaida’s inability to provide tangible benefits, implicitly arguing that a sense of obligation rooted in trust and affinity would sustain its alliances, at least in the short term (“Afghanistan Camps” 4). The bases for identity affinity were not fundamentally changed. But trust was sometimes at risk because its loci, such as key nodes and leaders, were eliminated as al-Qaida and other groups incurred an unprecedented pace of losses. The death or detention of one-third of al-Qaida’s leadership and death of eighty percent of al-Qaida’s original members in Afghanistan in the year following the 9/11 attacks threatened to dislodge its loci for trust with some of its allies (United States Department of State 2002 Patterns 2003 iii; Wright “The Master Plan”). In some circumstances, new loci of trust were subsequently created. But the ability to forge replacement loci of trust was hindered because many al-Qaida members went to hiding and were not accessible.

These same factors strained al-Qaida’s trust with its allies. The inter-personal links that al-Qaida had so assiduously cultivated were damaged by these constant losses. The pace of arrests and deaths outstripped the ability to replace these trusted friendships. With groups trying to evade
capture or death, there was a constant concern about who could be trusted, and each blow tested that trust. On the other hand, with many organizations in disarray, al-Qaida increasingly relied on personal relationships as well as organizational-level alliances.

In Pakistan: From a Provider to a Receiver

Al-Qaida, the Taliban, and the other resident groups were either immersed in the war in Afghanistan or on the run. One of the places they fled was across the border into Pakistan. Al-Qaida was no stranger to Afghanistan’s meddling neighbor to the east, but it had not anticipated Pakistan’s President’s decision to ally with the United States in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack. Under immense pressure, Pervez Musharraf joined the U.S. coalition against al-Qaida, and moved to interdict fleeing al-Qaida members.

Throughout the 1990s, the Pakistani Army had sponsored training facilities in Afghanistan for its anti-India proxies, especially the multitude of Pakistani Deobandi groups. In addition to securing a friendly neighbor on its western border to ensure “strategic depth” against India, Islamabad used the Taliban to create a layer of “plausible deniability” between it and its proxies’ asymmetric harassment of India. These Pakistani Deobandi groups thus felt Islamabad’s betrayal of the Taliban and al-Qaida acutely. They had invested heavily in the “Islamic Emirate” under the Taliban, including joint physical and ideological infrastructure, only to see it all destroyed in a matter of weeks. Furthermore, the Taliban was a product of the same madaris system in Pakistan as the Pakistani Deobandi groups. The personal ties between them ran deep and were reinforced by high-levels of ideological affinity, narrative affinity, and often ethnic affinity as fellow Pashtuns. Overnight, Islamabad went from a sponsor to an enemy for al-Qaida, and the Pakistani Deobandi organizations were torn about how to respond (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 127-8).
Despite Musharraf's unanticipated turnabout, al-Qaida still had ties with Pakistani militant groups, and it turned to them in its hour of need to find places to hide in Pakistan. This was a clear manifestation of al-Qaida's changed alliance position. Instead of sponsoring a haven, al-Qaida now had to turn to its allies and associates to fulfill its acute need for sanctuary. Al-Qaida required the assistance of its allies to hide, operate, and plan operations (United States Central Intelligence Agency "Al-Qaeda in Sudan" ii). It was not caught completely off guard; al-Qaida had given some forethought to this possibility. In 2000, several of bin Laden's lieutenants traveled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan and confirmed with resident Pakistani Deobandi militants that that North and South Waziristan Agencies were viable sanctuary locations (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 26). Al-Qaida would even re-establish some training capability by creating small-scale, mobile "pockets of training" in these areas (United States Central Intelligence Agency "Al-Qaeda in Sudan" i). In addition, Pakistan's teeming cities offered ample places to hide, especially when assisted by well-connected Pakistani groups. While Pakistan became an essential hiding place and small-scale training venue for al-Qaida, it was not comparable to Afghanistan under the Taliban. Al-Qaida would not be able to rebuild its pre-9/11 alliance hub position through continued service provision to other groups.

Its ability to trust Pakistani groups was complicated by the fact that many of them had long-standing relationships with the now-traitorous Islamabad. But in the immediate aftermath, al-Qaida had few choices but to rely on its fellow jihadists. For a period, it appeared that the combination of these relationships and the havens in FATA and Pakistan's cities would be adequate for al-Qaida operatives to ride out the storm. This façade was broken in March 2002 with the capture of senior al-Qaida gatekeeper Abu Zubaydah in a Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) safe house in Faisalabad (United States Department of State 2002 Patterns 113). By virtue their common Salafist orientation, LT and al-Qaida had high degrees of ideological compatibility, yet these two groups had not been
particularly close during their time in Afghanistan. However, the discovery of Zubaydah in an LT safe house was clear evidence that LT was among the Pakistani groups that assisted al-Qaida in finding places to hide in its hour of greatest need, at least temporarily, despite Islamabad’s shift and their relatively distant relationship (United States Department of State 2002 Patterns 113).

On the other hand, Zubaydah’s arrest was a breakthrough for U.S.-Pakistani counterterrorism cooperation. It was the biggest capture of a senior al-Qaida leader outside of Afghanistan to date, and, given his position and knowledge, al-Qaida had to scramble to ensure it would not lead to further arrests. At first glance, Zubaydah’s presence in an LT safe house suggests that the two groups had forged an alliance. Conversely, his detention demonstrated that LT was not able or willing to protect al-Qaida leaders. Given LT’s long-standing, close relationship with Islamabad, this had to give al-Qaida pause about whether to trust LT, let alone ally with it.

But al-Qaida was not dependent on LT for haven in Pakistan. It had other Pakistani allies it could turn to. The Pakistani Deobandi organizations were a stew of anti-India proxies and sectarian groups that had worked closely with al-Qaida in Afghanistan, and they continued to be allied with al-Qaida. In contrast to LT’s betrayal, these groups stayed close to their Arab brethren, who were increasingly dependent on them. In the FATA, al-Qaida had long-standing relationships with local Pashtun militants who remained willing to assist al-Qaida and were determined to resist any encroachment by Islamabad into their land. In return, al-Qaida had less to offer, but could still provide its expertise, particularly in operational matters, probably some funds, and a history of assistance. Despite differences in their brands of Sunni Islam and ethnicity, al-Qaida developed high degrees of identity affinity with these Pakistani groups as their narratives and experiences converged and personal relationships intensified.

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The differences in LT and the Deobandi Pakistani groups’ relationships with al-Qaida are the subject of Chapter 11.
Therefore, the situation in Pakistan immediately after 9/11 introduced a new alliance arrangement for al-Qaida, one in which al-Qaida was the more dependent party. It was not subordinate to its Pakistani allies, but was, in some critical ways, in a weaker position. The time al-Qaida spent cultivating alliances paid dividends, and probably saved the group during this period when it had an acute organizational need for places to hide, which could not be addressed through self-reform. It turned to its allies to fulfill this need, and found Pakistani Deobandi militants willing and able to do so. Its situation in Pakistan differed markedly from Iran, where it had no such allies and senior leaders were soon detained by Tehran.

The Bali Bombings and JI: The Perfect Execution of Al-Qaida’s Alliance Hub Strategy

While al-Qaida was able to use its allies to help it adapt and survive, the years immediately after 9/11 were exceptionally difficult for al-Qaida. Senior founding leaders, such as Abu Hafs al-Masri, were killed by Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, and other key figures, like Abu Zubaydah, Abu Musab al-Suri, and Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, were detained in Pakistan. One longtime member bemoaned these as the “meager years which we spent as fugitives” (Wright “The Master Plan”). Yet al-Qaida’s name proliferated, and the drumbeat of threats from it was constant. The specter of al-Qaida was everywhere, in part as a result of the actions of its allies.

The desire to eliminate the threat and avoid underestimating it was, understandably, the dominant consideration for governments. These fears were realized in October 2002 when a largely-unknown group called Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) detonated a car bomb on the Indonesian island of Bali. Nearly 200 people were killed, many of them vacationing Australian tourists (United States Department of State 2002 Patterns 94). This attack was the “ideal” execution of al-Qaida’s alliance hub strategy; an allied group trained by al-Qaida expanded its target, broadened its agenda, and conducted a mass-casualty operation against Westerners.
By the time the Bali operation was conducted, JI had been allied with al-Qaida for years. The connections between the two groups’ members dated back to prior to either becoming a fully-formed organization. Like al-Qaida, the Southeast Asian group’s members included mujahidin from the anti-Soviet jihad. The Southeast Asian mujahidin worked closely with legendary Islamist Afghan mujahidin-era commander, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, during the 1980s and used Services Bureau in Peshawar for assistance to plug into the jihad (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 2-3). Some participated in the 1987 Battle of Jaji alongside bin Laden (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 4). When these individuals subsequently formed a group, these affinity points helped to facilitate continuing connections with al-Qaida at the organizational level. JI operatives subsequently traveled to Afghanistan to train at al-Qaida-run camps during the 1990s (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 14, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1).

However, there were gaps in the relationship. JI members were largely absent from the jihadist scene in Sudan. Instead, they utilized an alternative training site in the Philippines during the early 1990s (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 16). Al-Qaida deployed trainers to Southeast Asia to assist with these training efforts (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1). When they did journey to Afghanistan, for linguistic reasons, Southeast Asians were often separated from their Arab counterparts during the training courses (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 5). As a result, JI was not as dependent on al-Qaida for training and haven as some other groups. Few JI operatives were present in Afghanistan in 2001 when the U.S. invaded because, while some had trained in Afghanistan, unlike other jihadist groups, JI did not re-located there (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1). Most of JI’s members were still in Southeast Asia, primarily the Philippines and Malaysia. Therefore, few fought alongside al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan after the U.S. invasion.
While it was not part of the Arab Sunni jihadist tapestry, JI offered al-Qaida entrée into another region. Southeast Asia was part of al-Qaida’s vision for a re-created caliphate, but it was not a priority in the Arab-centric group’s agenda. Instead, al-Qaida used Southeast Asia as a venue to meet and plan operations without being detected, ranging from the 1995 Bojinka plot to 9/11 (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Afghanistan Camps” 11). The alliance with JI helped al-Qaida to extend al-Qaida’s operational reach (Ratnesar). This helps explain why al-Qaida established a presence, mainly consisting of key nodes and liaisons, in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s (International Crisis Group Indonesia 29). More broadly, as al-Qaida sought to “promote jihad awareness in the Islamic world,” JI was a partner that could harness Southeast Asian recruiting towards that end, a population that al-Qaida did not often draw into its ranks or readily reach with its Arab-language messages (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2, United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 1).

JI’s goals were both more limited than al-Qaida’s and differed in focus. Consistent with its composition and ethnic identity, JI was Southeast Asian-centric. It sought to create a pan-Islamic archipelago spanning Southeast Asia, although its primary focus was on establishing an Islamic state in Indonesia in particular (International Crisis Group Indonesia 2). Led by Indonesians, JI was loosely organized into four territorial units known as mantiqis that covered Malaysia, Singapore; Java; Mindanao, Sabah, and Sulawesi; and Australia and Papua (International Crisis Group Indonesia i). Initially formed in the early 1990s, JI conducted its first operation in 1999. It was then involved in dozens of attacks in the region, but prior to the Bali bombings, it had not been identified by authorities as an organization, let alone as a serious threat (International Crisis Group Indonesia 2). Before 2002, JI’s largest attack was a series of small-scale bombings of churches and other Christian facilities on Christmas Eve in 2000, which killed five people and wounded dozens more, in retaliation for an incident of Christian violence against Muslims in Maluku.
Thus until 2002, it appeared as though JI was more animated by local communal violence than al-Qaida’s global mission. With the Bali attacks, JI expanded and adopted al-Qaida’s agenda, albeit within its regional context and aims. The International Crisis Group posited that “[t]he U.S.-led war on terror now appears to have replaced Maluku and Poso as the main object of JI’s wrath, especially as those conflicts have waned, and the targeting in Bali of Westerners, rather than Indonesian Christians, may be indicative of that shift” (Indonesia ii; emphasis added). In essence, the 9/11 attacks and the post-9/11 environment provided an opening for groups whose originating causes were losing resonance. This was perhaps the clearest case of the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath precipitating an evolution within a group that brought an existing ally’s agenda closer to al-Qaida.

For al-Qaida, JI’s value as an ally rose exponentially after 9/11. Because it had not been co-located in Afghanistan and was relatively unknown to authorities, JI was one of al-Qaida’s few allies not under direct attack in Afghanistan or being pursued relentlessly by authorities. Its existence had not even been detected until late 2001 after Singaporean authorities disrupted a plot against the U.S. Naval presence there ("Jemaah Islamiya"). Moreover, it had adapted to the environment and was now capable and willing to execute high-profile, mass-casualty attacks. While JI’s regional and local origins were reflected in the attack, the Bali bombings were in significant part a product of al-Qaida’s training and encouragement. They even had al-Qaida’s imprimatur in that they were simultaneous attacks using suicide operatives against Westerners, particularly Australians. Bin Laden hailed the attacks and folded them into al-Qaida’s narrative by warning Canberra to cease its cooperation with Washington ("Statement Attributed to bin Laden Praises Recent Attacks” 2002; Teather). The Bali bombings involved an unprecedented level of lethality by JI, enhanced by the estimated $30,000 provided by al-Qaida (International Crisis Group Indonesia Backgrounder 29; Ratnesar).
At the time of the Bali attacks, al-Qaida had not been able to conduct another large-scale, mass casualty attack since 9/11. Its ally thus filled this void with its operation. This was exactly the type of action al-Qaida needed its allies to undertake to demonstrate the movement's continuing viability and resonance. Al-Qaida's hand was more directly involved in a series of smaller-scale attacks since 2001. An al-Qaida operative firebombed a synagogue in Tunisia in April 2002, killing 19 and injuring dozens more. The group targeted U.S. military personnel in Kuwait in October 2002. Also in October, its Arabian Peninsula members' directed a suicide attack against the MV Limburg off the coast of Yemen that killed one and injured four people. Al-Qaida's East Africa cell bombed a hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, killing fourteen, and unsuccessfully tried to shoot down a commercial plane using a surface-to-air missile that same year (United States Department of State 2002 Patterns 118-9).

Al-Qaida was so pleased with the Bali bombings that it provided JI with another influx of funds, including a delivery of $130,000, with no specific conditions attached (Elegant; Director of Central Intelligence “DCI Testimony” 3). By this point, al-Qaida trusted that JI would use the money to implement the two groups' shared vision. The alliance functioned ideally for both partners: JI needed funds to evade authorities and conduct further operations, and al-Qaida needed a partner capable of executing attacks when its ability to do so was severely constrained.

However, the very attributes that made JI such a strong al-Qaida ally following 9/11 made it a prime target for governments after the Bali bombings. JI came under tremendous pressure in the wake of the Bali bombings as authorities in multiple countries pursued the group with previously unseen intensity. Counterterrorism efforts were bolstered by an international environment conducive to greater cooperation between governments. Over 200 JI operatives were soon arrested. Of particular significance for the al-Qaida and JI alliance, a key JI liaison figure called
Hambali was detained in Thailand in August 2003 (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* i-1). He admitted to his interrogators that JI was struggling to manage the fallout from the Bali bombings (Elegant).

The relationship suffered another blow when Hambali’s main al-Qaida interlocutor, Khalid Sheikh Mohamed was arrested in Rawalpindi, Pakistan in March 2003 (Elegant). The Hambali-Mohamed relationship was a critical node in terms of affinity and trust in the alliance, which could not be replaced given the CT environment and the groups’ geographical separation. Hambali was also a key advocate of JI’s shift towards al-Qaida (Elegant). Despite these setbacks and the group’s depleted state, JI was able to execute an attack on a Marriott Hotel in Jakarta in August 2003. It was another attack consistent with al-Qaida’s vision and aided by the funds provided by al-Qaida after the Bali bombing (Elegant). If imitation is the greatest form of flattery, JI paid additional homage to al-Qaida by becoming a regional alliance hub in its own right, working with an array of other groups in the region, like Abu Sayyaf Group and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, in areas such as training, haven, and operational planning (International Crisis Group *Indonesia* 13; Elegant).

Nonetheless, JI retained its own command and control and organizational independence (Elegant). Al-Qaida supplemented JI’s capability in important ways, but JI was not subservient to al-Qaida. Two JI members analogized JI’s dynamic with al-Qaida, highlighting JI’s independence. One likened it to:

that of an NGO with a funding agency. The NGO exists as a completely independent organisation, but submits proposals to the donor and gets a grant when the proposal is accepted. The donor only funds projects that are in line with its own programs. In this case, al-Qaeda may help fund specific JI programs but it neither directs nor controls it (International Crisis Group *Indonesia Background* 30).

Another JI member involved in liaising between the two groups invoked a similar comparison, describing JI as “a business affiliate, we can ask them (i.e., al-Qaida) for an opinion but they have no
authority over us. We are free. We have our own funds, our own men. We are independent, like Australia and the U.S. But when it comes to an operation we can join together” (qtd. in Rassler et al. 10).

It was an alliance of “mutual advantage and reciprocal assistance” (International Crisis Group Indonesia Backgrounder 30). After receiving training, funding, and support for years, JI assisted al-Qaida in maintaining the West’s sense of threat and besiegement during al-Qaida’s leanest years to date. JI selected targets that were consistent with both groups’ narratives. But it paid a heavy price for doing so and, like al-Qaida, JI was steadily degraded over the subsequent few years. It retained the ability to conduct attacks over the next few years—including a truck bombing of the Australian Embassy in 2004 that killed 11 and the 2005 suicide bombing of three establishments in Bali that killed 22—but with each attack, the pressure grew untenably. The arrests mounted in both quantity and quality as more than 300 suspected JI members were arrested: Thai authorities detained the network’s operations chief in 2003; Indonesian police killed its most experienced bomb maker in 2005 and arrested its two senior leaders in mid-2007; Malaysian authorities arrested two senior JI operatives in early 2008 and Indonesian police in September 2009 killed a JI leader (“Jemaah Islamiya’). Less than ten years after its deadly entrance onto the international stage, JI was on the verge of collapse. Residual members and factions continued operating, but JI as an organization no longer functioned before the decade was even over.

Al-Qaida and JI’s alliance languished in the face of the degradation of both groups, which included the loss of key nodes coupled with an inability to replace them or remain in regular contact with one another without incurring high risks. Some efforts to maintain ties continued. A
senior JI leader involved in the Bali attacks was detained in Pakistan in 2011, where he presumably sought to connect with al-Qaida (Leovich; “Jemaah Islamiya”).

8.8 The Next Alliance Hub Phase: Evolution into a Brand Name

In 2003, al-Qaida’s alliance dynamics grew more multi-faceted than during any other period to date. The group was altered from the losses it had experienced and years of hiding, but its top leaders and its name remained intact. The overall jihadist landscape became more decentralized (Director of Central Intelligence “DCI Testimony” 3). Al-Qaida had three existing types of alliance relationships: 1) co-located, indigenous allies in South Asia that provided some safe haven or protection to al-Qaida; 2) proximate, non-native allies that al-Qaida fought alongside in Afghanistan or cooperated with it on aspects of its agenda; and 3) distant allies that conducted activities with some degree of alignment with al-Qaida’s narrative and had cooperated with al-Qaida prior to 9/11. In 2003-4, a fourth alliance arrangement emerged: allies that publicly adopted al-Qaida’s name.

The first category consisted of alliances with local groups with which al-Qaida was co-located. Al-Qaida now tended to be more dependent on them than vice versa, but it still had some funds, operational expertise, and manpower to share with these allies, not to mention cachet and personal relationships to reinforce ties. These allies were mostly Pakistani Deobandi groups, which had long suffered from unity problems and were further fractured by the post-9/11 events, as well as their Afghan Deobandi counterparts. Al-Qaida participated in the insurgency in Afghanistan, but it was not the leader of this effort. Like the anti-Soviet jihad, the insurgency was an Afghan-led and dominated affair.
Al-Qaida’s relationships with the Afghan Taliban and other major Afghan insurgent organization, the Haqqani Network, evolved from the pre-9/11 dynamic of an organization sponsoring a state to organizational-level relationships. The Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network both stood by al-Qaida after 9/11, refusing to renounce it in the face of tremendous pressure. In so doing, these relationships developed an ongoing, default alliance posture, propped up by leadership and key node affinity. In a sense, the Afghan groups had to maintain an alliance with al-Qaida; otherwise they could not credibly explain to their followers why they had not disavowed al-Qaida in 2001, a move that would have prevented the U.S. invasion and the destruction of their rump state.

Al-Qaida’s relationship with the Haqqani Network, already robust, remained interdependent, while its relationship with the Afghan Taliban grew more distant and largely symbolic. The Haqqani Network was—and remains—the key insurgent force in eastern Afghanistan, headquartered across the border in North Waziristan Agency in FATA, which were important battlegrounds and safe havens for al-Qaida, respectively (Rassler and Brown 8). In addition to al-Qaida’s historic ties to the Haqqanis, the more-worldly Haqqani Network was more receptive to al-Qaida and foreign fighter participation in the insurgency than its xenophobic, southern Afghan Taliban counterparts. The Haqqani Network’s personal ties with al-Qaida members dated back further, to the anti-Soviet era. Al-Qaida’s first training facility, the Lion’s Den, was located in the Haqqanis’ terrain. The Haqqanis’ extensive provision of terrorist infrastructure to al-Qaida during the 1990s was often overlooked with the focus on the Afghan Taliban-al-Qaida relationship (Rassler and Brown 10). The Haqqani Network’s presence in North Waziristan proved to be essential to al-Qaida’s haven there because it prevented the Pakistani Army from conducting operations in that Agency, and thus created a secure haven for al-Qaida. Islamabad was unwilling to alienate the Haqqani Network, a group it recognized as an important powerbroker in Afghanistan.
The other non-South Asian groups that stayed after the U.S. invasion—the second category of allies—fully shared al-Qaida’s immediate objective, the expulsion of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and Pakistani forces from FATA. Examples included Uzbek, Uighur, and Turkish groups. Seemingly permanently in exile, the insurgency in Afghanistan had largely replaced the animating cause back home for these groups. While they still harbored ambitions to change the regimes in their home countries, their resources and manpower were largely focused on the jihad in Afghanistan and securing a haven in Pakistan. Al-Qaida was not the default central node of alliances with these groups. These groups often had or developed their own alliance arrangements with the Afghan Taliban, Haqqani Network, and the Pakistani Deobandi militants, especially local commanders in FATA (Rassler and Brown 14). A few still depended on al-Qaida to act as their liaison to the Afghan and Pakistani militant groups, a holdover from its previous alliance hub position that al-Qaida could still offer its weaker and less well-connected non-indigenous allies.

Overall, organizational boundaries in this landscape grew fluid. The jihadist milieu in Pakistan developed into a network in which organizational affiliation, and thus organizational-level relationships, were not as salient. These allegiances did not completely subside as many were reinforced by nationalities, ethnicities or Sunni sects. But cooperation at the individual level grew more difficult to distinguish from cooperation at the organizational-level.

The third category of alliances—distant partners cooperating with al-Qaida on facets of its agenda—became the most problematic for al-Qaida’s alliance hub position. JI was a model for how this alliance arrangement could function, but that result was atypical and temporary. With the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida succeeded in shaping the conflict and becoming the vanguard of the international jihadist movement. In the process, it lost control of its name. Its name was used by and associated with an array of actors and acts, some that al-Qaida did not support or did not in any way control.
Al-Qaida’s reduced ability to harness other groups through training, funding, and resources was evident. This was exacerbated by al-Qaida leadership’s inaccessibility, which made communication challenging and issuing guidance through propaganda a slow and arduous process. In addition, individuals who had served as key liaisons and affinity nodes between organizations continued to be killed or detained at an unsustainable pace, so there was often insufficient time to replace the personal relationships and trust underpinning organizational relationships (Lahoud *Beware of Imitators* 30).

Yet, with the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida became the biggest name in the terrorism. This was an asset that it could still leverage, even without its sanctuary, to continue to project leadership and strength (Rassler et al. 10). Thus began a new type of relationship, the “affiliates.” Some cite the self-appointed group of al-Qaida members that called itself Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula in 2003 as the first to adopt al-Qaida’s name (Rassler et al. 10). But another relationship was being negotiated, and it would be the first group that al-Qaida formally recognized as its affiliate.

*The Rise of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi*

In March 2003, when U.S. forces entered Iraq, Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was poised for a confrontation in what would quickly become “the central front for the global war on terrorism” (United States Department of State 2003 *Patterns* iii). Zarqawi was among the tranche of militants who fled Afghanistan to Iran. He then journeyed to northern Iraq, where he linked up with an Iraqi terrorist group, Ansar al-Islam, sometime in the summer of 2002. Still based uneasily in Pakistan, al-Qaida was ill positioned to take a meaningful role in what quickly became the premiere jihad in the heart of the Arab and Muslim world. Meanwhile, Zarqawi’s group quickly set out to wreak havoc in Iraq—conducting high-profile bombings, suicide attacks, and gruesome beheadings—but struggled to attain a leading position in the multi-faceted insurgency (Jones 156).
The war in Iraq and the ensuing jihad coincided with al-Qaida’s increasing discomfort with how its name was associated with actors or acts it did not condone and its desire to maintain its vanguard role, despite the loss of the resources and assets that had supported its position. This motivated precipitated a new phase in al-Qaida’s alliances, relationships often called affiliates or franchises. These alliances were an extension and adaptation of what transpired between al-Qaida and EIJ, whereby al-Qaida agreed to anoint certain organizations as part of al-Qaida even though they were not integrated into al-Qaida’s structure as EIJ was.

But al-Qaida did not have the initial idea for this alliance arrangement. Zarqawi proposed the affiliation alliance and played an integral role in the second affiliate relationship. Al-Qaida’s receptivity to this alliance strategy was in recognition of the changed environment and its need to adapt to it. Post-9/11, organizations saw value in adopting al-Qaida’s name and, by extension, its reputation, while geographic distance allowed them to retain autonomy.

This was not the first alliance effort involving these two organizations. Zarqawi resisted al-Qaida’s entreaties to bring his group under its rubric when he first arrived to Afghanistan from Jordan in late 1999. It was a homecoming of sorts for the Arab Afghan mujahidin who had journeyed to Peshawar in 1989 on the heels of the Soviet withdrawal and then fought in Khost until 1993 as part of the campaign to bring down the Soviet-backed Afghan Communist regime (M.A. Weaver). Back in Afghanistan, now under Taliban rule, Zarqawi preferred to maintain his autonomy and build his own organization focused on the Levant, especially Jordan, rather than join al-Qaida (M.A. Weaver). He opted to work out of Herat in western Afghanistan, thereby putting distance between his group and al-Qaida, which was concentrated in the Taliban and Haqqani strongholds in south and east. Nonetheless, he accepted some seed money from al-Qaida and settled in Herat (Jones 148).
Al-Qaida had reservations about Zarqawi as well. Zarqawi was seen as difficult to work with, even by other jihadists. He was more of a thug, especially given his criminal background, than a religious thinker or sophisticated strategist (M.A. Weaver). Zarqawi’s brash and aggressive style did not meld well with bin Laden’s more gentle “grandfatherly” demeanor and expectation of deference. However, bin Laden’s equally-abrasive Egyptian lieutenant Sayf al-Adel was an ideal liaison who could deal with Zarqawi, and he became al-Qaida’s point man for interacting with the Jordanian’s group (M.A. Weaver).

Zarqawi attracted recruits from the Levant, particularly Jordan and Syria, a quality that al-Qaida coveted given its limited following in those Arab countries. Zarqawi gradually built his own group called Jund al-Sham or “Soldiers of the Levant.” It sought to topple the “near enemy,” the Jordanian monarchy, before confronting the United States and Israel. This organization was sufficiently promising that al-Qaida continued to provide occasional funding, and Sayf al-Adl periodically visited its camps in Herat (M.A. Weaver). Zarqawi was asked in 2000 and 2001 to swear bayat to bin Laden, apparently another part of al-Qaida’s efforts to consolidate an anti-U.S. jihadist coalition prior to the 9/11 attacks. Each time, Zarqawi refused and opted to continue operating independently (M.A. Weaver).

When the U.S. forces arrived in Afghanistan in October 2001, Zarqawi now shared a clear common enemy and pressing threat with al-Qaida. It was seemingly an opportune time to ally. Yet when presented with another opportunity to join al-Qaida in Tora Bora and ally with it against the Americans, once again, Zarqawi decided to go his own way. The 9/11 attacks and American threat were not sufficient to change Zarqawi’s position on allying with al-Qaida, in large part because doing so while in Afghanistan would have required a level of subordination that Zarqawi was still unwilling to accept. Instead, he departed Afghanistan with his followers and headed for Iran in
December 2001. Shortly thereafter, Jund al-Sham moved again, this time to northern Iraq (M.A. Weaver).

However, the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003 increased the incentives to ally in ways that the war in Afghanistan had not. The two groups had long shared common enemies. But even in the face of these common enemies, they had differing priorities. Their primary adversaries and near-term goals—the expulsion of the Americans and establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq—were now fully compatible. Second, the two groups shared a greatest threat—the Americans—though this unity would be complicated by Zarqawi’s later insistence that the Shia posed an even greater threat than the Americans. Third, their ideological solidarity increased slightly. As Sunni jihadist organizations, they already had a high degree of ideological solidarity, but it grew further with their shared belief of the need for jihad in Iraq. Lastly, their identity affinity, specifically their narrative affinity, improved. The jihad in Iraq now occupied a central place in both groups’ narratives, in addition to the existing ethnic affinity and ideological affinity.

Lastly, and critically, they now had complementary organizational needs. Some of these other incentives already existed while the two groups were in Afghanistan, but Zarqawi had consistently refused to ally then. Al-Qaida had a perpetual organizational need for the alliance as part of its overall, general organizational need to bring groups, especially other Arab groups, under its rubric. The 9/11 attacks did not dissipate this need. If anything, the 9/11 attacks and U.S. invasion of Afghanistan heightened it, and the war in Iraq imbued a sense of urgency. In the war in Iraq, al-Qaida saw a “historic opportunity,” akin to the anti-Soviet jihad, to mobilize another generation of jihadists (Gerges 251). While Afghanistan had a legacy of victorious jihad, the effort in Iraq was more critical from al-Qaida’s perspective. This was in part a reflection of al-Qaida’s Arab orientation as Iraq was viewed as a strategically and religiously important location. Also, Iraq had
long been featured regularly in al-Qaida’s propaganda as a victim of the “Crusader-Zionist” alliance. Zawahiri admitted as much in a letter to Zarqawi.

It has always been my belief that the victory of Islam will never take place until a Muslim state is established in the manner of the Prophet in the heart of the Islamic world, specifically in the Levant, Egypt, and the neighboring states of the Peninsula and Iraq... As for the battles that are going on in the far-flung regions of the Islamic world, such as Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Bosnia, they are just the groundwork and the vanguard for the major battles which have begun in the heart of the Islamic world (2).

Yet al-Qaida had no meaningful presence in what was the “cause célèbre” of the global jihad or viable way to establish one (“Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate ‘Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States” 2; Gerges 251). This added to its existing organizational needs for an alliance with Zarqawi. Its absence from this battlefield detracted from its claims to be the vanguard of jihad. It was in danger of being eclipsed, and Zarqawi appeared to have the potential to supplant bin Laden as the predominant figure of the global movement (M.A. Weaver). When, in January 2004, Zarqawi approached al-Qaida, it was seemingly an ideal solution. Al-Qaida could then have a presence in Iraq, coopt a potential rival, and shape Zarqawi’s prosecution of the jihad, or so al-Qaida thought at the time (Jones 158).

The 9/11 attacks impact on al-Qaida’s reputation combined with his position in the jihad in Iraq that caused Zarqawi to re-visit his view on an alliance with al-Qaida. 9/11 made al-Qaida’s name a powerful symbol. This was precisely what Zarqawi needed as he sought to be the focal point for the resources, money, and volunteers flowing into Iraq. In Iraq—where al-Qaida was not—he was sufficiently removed from al-Qaida that he could retain his coveted autonomy in practice. It is possible that he still believed that al-Qaida still had ample funds to share, a common holdover assumption after al-Qaida spent a decade of acting as a jihadist lender. In reality, its treasury was dwindling, as Zarqawi would soon learn. Beyond such tangible resources, Gerges explained that “a formal association with the parent organization would also confer revolutionary legitimacy on
Zarqawi and turn him from a mere field commander in Iraq into a global jihadi on par with the masters” (258).

Zarqawi had gained a fair degree of notoriety overnight when former Secretary of State Colin Powell identified him by name in his February 2003 address to the United Nations making the case for war in Iraq, citing him as a primary link between al-Qaida and Saddam Hussein’s regime (Powell). The belief that an alliance already existed had the inadvertent effect of reducing the costs of partnership for Zarqawi, as he was already subject to the corresponding level of counterterrorism pressure without the benefits. Yet the United States designating a group or person as an al-Qaida ally was not the same as al-Qaida itself doing so in the eyes of the audience that Zarqawi was focused on. Al-Qaida was a name—more than that, it was a brand—that commanded widespread recognition, within the crowded field of insurgents in Iraq and among international donors and recruits alike.

Even with this alignment of organizational interests, it still took time to come to an agreement about an alliance. Zarqawi sent a letter to bin Laden in January 2004 that laid out his vision for the effort in Iraq and raised the possibility of swearing fealty to al-Qaida, if their views were compatible (Jones 157). Zarqawi was clear that he wanted an alliance with al-Qaida that would not require any adjustments on his end, but would allow him to benefit from the al-Qaida name. It was not until the end of 2004 that the alliance was officially cemented. First, in October 2004, Zarqawi published a statement in an online Arabic-language magazine swearing bayat to bin Laden. Then in December, bin Laden responded and affirmed Zarqawi’s role as a representative of al-Qaida. Zarqawi’s organization was then anointed as “al-Qaida in the Land of Two Rivers,” referred to as al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) (Jones 158). This was the only affiliate that bin Laden
announced; all subsequent affiliate announcements came from his deputy, Zawahiri, but only after bin Laden approved (Rassler et al. 10).

Barely concealed behind Zarqawi’s public subordination to bin Laden was his intent to relentlessly pursue his own agenda in Iraq, albeit now with the additional cachet that the al-Qaida brand provided (Jones 157). This agenda involved not only expelling the United States, but also striking the ascending Shia, who Zarqawi viewed as a dangerous enemy on par with the U.S, in order to ignite sectarian tensions and precipitate a civil war in Iraq (Jones 155). He had informed bin Laden of his views on this subject in a 2004 letter, “[i]f we succeed in dragging the Shia into the arena of sectarian war, it will become possible to awaken the inattentive Sunnis as they feel imminent danger … the only solution for us is to strike the religious, military, and other cadres among the Shia blow after blow” (United States Department of State 2005 Patterns 14). While bin Laden may have hoped to co-opt a potential competitor, Zarqawi’s notoriety continued to soar, arguably even eclipsing that of his professed leaders in Pakistan. Detained senior al-Qaida leader Abu Faraj al-Libi acknowledged as much when he remarked, “[h]ad I known of all of Zarqawi’s activities and capabilities when he first came to al Qaida with a desire to pledge bayat to Osama bin Laden, I would have written a letter to bin Laden advising that the Shaykh pledge bayat to Abu Musab instead” (qtd. in Jones 145).

These sentiments aside, Zarqawi’s meteoric rise was soon on the verge of implosion. His brutal tactics and indiscriminate targeting alienated both the Iraqi people and broader Muslim world. Despite Abu Faraj’s perception of Zarqawi’s stature, other members of al-Qaida were dismayed by Zarqawi’s behavior (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 76-7; al-Zawahiri). Al-Qaida tried in vain to get Zarqawi to adjust his approach, and soon discovered the perils of offering its name to a
partner who was unwilling to adhere to its guidance. Such relationships had no enforcement mechanisms, absent revoking the al-Qaida name.

In 2005, Zawahiri personally wrote to Zarqawi to offer both strategic and tactical guidance, urging him to de-emphasize his sectarian agenda and cease acts that alienated Muslims, particularly beheadings and attacks on Shias and holy sites. Zawahiri insisted that expelling the Americans remain the priority as the first step towards establishing an Islamic state. He maintained that Zarqawi’s efforts against the Shia distracted from that primary goal. In the same letter, however, Zawahiri asked Zarqawi for money, a notable reversal in the groups’ past position as a lender and bankroller (al-Zawahiri 1-18). In a sense, Zarqawi’s intent to take on the al-Qaida name as a way to garner greater resources worked all too well as he now was the one providing funds to the parent organization.

In November 2005, Zarqawi exported his violence to Jordan, the place that had animated his initial commitment to jihad. Sixty people were killed the bombings of three hotels in Amman. Many were guests at a Muslim wedding at the hotel (Department of State 2005 Patterns 136). Al-Qaida was furious about the operation, in part because of the disastrous outcome and in part because it was yet another instance of Zarqawi undertaking a major action with negative ramifications without consulting his alliance partner. Now-deceased al-Qaida religious leader, Atiyah al-Rahman, said as much in a follow up with another letter to Zarqawi in which he implored him to “[s]trive, may God bless you, to avoid repeating the mistake of lack of precision in execution, like what happened in Jordan” (“Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 16). Atiyah reiterated some of the same themes as Zawahiri, such as the need to build public support and maintain good relations with clerics and scholars. He did not attempt to dissuade Zarqawi from targeting the Shia. Instead Atiyah focused on improving Zarqawi’s alliance with al-Qaida, arguing
that strengthening this relationship should be Zarqawi’s priority, more so than external operations
("Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 3-18).

[A]bstain from making any decision on a comprehensive issue (one with a broad reach), and on substantial matters until you have turned to your leadership; Shaykh Usamah and the Doctor [Zawahiri], and their brothers there, and consulted with them..... I command you, my brother, and I am your brother and I have nothing except these words that are between the two of us and God as the third party, that you send messengers from your end to Waziristan so that they meet with the brothers of the leadership, and the rational and experienced people and the shaykhs here, because you have a greater chance to send messengers (brothers that you choose) than your brothers have here.

I am going to say something to you that may seem to you like an exaggeration, but you should think about it: Readying the brothers and mobilizing them and preparing them to be messengers between you and the leadership here is more important than preparing and sending the brothers for some operations like the recent operation of the hotels in Amman!

Truly, I am not joking, but the significance of your correspondence with your brothers here, and continued mutual discourse and consultation, as well as going along with them in well-laid plans, and mutual understanding, harmonizing, and guidance, are more important than many of the large scale operations. So strive, my brother, God bless you, and send your men so that they can bring you instructions, advice, ideas, suggestions, consultation, criticism, and mature opinion from your brothers.

The incongruous dynamic between the two groups was evident in these exchanges. Al-Qaida clearly continued to view itself as the superior in the relationship. While couched in respectful terms, Atiyah and Zawahiri made it clear they were issuing orders to Zarqawi. Al-Qaida acted as the religious and strategic authority, yet it was in the weaker position, requiring Zarqawi to send someone to Pakistan because it could not send a representative to Iraq and asking Zarqawi for money because it did not have enough.

While Zarqawi pointedly ignored some of the guidance offered by his “beloved brothers,” particularly regarding targeting the Shia, the January 2006 creation of the Mujahidin Shura Council—a coalition of Sunni insurgent elements, which was similar to the council al-Qaida convened in Sudan in the early 1990s—was in part an effort by Zarqawi to be responsive to al-Qaida’s urging that Zarqawi foster greater unity with other Sunni elements in the insurgency.
Zawahiri had implored him to "strive for the unity of the mujahidin," arguing that regarding "the active mujahedeen ulema—even if there may be some heresy or fault in them that is not blasphemous—we must find a means to include them and to benefit from their energy" (al-Zawahiri 7). Similarly Atiyah advised Zarqawi to:

\[
\text{take caution against being zealous about the name “al-Qa’ida”, or any name or organization. Although all mujahidin are our brothers, the Sunni are our brothers and our friends, as long as they are Muslims, even if they are disobedient, or insolent; whether they come into the organization with us or not, for they are our brothers, our friends, and our loved ones. We should cooperate with them (“Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 9).}
\]

In other words, they urged Zarqawi to reduce his emphasis on the very asset that drew Zarqawi to al-Qaida, its name.

In addition to improving relations with fellow Sunni insurgents, Atiyah and Zawahiri presciently urged Zarqawi to avoid alienating the Iraqi people, particularly fellow Sunnis. Atiyah explained to Zarqawi that:

\[
\text{[w]inning over the people, bringing them close, being cautious about alienating them, befriending them, helping them, accepting their foibles (which means [accepting] what they possess, including strength, weakness, propriety, impropriety, goodness, and ill; which doesn’t negate the continuation of guiding them towards goodness and betterment), molding them, gaining their sympathy at all their levels and ranks, using the utmost caution to not be harsh with them or degrade them or frighten them or be hasty in judging them or even be hasty in reforming them in a way that they might not comprehend, which might cause them provocation, wherein they would turn on us and you with hostile animosity (“Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 8).}
\]

The reckoning Atiyah feared soon came with the Awakening. As Atiyah cautioned, Sunni tribal leaders allied together and turned against AQI. With U.S. support, they pushed AQI out of key areas and reduced its support base in Iraq. The Awakening began in Anbar Province in 2006 and spread across the country (New York Times “Awakening Movement”). Despite foreseeing this possibility, al-Qaida had few points of leverage with AQI to get it to modify its behavior and avoid this catastrophe, often cited as a turning point in the war, because it was not providing Zarqawi
with tangible resources that it could use to express its dissatisfaction. Short of withdrawing its endorsement, which some al-Qaida members advocated, al-Qaida could not calibrate the provision of its name to influence Zarqawi’s behavior (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-000004” 6-11). It was a dichotomous asset; once given, it persisted, unless publicly revoked.

While Zarqawi was divisive and the alliance was not functioning as al-Qaida had intended, AQI still had some benefits for al-Qaida’s alliance hub position. Iraq was highly visible in a conflict that had resonance among jihadists and in the broader Muslim world (“Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States’” 1-2). As the recipient of throngs of new recruits and foreign fighters, not to mention the accompanying resources activated by this cause, AQI developed its own extensive contacts with existing organizations as well as emerging groups. It gradually formed its own relationships with non-competitors, arguably becoming an alliance hub in its own right. But AQI still saw value in and encouraged the al-Qaida brand, rather than trying to usurp al-Qaida. It was Zarqawi who proposed to the GSPC that it consider affiliating with al-Qaida, as will be discussed in Chapter 10. AQI did not attempt to replace al-Qaida Central as an alliance hub by proposing that GSPC join with AQI; instead Zarqawi promoted al-Qaida’s position as a hub by encouraging this alliance (United States Department of State 2005 Patterns 53).

Despite al-Qaida’s dissatisfaction with AQI’s conduct, Zawahiri and Atiyah both solicited Zarqawi’s views about the advisability of an alliance with the GSPC (“Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 10; al-Zawahiri 12). Al-Qaida was wary of the Algerians, as Zawahiri and Atiyah separately noted to Zarqawi, based on the destructive downward spiral of the jihad in Algeria during the 1990s. This experience in Algeria was particularly salient since the conflict in Iraq was at risk of following a similar trajectory. In the same letter where he asked for Zarqawi’s
input on the GSPC, Atiyah invoked Algeria in the 1990s as a course that Zarqawi should avoid at all costs ("Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 10). Al-Qaida still wanted to hear Zarqawi’s thoughts because he was in a better position to assess the current state of the GSPC. Al-Qaida’s willingness to consider Zarqawi’s view on the potential alliance suggested that in spite of the problems in their alliance, al-Qaida recognized Zarqawi’s value in improving al-Qaida’s alliance position and was not deterred by the rocky experience with its first franchise.

Zarqawi did not survive to see the second franchise he championed finalized. On June 8, 2006, he was killed by an airstrike north of Baghdad (Knickmeyer and Finer). Zawahiri announced al-Qaida’s merger with the GSPC three months later on September 11, 2006, the five year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. In his speech announcing the GSPC’s merger with al-Qaida, Zawahiri called on al-Qaida’s newest partner to be "a bone in the throat of the American and French crusaders" and to sow fear "in the heart of the traitors and apostate sons of France" (Reidel 126). In January of the following year, the GSPC officially became al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Like the AQI case, the GSPC’s re-branding coincided with alliance formation, rather than being a reflection of a long-standing alliance; yet in many ways the GSPC case was more similar to the EIJ alliance in its motives, the subsequent chapters will discuss. For al-Qaida, the AQIM franchise opportunity was particularly timely in maintaining its alliance hub position in the wake of Zarqawi’s death.

Zarqawi’s death did not eliminate the problems between the center and its Iraq affiliate. Bin Laden endorsed AQI’s choice of a successor to Zarqawi, but his public statement made it clear that al-Qaida leadership was not consulted beforehand (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 76). In October 2006, AQI and several smaller Sunni insurgent elements announced the creation of the “Islamic State of Iraq.” Al-Qaida’s franchise in Iraq was subsumed under this umbrella. While AQI’s name
change provided a thin veneer, it referred to itself exclusively using the new name, and thus al-Qaida’s name lost prominence in that theatre. AQI’s apparently judged that the al-Qaida moniker lacked resonance with Iraq people and that the foreign association of the al-Qaida name was not advantageous. Al-Qaida’s first franchise was a shadow of what it once was. In some respects, this must have been a relief for al-Qaida as AQI’s actions were damaging and counterproductive, but in terms of al-Qaida’s position as an alliance hub, the diminishment of AQI—and its decision to change its name without consulting al-Qaida leadership—was a blow (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000003” 7).

The shift to the Islamic State of Iraq did not alleviate al-Qaida’s consternation with AQI’s conduct. In early 2011, American al-Qaida spokesman Adam Gadahn authored a letter to an unidentified al-Qaida leader. In it, he sharply criticized the Islamic State of Iraq’s targeting and tactics. Gadahn pointed out that the Islamic State of Iraq was still known to be associated with al-Qaida, so its mistakes, such as targeting Christian churches during mass when children and women were present, still reflected badly on al-Qaida and alienated the Iraqi people (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000003” 6-7). He urged al-Qaida to publicly dissociate with the Islamic State of Iraq, which he derided as “group who believes the authenticity of their fictitious state” (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000003” 7).

I do not see any obstacle or bad act if al-Qa’ida organization declares its discontent with this behavior and other behaviors being carried out by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq, without an order from al-Qa’ida and without consultation. I see that this is done immediately or lately, favorably sooner. I see that the organization should declare the cutoff of its organizational ties with that organization. The relations between al-Qa’ida organization and (the state) have been practically cut off for a number of years. The decision to declare the State was taken without consultation from al-Qa’ida leadership. Their improvised decision has caused a split in the Mujahidin ranks and their supporters inside and outside Iraq. This is the only solution facing al-Qa’ida organization, otherwise its reputation will be damaged more and more as a result of the acts and statements of this group, which is labeled under our organization (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000003” 8-9).
While Gadahn’s recommendations were not heeded by bin Laden, he was not alone in his disdain for al-Qaida’s conduct in Iraq. In March 2007, an Egyptian member of al-Qaida (probably senior member based on the content and audience) appealed to a respected Sunni scholar to try to influence AQI/Islamic State of Iraq, in the face of its continuing “lack of judgment” ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000011” 1-2). A veteran East African al-Qaida member similarly lamented AQI/Islamic State of Iraq’s tendency to inform al-Qaida of its action ex post facto and scorned the Islamic State of Iraq’s decision to declare itself a state (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 76-7).

While bin Laden was not willing to cut the Islamic State of Iraq off from al-Qaida, he did create some distance. In October 2007, he dissociated al-Qaida “from any unlawful acts in Iraq” and urged greater unity without referencing the Islamic State in Iraq, a conspicuous oversight (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 77). Al-Qaida’s limited ability to influence the Islamic State of Iraq was clear up until bin Laden’s final days. A week before his death, bin Laden requested an update from the group as well as an explanation for its lack of communication ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000010” 4). The alliance was barely intact and remained strained by distance, security, and continuing differences over tactics and targets.

The difficult experience with AQI did not deter al-Qaida from continuing its branding and franchise alliance strategy. Its name—and groups’ desire to adopt it—continued to be the main asset that al-Qaida had to offer. In the AQI and GSPC experiences, the affiliate alliance was a way for distant groups to forge a visible alliance with al-Qaida. Al-Qaida soon sought other ways to adapt this strategy to further shore up its alliance hub position.

8.9 The Faux Affiliates: EIG and LIFG
Thus far, affiliate alliances—groups that adopted al-Qaida’s name—had taken two forms. First, al-Qaida and EIJ’s merger, announced in June 2001, involved EIJ’s absorption into al-Qaida. “Officially” the merged group, al-Qaida al-Jihad, was an amalgamation of the two names. In that case, the merger was the culmination of a long-standing and increasingly inter-dependent alliance. Despite the duration of the relationship and EIJ’s dependence on al-Qaida, the move was still deeply divisive within EIJ. A faction of EIJ members were officially subsumed into al-Qaida, while those who refused to join the alliance did not go public with their objections and instead retained the EIJ moniker. Second, after 9/11, AQI and AQIM adopted al-Qaida’s name and subordinated themselves to al-Qaida publicly, while remaining separate and largely autonomous organizations.

Al-Qaida sought to create a third category of affiliates that fell somewhere in between these two ends of the spectrum, with considerably less success. These alliances were a formalization of the integration of co-located factions of existing groups that were packaged and presented publicly as affiliates. They were similar to the EIJ’s experience in that these factions were de facto part of al-Qaida by the time the alliance was publicly announced. Yet they were dissimilar in that the factions could not credibly claim to represent their organizations and those who opposed the alliance were unwilling to remain silent. Affiliation declarations spurred open opposition from influential parts of the groups, damaging their value as demonstrations of al-Qaida’s leadership and viability.

The organizational dynamics of the two “faux” affiliate groups, EIG and LIFG, that al-Qaida attempted to re-brand in 2006 and 2007 respectively, had a number of commonalities. Both were sizable groups—estimated in the thousands, though their numbers were badly damaged by counterterrorism efforts—with influential leaders imprisoned (United States Department of State “Middle East Overview”). Some members of the two organizations travelled along a similar path as al-Qaida. They fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s and early 1990s before moving to Sudan. The
haven in Sudan was particularly ideal for these groups because of its proximity to their homelands and primarily cause. From Sudan and at home, they were engaged in efforts to overthrow their regimes. By the time they were ejected from Sudan in the mid-1990s, both had suffered debilitating blows by their adversary governments and a number of their members, including senior leaders, were detained. Defeated at home, some members shifted back to Afghanistan, where they sought a reprieve and time to rebuild under the Afghan Taliban.

Over time, the experience of those residing in exile in jihadist havens, while others remained in hiding or imprisoned at home or in the West living under asylum, divided them. The aftermath of 9/11 exacerbated this dynamic as many members were killed, detained or rendered back to their home countries. Those who remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan were often integrated into al-Qaida. They became dual members who were well positioned to fill the growing vacancies within al-Qaida and thereby grew increasingly detached from their parent organizations. By 2006, this rift had taken its toll on both groups’ cohesion, and they no longer had a common mission.

EIG’s historic leadership declared a ceasefire initiative in 1997 from prison and, as evidence of its sway over much of the group, the ceasefire held. These leaders had publicly denounced previous efforts by EIG’s members in Afghanistan to align the group with al-Qaida, including forcing the head of its external shura, Rifai Taha, to recant his signature on the 1998 “International Front” declaration. In early 2002, while some EIG members were battling Coalition forces in Afghanistan and working closely with al-Qaida, EIG leaders in prison issued the first of four revisionist tracts abdicating violent jihad against Cairo. It was entitled “The Initiative for Ceasing Violence: a Realistic View and a Legitimate Perspective” (Ashour 613). Over the course of their de-mobilization and de-
radicalization campaign, EIG’s historic leaders repeatedly condemned al-Qaida actions, including its violence in Saudi Arabia and the 9/11 attacks (Meijer 211).

But the EIG members co-located with al-Qaida in South Asia were no longer willing to follow their historical leaders and instead recognized al-Qaida as their leader. In August 2006, Zawahiri publicly announced that EIG had merged with al-Qaida. A closer examination of Zawahiri’s statement reveals that he was well aware that the move would not be supported by EIG leadership back in Egypt. He described those who were allying with al-Qaida as a “fundamental bloc” of EIG with “pure, clear, undiluted origins,” a clear shot at the imprisoned EIG leadership and those who adhered to their ceasefire and renunciation of violence. Together, they formed “Gamaat al-Qaeda al-Jihad,” or the Base of Jihad Organization, an amalgamation of all three organizations’ name (“Al-Zawahiri: Egyptian Militant Group Joins al-Qaeda”).

Al-Qaida persisted in its long-standing effort to build an anti-U.S. jihadist coalition and publicly attributed this EIG’s faction’s decision to ally with it to a common enemy and shared threat. The union, Zawahiri claimed, was “for the purpose of concentrating the Muslim umma’s capabilities in a single rank in the face of its enemies in the most insolent Crusader campaign launched against Islam in its history” (“Al-Zawahiri: Egyptian Militant Group Joins al-Qaeda”). But this alliance was similar to the “blowfish” effect that Wright remarked on in 1998, whereby al-Qaida used alliances as propaganda to make itself seem bigger. The “official” incorporation of part of EIG into al-Qaida was a formality, as these exiled and marginalized members had been incorporated into al-Qaida for several years. Nonetheless, the announcement of yet another merger, especially “a great portion” of EIG, known to be a large group, gave the appearance that al-Qaida was growing, an effect that was soon dampened by the rejection of the alliance by EIG leaders in Egypt (L. Farrall 1-4).
But al-Qaida was not deterred by the historic EIG leaders’ repudiation of the alliance announcement. Merger announcements were too vital to al-Qaida’s ability to project its continued viability, relevance, and growth in the face of constant losses and pressure. It proceeded with a similar arrangement with LIFG, announced by Zawahiri on November 3, 2007. This alliance was also based on the integration of several influential LIFG leaders into al-Qaida in the years since 2001. In this case, al-Qaida had a charismatic figure involved in the alliance, Abu Layth al-Libi, make a statement simultaneously affirming that “[w]e announce we are joining al Qaeda as loyal soldiers” (Ersan).

The LIFG alliance announcement raised even more questions than the EIG declaration. LIFG had well-known connections to al-Qaida, but it had consistently avoided subservience to al-Qaida or adopting its cause. So what caused LIFG to change its longstanding position about joining al-Qaida’s coalition against the United States? Was it the alleged U.S. involvement in the detention of LIFG leaders? Moreover, earlier in 2007, al-Qaida announced the GSPC merger with al-Qaida and thereby anointed the GSPC as al-Qaida’s branch in the Islamic Maghreb. By all accounts, Libya is part of the Maghreb. Thus why would it join al-Qaida Central rather than becoming part of al-Qaida’s branch dedicated to the region?

By 2007, LIFG was a shadow of what it once was. Its remaining presence in Libya included two emirs and several shura members in prison and a covert presence of an unknown size in the restive city of Benghazi (Ersan). The rest of the group was in exile. Some had settled into Europe, primarily the U.K., taking advantage of liberal asylum laws, while others remained in Afghanistan and Pakistan (United Nations “Narrative Summaries” 1267; Ersan). The gulf between the various elements of the group had grown in the years since 2001. By 2007, LIFG was no longer functioning in accordance with its established procedures. Its main decision-making body, the shura council,
had not been able to convene or confer for several years. Its emir had been detained in 2004, and the group had been unable to appoint a new one. In this vacuum, influence in the LIFG was derived informally, and it was unclear who could speak on its behalf.

The Libyan group had longstanding ties to al-Qaeda, but the relationship had been carefully negotiated over the years. There was not an absence of ideological commonality. LIFG and al-Qaeda had “traveled in similar ideological circles” for decades, but LIFG maintained its desire to bring down the Qadhafi regime and had repeatedly refused to sign on to al-Qaeda’s agenda or endorse its attacks (Zelin and Lebovich). Al-Qaeda viewed the Gadhafi regime as an apostate regime, though Tripoli was not a priority for the group, especially compared to Riyadh or Cairo, let alone the United States. LIFG navigated a careful ideological position whereby it condemned the U.S., but did not adopt al-Qaeda’s global jihadist agenda. At several pivotal alliance junctures, al-Qaeda and LIFG opted not to become more inter-dependent because doing so would have required subordination and adaptations, primarily by LIFG, that it was unwilling to make.

There were ample opportunities for interaction and trust building. Members from both groups had been co-located for years. They worked together in Sudan, including collaborating in an effort to derail the descent into senseless violence in Algeria, and LIFG had a representative on the jihadist shura council organized by al-Qaeda (Tawil “The Changing Face”). Yet the two groups’ time in Sudan concluded with disenfranchisement among LIFG members who felt that bin Laden had forsaken them by agreeing to Khartoum’s demand to expel the resident Libyans (Lahoud Letters from Abbottabad 45).

The reservations were not only on the LIFG’s side. Al-Qaeda was critical of the LIFG’s conduct, particularly its unwillingness to adhere to al-Qaeda’s guidance to wait before confronting Tripoli in the 1990s. In letter found in the Abbottabad compound where bin Laden was found, a
senior al-Qaida leader, likely bin Laden, lamented LIFG’s actions in Libya as being among a litany of mistakes made by other jihadist groups:

The brothers in Libya failed because, firstly, they did not listen to any of the advice they were offered. Al-Qaeda advised them to wait, so did the Jihad Group [EIJ] and the Islamic Group [EIG]. All the brothers advised the Libyan Mujahidin that they did not have the basic resources to topple the Libyan regime. Not to mention, the timing did not add up..... The excessive enthusiasm among the Libyan brothers about creating a Muslim state in Libya made them lose focus. Then, the Libyan brothers suffered tremendously as they entered into a conflict with the Libyan regime. Thousands of our Libyan brothers went to jail. Many of them were tortured and persecuted ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019" 2010 8).

After suffering serious setbacks in Libya in the mid-1990s and being expelled from Sudan, the LIFG ceased operations in Libya and re-located to Afghanistan to rebuild. LIFG felt that resident jihadist groups should adhere to the Taliban’s authority and resented al-Qaida actions that jeopardized the haven (Tawil “The Changing Face”). While it benefited from bin Laden’s resources, LIFG was not dependent on al-Qaida for haven in Afghanistan because it had its own relationship with the Taliban, arguably on par with al-Qaida. Mullah Omar once heralded LIFG’s leader as the “Shakhy of the Arabs” (Cruickshank 5-6). The LIFG refused to sign bin Laden’s 1998 International Front statement or endorse al-Qaida’s attacks on the U.S. Embassies in East Africa that same year. It did, however, vehemently denounce the U.S. cruise missile strikes launched in response to al-Qaida’s Embassy attacks. LIFG declared that “America is not only the enemy of the Mujahid Sheik Usama Bin Laden and the Islamic movements, but rather the enemy of the Islamic nation” (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group LIFG “America is...”).

After 9/11, al-Qaida and LIFG faced a shared greatest threat. Abu Yahya al-Libi, an LIFG religious figure who opted to stay in Afghanistan and would later join al-Qaida, issued a call for jihad against the U.S. and declared it an infidel force occupying a Muslim nation (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group LIFG “Fatwah of Sheikh Hasan”). LIFG was not spared in the post-9/11 dragnet, and
key leaders were detained in several countries. Some were rendered back to Libya, where they remained imprisoned (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 181). Many of those who avoided arrest adopted a low profile, except senior LIFG members in Afghanistan and Pakistan who were the most secure and active, and thus became the most visible leaders of LIFG. They grew increasingly integrated into al-Qaida, in part because al-Qaida now had a perpetual need to replace the loss of experienced and capable figures in the group.

Developments in 2003 offered yet another alliance opportunity. LIFG declared the war against Americans in Iraq to be a defensive, thus legitimate, jihad (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group “Statement #21”). The two groups once again appeared to have common cause. Moreover, it had appeal amongst Libyan jihadists, and they flocked to the fight in Iraq. It was not clear how many were actually LIFG members or acting at LIFG’s behest, but LIFG did not appear to be the major force behind this mobilization (Zelin and Lebovich; Tawil “The Changing Face”). Unlike the case of the GSPC, where Algerian involvement with AQI helped to facilitate a merger between al-Qaida and GSPC, Libyan participation in the conflict did not bring LIFG more firmly into al-Qaida’s orbit.

Moreover, the long-isolated Qadhafi regime was rehabilitated in the international community when it agreed to Washington’s request that it relinquish nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and accept responsibility for bombing aircraft over Scotland and Niger in 1988 and 1989 (Ersan). The improved relationship between Tripoli and Washington extended to counterterrorism cooperation, such as the rendering of two senior LIFG leaders to Tripoli (Tawil “The Changing Face”). The threat from the United States to the LIFG thus grew even more acute, and al-Qaida and LIFG’s shared enemies more salient.

LIFG was accused of involvement in operations consistent with al-Qaida’s global jihadist agenda, particularly two major terrorist attacks conducted by North African militants. However,
unclassified sources are vague on the nature of these links. First, LIFG is reported to have been involved in planning the May 2003 bombings in Casablanca, Morocco, that killed over 40 people and injured more than 100 (United Nations “Narrative Summaries” 1267 2010). It is also accused of unspecified links to the 2004 attacks in Madrid, Spain (United Nations “Narrative Summaries” 1267 2010). Neither operation was attributed to LIFG, which suggests that with the group’s decentralization, members were freelancing and had become involved in global jihadist activities.

In November 2007, Zawahiri declared that LIFG had joined al-Qaida. Once again, he justified the move as a religiously-driven balancing requirement, a step toward “one jihadist battle by one Islamic nation against one Crusader-Zionist enemy” (Ersan).

Today, with God’s blessing and grace, the Islamic nation is witnessing a blessed, kind, and benevolent step taken by the pioneering mujahidin on the path of its unity in God’s obedience and bidding for His victory and support. A group of men who initiated jihad, took the path of struggle, hoisted the flags of the call for Islam and jihad, and took the lead in patience and steadfastness of the elite Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, has announced joining al-Qaida of Jihad in order to continue the march of their brothers who sacrificed their souls in battlefields and spent their lives in prison of their own accord to satisfy their God (Ersan).

Zawahiri went on to label Qadhafi as an agent of the Crusaders, and thereby embrace LIFG’s founding mission as part of al-Qaida’s global jihadist agenda. In response, while pledging allegiance to al-Qaida and its aims, Abu Layth did not abdicate his life-long commit to overthrowing Tripoli. Instead, he presented the two causes as intertwined, in light of Qadhafi’s about-face.

Libya’s tyrant is suddenly discovering after these long years that America, defender of the cross... is not an enemy who should be threatened with fiery speeches and revolutionary chants until our voices are lost, but is in fact a close friend and trusted ally... Libya has turned into a new crusader base in the Islamic Maghreb... It is by the grace of God that we fully understand Libya’s importance to the West (“Al-Zawahiri, Al-Libi: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Joins Al-Qa’ida” 3).

In joining al-Qaida, Abu Layth did not abdicate loyalty to LIFG’s imprisoned leaders or to LIFG as an organization. Instead he claimed:
It is with the grace of God that we were hoisting the banner of jihad against this apostate regime under the leadership of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which sacrificed the elite of its sons and commanders in combating this regime... The Group’s leader lions are still imprisoned behind the bars of apostate criminals, rejecting deals and concessions... Based on all that, and from our religious duty to close ranks and agree, we announce that we have joined al-Qaida of Jihad ("Al-Zawahiri, Al-Libi: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Joins Al-Qa’ida” 4).

But the LIFG was no longer a unitary actor and those who agreed to the alliance were not in a position to speak for the organization as a whole. LIFG was divided along similar lines as the Egyptian groups. Members co-located with al-Qaida in South Asia advocated for the merger, while LIFG members in Europe and imprisoned at home rejected it (Tawil “The Changing Face”). This is one reason why the LIFG affiliate announcement folded into al-Qaida’s recent acquisition of an arm in the Maghreb. The LIFG elements joining al-Qaida were concentrated in South Asia, not in the Maghreb. In addition, the sordid history between Libyan and Algerian militants, discussed in Chapter 10, compounded the issue. Instead of being subsumed by AQIM, Abu Layth al-Libi vowed to fight “side by side with our brothers of the al-Qaida Organization in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb” ("Al-Zawahiri, Al-Libi: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Joins Al-Qa’ida” 5).

However, there was a parallel effort underway by the imprisoned leaders of the LIFG. In July 2009, they not only rejected the alliance with al-Qaida, but they declared that they were engaging in talks with Tripoli. Several months later, these members published their own 417-page publication with three main themes: 1) a refutation of al-Qaida’s ideology; 2) a pledge to cease the LIFG’s campaign to overthrow Qadhafi’s regime; and 3) a re-evaluation of the group’s posture towards violence (Cruickshank 5). Their initiative was supported by a faction of the group that identified itself as LIFG-Britain (“Libyan Islamist Group Issues Statement Supporting Regime Dialogue”).

The LIFG imprisoned leadership’s initiative was an unwelcome surprise. Zawahiri had long-standing disagreements with EIG’s historic leadership and was well-aware of their positions, but
the LIFG leaders’ announcement was unexpected, made more complicated by the fact that Zawahiri had publicly praised some of these same individuals, including in the alliance announcement (Cruickshank 6).

Dear brothers, his eminence, the mujahid scholar Abu-al-Munzir al-Sa’idi; the amir of mujahidin, the patient and steadfast Abu Abdallah al-Sadiq; and the rest of the captives of the fighting Islamic group in Libya, here is good news for you: your brothers are continuing your march after you, following in your footsteps, holding the flag that you hoisted, and escalating their confrontation with the enemies of Islam: al-Qadhafi and his masters the Crusaders of Washington (“Al-Zawahiri, Al-Libi: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group Joins Al-Qa’ida” 2).

Abu Layth al-Libi also publicly recognized the authority of these leaders. Al-Qaida’s ability to repudiate LIFG’s position was further complicated by the fact that it continued to recognize the legitimacy of jihad in Palestine, Afghanistan, and Iraq, places where “infidels” occupied Muslim lands (Cruickshank 6-7).

The peace talks with Tripoli were the result of nearly three years of negotiations. While some argue that LIFG’s revisions had little impact on the broader global jihadist movement, it was a blow to al-Qaida’s alliance strategy. Unlike the LIFG members involved in the alliance, the peace talks were led entirely by members of the group’s shura, including its first emir and the brother of a senior LIFG member involved in the al-Qaida alliance (Tawil “The Changing Face”). The limitations of this alliance were apparent when the LIFG-al-Qaida members who championed the alliance, particularly Abu Layth al-Libi and Abu Yahya al-Libi, were killed over the next three years. Both were charismatic and influential figures, who, from an alliance standpoint, were not replaceable, especially in the face of the opposition from the historic leaders.

Thus neither EIG nor LIFG was an example of an organizational-level alliance or true affiliate. Rather they reflect how breakdowns in organizational cohesion can lead to sub-group arrangements, typically based on key nodes. When they were cohesive organizations, these groups
resisted allying with al-Qaida in spite of ideological solidarity, shared threats, and common enemies. When al-Qaida attempted to apply its affiliate strategy to them, the result was far from optimal. Alliance announcements were largely symbolic in that they formalized relationships with individuals already integrated into al-Qaida, but did not persuade other elements of the group to join the alliance. They offered an opportunity for al-Qaida to publicly project strength and represent itself as the vanguard. On the other hand, the public repudiation of the alliances by influential segments of these groups seriously diminished the success of these endeavors.

8.10 The Downsides of Affiliates and Allies

Al-Qaida’s franchising strategy created the appearance of the core organization that issued guidance to its affiliates, which then acted in compliance with al-Qaida leaders’ edicts. The reality was decidedly more complicated, messy, and far less satisfying for al-Qaida. Most affiliates retained far more autonomy than this formulation suggests and often proved resistant to guidance that did not dovetail with their intentions. This became a source of frustration for al-Qaida, particularly bin Laden. He repeatedly expressed angst about their blunders, particularly their targeting of fellow Muslims, and their insistence on using precious resources to target the near enemy (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019”).

While al-Qaida’s influence on affiliates had limitations, it was not more successful at influencing allies with which it was co-located. At first glance, the Pakistani Taliban (TTP) appeared to be an ideal al-Qaida ally. Formed in 2007 as an umbrella group of militants in the Pakistani tribal areas, TTP had several attributes to recommend it as an al-Qaida ally. Because TTP had a presence throughout the seven agencies of FATA, though concentrated in South Waziristan, it could provide haven for al-Qaida, fulfilling a key al-Qaida need. TTP’s staunchly anti-Islamabad posture meant
that al-Qaida did not have the same trust issues as it did with other groups that had relationships with the Pakistani Government.

Al-Qaida, and its brand, did not occupy the same position of prestige in South Asia as it did among its Arab counterparts. The Afghan Taliban was viewed as the symbolic leader of jihad in the region. Fittingly, the TTP did not take on al-Qaida’s moniker, choosing instead to name itself after its Afghan counterpart. As was the case for al-Qaida affiliates, this did not mean that the TTP also heeded the Afghan Taliban’s counsel.

But TTP’s decentralized structure and antipathy towards Islamabad turned out to be more of a curse than a blessing for its alliance with al-Qaida. Its attacks were frequently indiscriminate, repeatedly killing fellow Pakistani Muslims and civilians. It also provoked greater Pakistani military involvement in FATA, which threatened the safe haven al-Qaida depended on. Its actions grew increasingly unpalatable to al-Qaida. Eventually, al-Qaida chastised the TTP privately and contemplated doing so publicly. In 2010, two senior, religious leaders in al-Qaida sent a reprimanding and damming letter to TTP’s leader, their “good brother” Hakimullah Mehsud.

We have several important comments that cover the concept, approach, and behavior of the TTP in Pakistan, which we believe are passive behavior and clear legal and religious mistakes which might result in a negative deviation from the set path of the Jihadists Movement in Pakistan, which also are contrary to the objectives of Jihad and to the efforts exerted by us ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000007" 1).

They went on to refute Hakimullah’s claims to be the sole emir in Pakistan and condemn his declaration that anyone who did not recognize him as such was an enemy as doctrinally incorrect and unnecessarily divisive ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000007" 1). Al-Qaida decried his takfiri tendencies and bemoaned his excommunication of fellow Muslims as excessive ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000007" 1). The cultural code of Pashtunwali is often cited as a key reason why both the largely Pashtun Pakistani and Afghan Taliban hosted al-Qaida in the face of
immense pressure. This social code places a premium on being a good host and protecting one’s guests. However, al-Qaida balked at Hakimullah’s men calling al-Qaida “guests,” believing that they had an ulterior political motive for doing so (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000007” 1).

Atiyah and Abu Yahya explained to Hakimullah in unusually blunt terms: “[w]e want to make it clear to you that al-Qa’ida is an Islamist Jihadist organization that is not restricted to a country or race, and that we in Afghanistan swore allegiance to the [Afghan Taliban] Emir Mullah Muhammad [Omar] who allowed us to carry Jihad” (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000007” 1). In pointing this out, they are inferring that Hakimullah does not have equivalent authority to Omar and making it clear that al-Qaida has not sworn allegiance to Hakimullah. They further warned Hakimullah to cease his efforts to poach members from al-Qaida (1). They closed by saying, “[w]e hope that you will take the necessary action to correct your actions and avoid these grave mistakes; otherwise we have to take decisive actions from our end” (1). While the letter was brief, it was direct and reflected serious fissures in the relationship. TTP did not fare any better in al-Qaida’s internal communications. In the same letter that he denounced the Islamic State in Iraq, Adam Gadahn railed against TTP, pointing out its numerous errors and transgressions and how they harmed al-Qaida (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000004” 12-21).

Even TTP’s attempted operation in the United States—seen by many as clear evidence that TTP was pursuing al-Qaida’s global jihad and was a close al-Qaida ally—was criticized harshly by al-Qaida for its mistakes, both tactical and religious. In May 2010, a TTP-trained operative named Faysal Shahzad attempted to detonate a bomb in Times Square in New York City. The device caught fire, but failed to detonate, and Shahzad was detained shortly thereafter trying to flee. Given al-Qaida’s inability to conduct an attack within the United States, TTP’s plot should have seemingly been heralded by al-Qaida. But al-Qaida lamented the TTP’s failure to consult with it prior to
launching such “external operations.” In a letter drafted the same month as the failed Times Square attack, bin Laden criticized TTP’s mistakes, which he believed could have been avoided if TTP had consulted with its more experienced ally.

It would be good if you coordinate with our brothers of the Pakistan and Afghanistan Taliban in regards to the external work, so that there is complete cooperation between us, and tell them that we started planning work inside America many years ago, and gained experience in that field, and we and they are brothers so we should not fall into the error that hurts the Muslims and benefits the enemy, due to lack of coordination between us. So, for example, the operation of brother Faysal Shahzad, Allah release his imprisonment, was possible to avoid his capture and the errors that happened easily by one who had experience (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019” 36).

Perhaps most telling was that when TTP acquired an American operative, it did not share him or its intentions with al-Qaida, despite al-Qaida’s well-established need and desire for such operatives and, as bin Laden pointed out, al-Qaida’s experience in this venture. Moreover, unlike al-Qaida’s affiliates, TTP had ready access to al-Qaida because they were co-located, so its lack of consultation was not the result of inaccessibility or geographic distance. The TTP did not exhibit the kind of deference to al-Qaida that al-Qaida believed its due as the vanguard of the movement, thus demonstrating that this problem was not limited to al-Qaida’s distant allies.

Moreover, rather than being impressed with the TTP’s initiative, bin Laden was concerned with the religious legitimacy of Shahzad’s conduct. In October 2010, he instructed Atiyah to inquire into the process through which Shahzad became an American citizen and to advise the TTP that Shahzad’s false oath of citizenship was unacceptable.

Perhaps you monitored the trial of brother Faysal Shahzad. In it he was asked about the oath that he took when he got American citizenship. And he responded by saying that he lied. You should know that it is not permissible in Islam to betray trust and break a covenant. Perhaps the brother was not aware of this. Please ask the brothers in Pakistani Taliban to explain this point to their members. In one of the pictures, brother Faysal Shahzad was with commander Mahsud [a reference to Hakimullah Mehsud]; please find out if Mahsud knows that getting the American citizenship requires taking an oath to not harm America. This is a very important matter because we do not want the Mujahidn to be accused of breaking a covenant (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000015” 7).
Al-Shabaab: The Last Affiliate?

There was still another group anxious to be endorsed by al-Qaida, al-Shabaab in Somalia. Al-Qaida had a long history with Somalia Islamists, dating back to the U.N. intervention in the famine and civil war in the early 1990s. At that time, al-Qaida worked with a secular warlord as well as fellow jihadists, particularly a movement known as al-Ittihad al-Islamiyah (AIAI). While ousting the Americans was considered a success, its ambitions for the failed state were not realized and al-Qaida left frustrated by the experience (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 77). Rather than being an ideal safe haven, the intensely clannish, failed state environment proved rife with problems for all foreigners. Furthermore, after suffering several defeats, AIAI determined that the environment in Somalia was not conducive to jihad, and it became decentralized and shifted to strategy that emphasized dawa over jihad, much to al-Qaida’s dismay (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 40-1).

The environment in Somalia changed markedly in 2006, when an entity known as the Council of Islamic Courts rose to fill the governance vacuum, confront the warlords who had long used Mogadishu as their personal fiefdoms, and oppose the Transitional Federal Government which was widely seen as a proxy for many Somalis’ longtime enemy, Ethiopia. The Courts included remnants of a now-defunct AIAI as well as a broad coalition of Islamists (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 77). An extremist faction within the courts, known as al-Shabaab, had engaged in a covert, dirty campaign of assassinations against opposition and rivals throughout 2004 and 2005, and exploited hostility towards the Ethiopian-backed prime minister of the Transitional Federal Government to gain more power within the Courts (Menkhaus 365). A coalition of often-warring Mogadishu warlords, allegedly with foreign backing, banded together to combat the rising power of the Islamists, only to be decisively defeated, leaving much of Mogadishu in the Courts’ control in mid-2006 (Menkhaus 368). Its influence soon spread throughout Somalia and enjoyed more public
support than any of the makeshift governments that had formed since the country's collapse (Menkhaus 371).

Addis Ababa watched the Islamic Courts’ takeover with alarm. The Courts were ardently anti-Ethiopian and harbored irredentist claims on Ethiopia’s Ogaden region, where a long-standing Islamist separatist insurgency was still underway. To make matters worse, al-Shabaab continued to marginalize moderates and accrue greater power within the Courts (Menkhaus 370-8). The Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in late 2006 to dismantle the Courts was both in response to al-Shabaab’s growing stature and a cause of its increasing influence. The Courts were quickly defeated militarily, but the Ethiopian presence in Mogadishu soon faced an urban insurgency as did the Ugandan forces deployed under the auspices of the African Union (Menkhaus 384).

Unbeknownst to most Somalis, even within the Islamic Courts, a small number of East African al-Qaida operatives, known as the East Africa al-Qaida cell, had been present in Mogadishu since 2004 and hiding in part under the protection of individuals who later became involved in al-Shabaab (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 80-90). They assisted in the assassination campaign in 2004-5 (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 88). These al-Qaida operatives were the focus of the United States policy towards Somalia (Menkhaus 377). Given their involvement in the 1998 Embassy attacks and 2002 attacks on a hotel and airliner, they were seen as an acute threat to U.S. interests in the region.

But al-Qaida, including the cell, was not behind al-Shabaab’s formation or its rise (Lahoud “The Merger” 3). In fact, the handful of resident, local al-Qaida operatives had reservations about al-Shabaab’s formation. With one exception, the resident al-Qaida members refused to take orders from al-Shabaab or participate in it (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 79). The most notorious of them, Harun Fazul, saw al-Shabaab lacking ideological grounding and politically savvy. He presciently argued that al-Shabaab would adversely impact the broader Islamic Court movement (Lahoud “The
Merger” 2-3). He also felt that Somali jihadists’ jockeying to be close to al-Qaida provoked unhelpful competition and their efforts to attract foreign fighters came at the expense of gaining Somali public support (Lahoud “The Merger” 2-3).

Al-Qaida leadership took notice of events in the region and lent some rhetorical support, but direct communication between al-Qaida leaders in Pakistan and its operatives in Somalia was often difficult and rare (Lahoud “The Merger” 83). Abu Yahya al-Libi, the LIFG turned al-Qaida religious scholar, issued a call to all Muslims to conduct jihad against Ethiopia in February 2006 (Menkhaus 388). Then, Zawahiri issued a call for jihad against the Ethiopian presence in Somalia in January 2007 (Menkhaus 358). While Somalia was featured in several al-Qaida statements, even one by bin Laden himself in 2009, none directly or specifically acknowledged al-Shabaab (Lahoud “The Merger” 1). Instead, al-Qaida encouraged jihad there in general, without specifically endorsing al-Shabaab.

But al-Shabaab sought a formal relationship with al-Qaida. The autobiography of senior al-Qaida operative, Harun Fazul, strongly suggests that there was not an organizational relationship between al-Qaida and al-Shabaab up until this point, though there were some historic connections (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 84). Then, in a bid for an alliance, in September 2009, al-Shabaab publicly pledged fealty to bin Laden, declaring him “our Sheikh and emir” and professed to be awaiting his “guidance during this advanced stage of jihad” (qtd. in Lahoud Beware of Imitators 95). Al-Shabaab’s statement was paired with a video in which bin Laden declared general support for jihadists in Somalia, creating the impression that an alliance already existed (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 95).

But this appearance was deceiving because al-Qaida leadership had not agreed to adopt al-Shabaab as an affiliate. In his subsequent statements, bin Laden did not acknowledge or respond to
al-Shabaab’s message. Moreover, Fazul had established a line of communication with bin Laden in early 2009, a fact that probably did not improve al-Shabaab’s prospects of becoming an al-Qaida affiliate, given Fazul’s reservations about the group and the esteem with which he was held by bin Laden (Lahoud *Beware of Imitators* 84). Fazul’s autobiography was also available online by that point, so his views about al-Shabaab were probably known to al-Qaida leaders. Fazul’s positions in the autobiography on the issues, like the importance of Somali leadership in the conflict, avoiding Muslim causalities, and gaining public support, were remarkably consistent with bin Laden’s private concerns about regional jihadist groups’ behavior. This may have further increased the credibility of Fazul’s opinions in bin Laden’s eyes as well. In August 2010, bin Laden drafted a private response letter to al-Shabaab (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000005” 1). He declined al-Shabaab’s emir’s request for a public, formal affiliation with al-Qaida (Lahoud *Letters from Abbottabad* 91).

> I see that this obligation should be carried out legitimately and through unannounced secret messaging, by spreading this matter among the people of Somalia, without any official declaration by any officers on our side or your side, that the unity has taken place. But there remains the situation of the brothers on your side and their talking about their relationship with al-Qa’ida, if asked. It would be better for them to say that there is a relationship with al-Qa’ida which is simply a brotherly Islamic connection and nothing more, which would neither deny nor prove (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000005” 1-2).

> Why did bin Laden refuse? His position was a departure from al-Qaida’s alliance posture since 2004, which had leaned in favor of alliances that may have not even been advisable, and suggested a shift in its alliance behavior. Al-Qaida had long been careful about which groups could become affiliates, but these acquisitions had been central to al-Qaida’s enduring relevance and viability, especially in theatres where jihad was ongoing and prolific. Prospective affiliates had to be vetted first, and none had been without problems. However, bin Laden appeared prepared to cease anointing new affiliates in part because the costs of affiliation, namely ensuing counterterrorism pressure on new affiliates, were too great. He explained to al-Shabaab:
If the matter [of affiliation] becomes declared and out in the open, it would have the enemies escalate their anger and mobilize against you; this is what happened to the brothers in Iraq or Algeria. It is true that the enemies will find out inevitably; this matter cannot be hidden, especially when people go around and spread this news. However, an official declaration remains the master for all proof. Also, there will be fields open to those who would like to provide rescue assistance to Muslims in Somalia, to deny this reality which is not based on definitive evidences. Therefore, such would minimize the restraints on Muslims in the region of the emirate and likewise on the emirate proper ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000005" 1-2).

He was also concerned that the al-Qaida affiliation would harm the ability and willingness of Gulf donors to assist the long-suffering Somali people, and thereby further alienate al-Shabaab from the Somali population. In his words:

This concern for the welfare of the Somali people was a reversal of al-Qaida's position in the early 1990s, when the group rejected the idea of concerning itself with aid and development issues. His belief that the al-Qaida brand would harm the welfare of the Somali people was also a recognition that the group lacked support and legitimacy in much of the Muslim world.

Within the letter, another reason for denying the public affiliate is implied, although not stated explicitly. Bin Laden urged al-Shabaab’s emir to avoid Muslim causalities in its attacks on African Union forces ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000005" 2-3). In several other letters, bin Laden’s dismay with affiliates targeting of Muslims was apparent. This suggests he may have been reluctant to take on another affiliate which had demonstrated such carelessness.

Bin Laden’s decision, even after he communicated it to al-Shabaab, was a source of debate within al-Qaida’s senior echelons. A letter, possibly authored by Zawahiri, implored bin Laden to re-
consider his decision not to make al-Shabaab an affiliate. He argued that it is better for al-Qaida to acknowledge its allies in order to avoid false allies who claim association. Zawahiri dismissed those “brothers...who might have been too concerned about inflating the size and growth of al-Qa’ida” and offered an alternative view on the question of al-Shabaab’s status.

I see it to be very essential for Al-Qa’ida to confirm and declare its linkage with its branches, in order to become a reported fact, there is no use in denying it. Therefore, please reconsider your opinion not to declare the accession of the brothers of Somalia so as not to be pressured later on to announce our disassociation with them or with others (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000006“ 1).

Regardless of the dissent, consistent with his prerogatives as the emir, bin Laden was the final arbiter of this decision. Zawahiri had announced the mergers with AQIM, EIG, and LIFG on behalf of al-Qaida, but the behind the scenes discussion about al-Shabaab strongly suggests that Zawahiri did not have the authority to do so—and would not have done so—without bin Laden’s consent. Whether declining al-Shabaab reflected an overall shift in bin Laden view of affiliates or was specific to al-Shabaab and Somalia is unclear. Despite his decision to deny public affiliation, bin Laden still sent instructions and guidance through intermediaries to the “Somali brothers,” including advising them on matters such as how to handle sharia infractions less stringently (“Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000010“ 5-6).

Bin Laden’s reticence also stemmed from his concerns that al-Qaida’s name had become too tarnished. An unknown al-Qaida leader, probably bin Laden, authored a letter raising the possibility that rather than perpetuating al-Qaida as a brand, the group should change its name.

I make mention to you of a very important matter that came to me, which is changing the name of (Qa"ida al-Jihad), because there are several necessary and attention-worthy reasons to change it, of them: Al-Qaida al-Jihad was abridged by the people and only a few people remember this name; it has come to be known as (al-Qa’ida) and this name reduces the feeling of Muslims that we belong to them, and allows the enemies to claim deceptively that they are not at war with Islam and Muslims, but they are at war with the organization of al-Qa’ida, which is an outside entity from the teachings of Islam.... Al-Qa’ida describes a
military base with fighters without a reference to our broader mission to unify the nation ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-0000009" 1).

Fazul expressed similar concerns about the “contamination” of al-Qaida’s brand by groups who claimed to act under its auspices (Lahoud Beware of Imitators 50). As part of a new phase for the group to correct for “the alienation of most of the nation from the mujahidin,” bin Laden instructed one of his deputies to prepare a covenant for regional groups to commit to that would avoid the mistakes that had tarnished the reputation of jihadists. He planned to send out policies on operations to the affiliate groups stressing the need to avoid Muslim causalities in their operations as well as guidance on how to handle propaganda ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019" 6-18). By extension, it appears that bin Laden felt that the affiliate alliance approach was not working as he hoped because al-Qaida was not able to shape the behavior of its allies. His overall discomfort with the affiliates’ behavior and the direction of the movement suggests he may have been considering shifting away from affiliate alliances. At a minimum, prior to his death, bin Laden sought a new phase of greater consultation with and subordination to among affiliates ("Harmony Document SOCOM-2012-00000019"17-9).

8.11 The End of an Era

Then on May 1, 2011, twenty-three Navy Seals departed from eastern Afghanistan in two Blackhawk Helicopters. They flew into Pakistan undetected, penetrating deep into the country in a ninety-minute flight. They landed outside of a compound in the city of Abbottabad (Schmidle 1). One of the Blackhawks crashed during the landing, but the Seal teams proceeded into the compound. By the end of their mission, they had killed bin Laden along with his son, his courier, and the courier’s brother (Schmidle 6-8). Al-Qaida’s founder and visionary was dead.
In the wake of bin Laden’s death, al-Qaida’s alliance position was in jeopardy. While clearly not in control of the movement and frustrated by its direction, bin Laden was the leadership symbol underlying the al-Qaida brand name, ultimate decision maker on alliances, and a source of leadership affinity in some alliances. While Zawahiri appeared the likely successor, the absence of an immediate statement from him fueled speculation about who would lead the group. Other leadership options, like Sayf al-Adel, circulated. Moreover, Zawahiri was a problematic and deeply divisive leader when he had his own group, and some original al-Qaida members did not regard him as the legitimate heir of the emirship (Lahoud *Beware of Imitators* 97). Nonetheless, after eulogizing bin Laden, Zawahiri was officially designated as bin Laden’s emir nearly six weeks after bin Laden died. The group’s propaganda arm released a statement:

And as the best form of gratitude for the righteous martyr and for the life of the mujahidin Sheikh Usama bin Laden is to continue on the path of jihad in the Cause of Allah, and to help the Muslims and the weak, the General Command of Qaeda al Jihad - and after the completion of consultation - announces that Sheikh Dr. Abu Muhammad Ayman al-Zawahiri, may Allah grant him success, has assumed the responsibility of the leadership of the group (qtd. in Roggio “Al Qaeda Appoints”)

AQIM and AQAP both quickly issued statements in July pledging fealty to Zawahiri (Roggio 2011). Once again, al-Shabaab presented itself publicly as among al-Qaida’s affiliates, announcing that it too transferred its loyalty to Zawahiri in June and ignoring the fact that bin Laden had not blessed this type of public affiliation. Al-Shabaab’s spokesman announced that “[w]e welcome the outstanding choice of [Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri], and we shall maintain our covenant with him” (qtd. by Lahoud “The Merger” 2). That same month, Harun Fazul was killed at a checkpoint in Somalia, though speculation surfaced that al-Shabaab had played a role in his death (Lahoud “The Merger” 4).

In July, the head of al-Qaida’s branch in the Arabian Peninsula, (AQAP) similarly pledged:
allegiance of obedience in good and hard times, in ease and difficulty, in following the Book of Allah and the Sunna [traditions] of Allah’s Messenger, Allah’s peace and prayer be upon him, and in fighting the enemies of Allah as much as I can - myself and the your loyal soldiers who are with me in the front of the Arabian Peninsula (qtd. in Roggio “AQAP Leader”).

AQAP’s pledge was particularly important for al-Qaida to retain its alliance hub status. Even prior to bin Laden’s death, the locus of global jihad was shifting to Yemen. The al-Qaida wing there had announced its formation publicly in 2009. AQAP had far greater freedom than its leaders in Pakistan, as evidenced by its two attempted attacks against the United States and high-profile assassination attempt against a Saudi official. The group had a growing following in part due to a charismatic American cleric who acted as the group’s spokesman, and an English language magazine designed to appeal to Western recruits (Department of State 2010 Country Reports 9). Unlike the affiliates discussed earlier in the chapter, AQAP was not an organization that entered into an alliance with al-Qaida; it was part of al-Qaida. From the time of its formation, its core leaders were al-Qaida members who had already sworn bayat; it was a combination of al-Qaida’s branch in Yemen and al-Qaida members in Saudi Arabia (Department of State 2009 Country Reports 210). Most notably, its emir was bin Laden’s former bodyguard and loyalist. Thus it did not go through the same alliance process as the other affiliates; it was already part of al-Qaida from the outset.

By the time bin Laden was killed in 2010, AQAP was al-Qaida’s most prolific affiliate (Brennan 2012). The State Department assessed that “[a]s al-Qa’ida’s core has gotten weaker, we have seen the rise of affiliated groups around the world. Among these al-Qa’ida affiliates, al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) represents a particularly serious threat” (Department of State 2011 Country Reports 5). Thus with the death of bin Laden and, particularly if Zawahiri is eliminated, AQAP may de facto adopt a larger the main alliance hub within the network. But it was not attempting to usurp al-Qaida Central. In pledging its loyalty to Zawahiri, AQAP forewent an effort to supplant al-Qaida’s alliance position in the movement.
At the helm, and endorsed by al-Qaida and its affiliates, Zawahiri sought to solidify al-Qaida’s alliance position with another affiliate announcement. While he was aware of bin Laden’s concerns, he did not share bin Laden’s reservations about al-Shabaab. On February 9, 2012, under Zawahiri’s direction, the public affiliation and alliance between al-Shabaab and al-Qaida came to fruition (Lahoud “The Merger” 1). It was al-Qaida’s first acquisition since bin Laden’s death. It took the death of both bin Laden and Fazul for the merger to be finalized.

Al-Shabaab’s emir issued an audiotape, once again pledging loyalty to al-Qaida, specifically to Zawahiri. He said, “on behalf of my brethren, leaders and soldiers in Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin, I pledge allegiance to you [promising to adhere to] God’s Book and the Sunna of His Messenger” (qtd in Lahoud “The Merger” 2). The audio message was followed by a video from Zawahiri, who pointed to the now-public alliance as evidence that “jihadist movement is growing with God’s help” (qtd. in Lahoud “The Merger” 2). Interestingly, the al-Shabaab affiliate announcement did not precipitate the re-naming of the group that accompanied the other affiliate relationships, a possible indicator that there was a shift in how affiliate relationships were going to be handled from that point forward.

While still receptive to affiliate relationships, Zawahiri has continued bin Laden’s practice of being vigilant about endorsing groups as affiliates, suggesting he is not impervious to the pitfalls of these alliances. Tellingly, despite Zawahiri’s unambiguous desire to influence and shape events in Egypt, he has not responded to the overtures of a group calling itself Ansar al-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula. The new organization announced its establishment in a message released in December 2011, and sought an al-Qaida endorsement from the outset. In its founding statement, the group pledged to fight the “corrupt” Egyptian regime and its “henchmen among the Jews, the Americans, and those around them.” Then in a communiqué posted on a jihadist forum the following month,
Ansar al-Jihad pledged to obey Zawahiri’s commands and prayed that God grant him success. It added: “We will never quit or surrender until the last drop of our blood [is spilled] in the Cause of Allah and until Islam rules by the help of Allah the Almighty” (“Ansar al-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula Pledges to Zawahiri”). While continuing to issue statements on the situation of Egypt, Zawahiri has not accepted Ansar al-Jihad as a representative of al-Qaida in the region.

It is clear that bin Laden’s death in May 2011 was not the end of al-Qaida. But the death of any founding leader causes changes within any organization, particularly in the wake of ten years of constant organizational upheaval, including its organizational dynamics and appeal as an alliance partner. The impact of bin Laden’s death on al-Qaida’s alliances was not immediately evident, in part because Zawahiri had played such a visible role in managing these relationships for years and was widely known to be bin Laden’s successor. All of the affiliates declared continuing fidelity to Zawahiri, and none broke away or changed their affiliate position. Al-Qaida even acquired another affiliate in al-Shabaab, creating an opportunity for the group to project continued growth and leadership, even in the wake of bin Laden’s death. But al-Qaida’s influence over its affiliates, which was clearly unsatisfactory to bin Laden, appears in danger of decline.

The overall jihadist movement has grown increasingly decentralized under sustained counterterrorism pressure. Al-Qaida remains sequestered and in hiding in South Asia amidst the revolutionary changes re-shaping the Middle East. A generation of jihadists has joined the fight with little or no direct exposure to al-Qaida. As a result, al-Qaida’s position as an alliance hub is tenuous and even its brand name, which has helped sustain it in the difficult years since 9/11, is in danger. There is no clear successor to Zawahiri, so should Zawahiri be removed, al-Qaida’s ability to occupy that position will be delivered a potentially fatal blow. No figures have the credibility to issue guidance and statements to the affiliates, even if that advice is symbolic and rarely heeded. In this
environment, it does not appear as though another international alliance hub can emerge, but regional hubs, including al-Qaida's affiliates will likely still operate.

8.12 Conclusion

Like the PFLP-SOG during its time, al-Qaida has exerted a defining influence over the terrorist landscape and even the international system. Its ability to shape the environment was inextricably linked to its vast network of alliances. Its evolution from the mid-1980s until 2010 can be broken into four relatively distinct periods. Some factors remained largely unchanged over this time. As anticipated, the group's ideology and enemies were largely constant. Thus these variables alone appear insufficient to explain much of its alliance behavior or the fluctuations in its relationships.

Organizational factors were central to al-Qaida’s alliance disposition and its desirability as a partner. Al-Qaida was predisposed towards alliances before it was even an organization. Its initial iteration was even designed primarily to be a service provider for other groups. As a result, alliances were deeply embedded in al-Qaida's organizational culture, frames, and problem-solving lens from the outset. Al-Qaida’s attractiveness as an alliance partner was derived primarily from its resources, namely its willingness to share them with its allies, rather than its own operational accomplishments for the first three periods. It was able to emulate the characteristics of a state sponsor because the group had both permissive and active state sponsors prior to 9/11. It was well positioned to cultivate trust through interactions and personal relationships developed in these safe havens. Its reputation as a resource for other groups, with its foundation of high-profile operations beginning in 1998, created a self-perpetuating cycle. Its array of alliances demonstrated its trustworthiness as an ally and thereby it attracted more allies.
After 9/11, al-Qaida’s reputation became an asset in its alliances. Al-Qaida was able sustain its alliance position even after its resources diminished after 9/11 largely because of its name. This coincided with a dramatic change in the threat environment. Al-Qaida’s actions precipitated a marked change in the threat that the U.S. posed to many organizations. But the threat alone was insufficient to persuade previously-reticent groups to ally with al-Qaida until they had a need for al-Qaida’s name. Groups like Jund al-Sham and LIFG opted to flee in the face of a shared greatest threat with al-Qaida in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. In essence, al-Qaida made the enemy narrative it propagated more of a reality with its actions.

Al-Qaida was ideally suited for its role at the center of an international terrorist network from an identity standpoint. It fell firmly within the dominant ideological currents of the time and played a role in further spreading that doctrine. It had relatively flexible criteria for ideological affinity within other organizations as long as they met two standards: 1) a Sunni ideology; and 2) a commitment to jihad. Its principles were not particularly flexible or nimble, but its overall ideological and narrative platform was vast and encompassing, while urging a specific agenda. Al-Qaida’s ethnic Arab identity also offered a reinforcing identity feature with a number of groups operating during this time, though it was able to cross this identity feature as well.

Bin Laden was the ultimate authority on al-Qaida’s alliance decisions, but his death demonstrated that the alliances did not rest solely upon his leadership or personality. He was the face of many of al-Qaida’s alliance, though Zawahiri increasing adopted that role after 2005, and his belief in the necessity of alliances was central to embedding these relationships into al-Qaida’s organizational frames. Zawahiri has continued to carry this torch, though it is unclear whether this would survive loss of this al-Qaida leader, especially combined with the losses over the past decade.
The remaining chapters in Section III delve into al-Qaida’s relationships—or lack thereof—with three sets of organizations. The first case study in Chapter 9 explores al-Qaida’s relationships, already discussed briefly in this chapter, with the two major Egyptian Sunni jihadist groups, EIJ and EIG. Chapter 10 examines al-Qaida’s varying cooperation with the Algerian groups, GIA and GSPC. Then Chapter 11 probes into al-Qaida’s relationships with groups in the region it has spent most of its life in, South Asia, specifically Pakistani groups. The studies draw on information available in the literature, media, government archives, and expert interviews to explore: the groups’ motivations for forming alliances; the areas in which the groups cooperated with the al-Qaida; the outcomes of their cooperative efforts; and—to the extent possible—how they maintained their relationships. In each case study, the background of the group, its operations and tactics, its ideology and goals, its organizational composition, and its relationships are examined. The final chapter of Section III, Chapter 12, examines Chapters 8-11 specifically in terms of the theoretical frameworks and hypotheses proposed in Chapters 1 and 2.
CHAPTER 9:

AL-QAIDA: EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD AND EGYPTIAN ISLAMIC GROUP

“Jerusalem will not be liberated unless the battle for Egypt and Algeria is won and unless Egypt is liberated”—Ayman al-Zawahiri in 1995

“It [the Islamic world] is like a bird whose wings are Egypt and Syria, and whose heart is Palestine”—Ayman al-Zawahiri in 2005

9.1 Introduction

More than any other nationality, Egyptian militants have exerted a formative influence over the Sunni jihadist milieu. They have shaped the movement’s landscape as prominent theologians, strategists, and tacticians. They have been alternatively called the backbone, the brains, and the nerve center of al-Qaida—by all accounts, indispensable (Gerges 140). Two Egyptian groups in particular are regularly invoked as key al-Qaida allies: the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) and the Egyptian Islamic Group (EIG). Only one letter separates them in the English acronyms used to refer to them, which perhaps explains why they are often lumped together and frequently confused. The organizations were similar in key respects. Both were violent Salafist organizations dedicated to the creation of an Islamic state in Egypt and the overthrow of the Egyptian regime. Yet these general commonalities masked important variation in the two groups’ compositions and strategies, which produced different organizational dynamics and needs, and thereby, different alliance decisions.

Perhaps the most widely known of the Egyptian terrorists, al-Qaida’s current leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, headed EIJ, prior to becoming bin Laden’s deputy and eventually taking over al-Qaida after bin Laden’s death. EIJ was a small, conspiratorial group with members hailing from the elite of Cairo and Alexandria. When bin Laden and Zawahiri met in the 1980s, Zawahiri was the older and more experienced of the pair. Over the next two decades, EIJ’s trajectory was constantly and increasingly interwoven with al-Qaida’s path. Zawahiri was ultimately eclipsed by his Saudi colleague as EIJ was decisively defeated in Egypt and floundered in perpetual exile. Despite
attempts to self-reform, it became dependent on al-Qaida. EIJ’s downfall coincided with al-Qaida’s rise and was the main impetus for its alliance and then merger with al-Qaida. It was the culmination of years of collaboration as EIJ’s members had formed the inner core of al-Qaida since its early days. Yet EIJ’s relationship with al-Qaida was often fraught with tension and a source of internal discord for EIJ. Their official merger was, in many respects, both an admission of defeat by EIJ and the opening bell for al-Qaida.

Operating simultaneously was a large, grassroots movement from Upper Egypt, EIG. EIG was the group responsible for the majority of the violence in Egypt during the 1990s. While some of its members operated in exile, much of EIG remained embedded in Egypt and committed to an Egypt-centric agenda. Rather than being galvanized by international causes, like Sadat’s rapprochement with Israel, EIG was an outgrowth of the regional socio-economic disparities in Egypt that left a segment of Egyptian society with no pathways to achieve upward mobility. EIG members in exile became integrated with al-Qaida, while the Egypt-based core of the organization, including most of its leadership, had an arm’s length relationship with al-Qaida. After the imprisoned “historical” leadership abdicated its previous positions on violence and the EIG was no longer operational in Egypt, the faction of the group in exile in Afghanistan allied with al-Qaida. This move was repeatedly and unequivocally denounced by the historical leadership, which continued to command the loyalty of the majority of the organization, as evidenced by the holding ceasefire in Egypt.

While some of these events, activities, and personalities were discussed in Chapter 8 as part of al-Qaida’s alliance hub development, this chapter examines them from the perspective of the two competitor Egyptian groups, tracing their troubled existences and respective relationships with al-Qaida. This chapter is a matched case study that examines why two groups that adhered to the same ideology, combatted the same enemy, and shared many identity features, formed such
different relationships with al-Qaida. It is comprised of five sections. The first section examines the environment in Egypt during the period that the groups were created with an emphasis on the roots of the two organizations. The second section compares their identity features. The subsequent section traces the chronology of EIJ and EIG’s activities, highlighting how each did or did not interact with al-Qaida and how their alliance behavior differed. The chapter then examines the role of leadership affinity in the al-Qaida and EIJ dyad, as the dynamic between Zawahiri and bin Laden is often invoked as a central component to the EIJ and al-Qaida merger; whereas these personal relationships and leadership affinity did not develop between bin Laden and the EIG’s historical leadership. The final section analyzes what factors were the most important to the outcome: EIJ’s merger with al-Qaida by 2001, at a time when EIG was divided into an exiled faction in an alliance with al-Qaida and the bulk of the organization eschewing an alliance and ceasing armed jihad.

9.2 Discord in Egypt

Islamists in Egypt have been alternatively repressed and manipulated by virtually every government. The movement was—and is—diverse in its creed, strategy, adherents, and shaped by the issues of its time. Some differences within the overarching movement can be traced to the variation in the instigating motives. One type of motive was external in orientation, preoccupied particularly with the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The International Crisis Group assessed that:

[t]he emergence of a jihadi current within Egyptian Islamism in the 1970s was connected at the outset with the Palestinian question. The subsequent popularisation [sic] of [Sayyid] Qutb’s thought occurred in conjunction with the radicalisation [sic] of the younger generation of Egyptian Islamists in reaction to Sadat’s signing of the Camp David accords with Israel and his attempts to repress widespread opposition to this (Islamism in North Africa 3).
The defeat in the 1967 Six Day war and “the Palestinian question” were undoubtedly mobilizing events for Islamists in Egypt during the 1970s. But there were dynamics within Egypt that were not directly related to the Israel-Palestinian conflict that were also critical to the trajectory of the diverse movement. It was not only Sadat’s signing of the Camp David accords that stimulated Islamist opposition. Focusing on the international dimension risks overlooking the rising disenfranchisement over the socio-economic conditions in Egypt, especially in Upper Egypt, and the embrace of Islam as a solution to these problems.

At the same time that the Leftist groups addressed in Section II were wreaking havoc across the globe in the name of a worldwide Communist revolution against imperialism, Islamists in Egypt were agitating for another kind of change and finding a theological justification for it in the works of Sayyid Qutb. It is difficult to overstate the importance of Qutb’s influence on the Egyptian Islamist landscape. Nearly all Egyptian jihadi groups have been “Qutbist” in their orientation. Qutb’s teachings were a challenge to former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s secularism and pan-Arabism. A central tenet of Qutb’s propagations was that the Egyptian Government was impious, illegitimate and thus, infidel—a position that led to Qutb’s execution in 1966 (International Crisis Group Islamism in North Africa 3). Before he died, Qutb provided a compelling theological basis for Egyptian Islamists to resist their government.

After Nasser’s death, his Vice President, Anwar Sadat, came to power in 1970, presenting himself as “the pious President.” He initially saw utility in co-opting the Islamists who had been suppressed during Nasser’s reign in order to counter-balance Nasserists (Gebara 2-3). In his efforts to marginalize Nasserist challengers, Sadat reversed several economic reforms implemented by Nasser. This was particularly consequential in Upper Egypt, where Nasser’s programs had offered new opportunities to members of systemically-disadvantaged tribes. In essence, this population was doubly disadvantaged. Upper Egypt’s development—and the government’s investment in it—
has always lagged far behind Lower Egypt’s. These tribes were third-class citizens at best, the lowest rung of Upper Egypt’s already-disadvantaged population.

Successive governments in Cairo were content to rule Upper Egypt by proxy; it had never really established its writ there—nor had any colonial power—which was a source of pride for Upper Egyptians and derision by their northern countrymen (Fandy 611). In the absence of government control, a tribal system of governance prevailed. Ashraf were at the top of the “hierarchy of dominance,” followed by a tribal grouping known as “Arabs,” and then at the bottom of the pyramid were the fallahin. Islam was embedded in these traditions and used to re-enforce the status quo in which some tribes were economically and culturally advantaged at the expense of others (Fandy 612).

Nasser’s reforms changed this environment in subtle, but important, ways. Fallahin boys were given greater access to education, including university education, thereby improving their status and prospects, in terms of jobs and access to land, ever so slightly. As Egypt scholar Mamoun Fandy assessed:

> [f]or the sons of the fallahin, economic and educational mobility exposed contradictions between their relatively low tribal status and the improvement of their economic and educational situation. Furthermore, education allowed the fallahin to read the Quran and hadith for themselves and become aware of interpretations other than those of their Arab and ashraf landlords... The persistence of the political status quo became a source of tension after 1970 and abetted the rise of Islamism in the south. The political power structure did not change because the Arabs and ashraf had retained their economic status. During Nasser’s rule, for example, they generally managed to circumvent even the most widely hailed program, land reform, which became entangled in the local power structure. Consequently, only a few of the minor families in the south benefited from it. Thus, although the fallahin increased their level of education and expectations, most remained landless and relatively powerless (614).

Even these meager gains were eliminated when Sadat rolled back the reforms that offered these opportunities, such as taking back the modest amounts of land that had been re-allocated by
Nasser and returning it to ashrafs, and reinforcing the traditional tribal power structures. Again, Fandy, explained:

In the south, Sadat's use of Islamic symbols initially appealed to the minor tribes—Nasser's constituency—which remained hopeful of the prospect of change toward a more equitable society. The fallahin and other minor tribes, however, lost hope when Sadat initiated his infitah (economic liberalization) policies, which favored the south's old feudal families. In some cases, fallahin and Arab families, who had been given land belonging to former ashraf owners, were forcibly evicted.... Naming old feudal families to gubernatorial and ministerial positions meant that fallahin and their sons were likely to lose their jobs and the return of the old way of doing business based on connection. In the face of infitah policies, the re-emergence of old families, and the uncertainty in their lives, fallahin took refuge in Islam... Furthermore, resisting Sadat's policies by holding him accountable to his own Islamic rhetoric was safe: police during the 1970s did not arrest people whose criticisms were based on Islam because Islamization was a state policy. Thus, resistance to Sadat's de-Nasserization programs and the loss of jobs took an Islamic form (616).

This Islamization process was further accelerated by opportunities for migrant work in the Gulf countries in the mid-1970s, which were taken advantage of primarily by fallahin and to a lesser extent, Arabs willing to do manual labor (Toth 553). Upon return, they had greater newfound wealth and enhanced Islamic credentials. They used both to build mosques and buy land, which were two status symbols typically only available to ashrafs. These mosques served as forum to propagate a message that status is based on piety, not lineage. Mosques and Assyut Universities were critical outlets to disseminate information in Upper Egypt because the media was entirely controlled by Cairo, which often portrayed Upper Egyptians as backwards. Gradually, over the course of the 1970s, a decentralized Islamist network flourished and expanded to provide social services, access to opportunities, and functions like dispute resolution that the government and existing order had failed to offer effectively (Fandy 619). Anthropologist James Toth described the array of needs this Islamic association—referred to as Jamaat al-Islamiyah (referred to as Egyptian Islamic Group in English or EIG)—filled, which included hospital beds for the poor, low-cost health clinics, affordable housing, after-school tutoring, complementary textbooks, clothing exchanges, veterinarian services, small-scale business assistance and low-cost credit, and guidance through the labyrinthine state bureaucracy for
permits, licenses, and tax abatements. All of these constituted critically important services that the government in Cairo simply could not or would not provide (557).

The Islamic association soon posed a challenge to the existing powerbrokers, who eyed this service provision increasingly warily.

Dissatisfaction was not expressed solely through the erection of parallel forms of governance; some sought to precipitate a regime change. In 1974, an Islamist group led by a Palestinian of Jordanian nationality, Salah Sirriya, and comprised mostly of Upper Egyptians attempted to mount a coup against President Sadat by seizing the Military Technical Academy outside of Cairo. The anticipated uprising failed to materialize and the members of the “Military Academy Group,” as the coup plotters were called, were soon arrested. Sirriya was then executed in 1976 (International Crisis Group Islamism in North Africa 4).

Discontent in Egypt over living conditions overflowed into massive food riots in 1977, which Sadat responded to with widespread repression of all opposition elements, though he publicly accused leftists of fomenting the unrest. Then the government clashed with a small militant Islamist group that kidnapped and killed a government official when its demands for the release of their members from prison were not met (Ibrahim 424). These events intersected with developments beyond Egypt’s borders. The 1979 Iranian revolution fostered a renewed sense of hope and optimism among Islamists in Egypt. The timing appeared preordained as an Iranian-type revolt in Egypt seemed both achievable and essential in the wake of Sadat’s rapprochement with Israel, which culminated in the Camp David Accords in March of that year (Wright The Looming Tower 48). What was left of Sadat’s alliance with Islamists had been irrevocably ruptured. Various Islamist factions pressed forward with their respective plans—with varying levels of coordination among them—as all sought to precipitate a revolution in Egypt. Sadat’s regime swiftly responded to quell them with measures such as mass arrests, banning religious student associations, and passing
progressive laws, such as granting women the right to a divorce and banning the niqab (Wright The Looming Tower 49-50, International Crisis Group Islamism in North Africa 7).

Building on Qutb’s teaching, Abd al-Salam Faraj published an influential pamphlet entitled The Neglected Duty (Gerges 9). It was a cogent and persuasive text rooted in an accessible interpretation of the Quran and the Hadith that argued that offered a justification for jihad against anyone who deviates from the duties of Islamic law, which includes jihad (Juergensmeyer 82). Faraj maintained that Sadat’s professions of faith and image as “the pious President” were not only insufficient, but were also deceitful, in light of his failure to govern Egypt in accordance with Islamic law (International Crisis Group Islamism in North Africa 4). Therefore, jihad against his regime was both doctrinally acceptable and a required individual duty of all Muslims. Moreover, Faraj decreed that jihad against the near enemy should have primacy over the struggle against Israel, “the more distant enemy” (International Crisis Group Islamism in North Africa 5). Sadat’s dealings with Israel gave Faraj’s words further credence, and provided a basis for agitating Islamists to take more direct action.

Within this crowded field of Islamists in Egypt was Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. By this time, he had already been committed to bringing down the Egyptian Government for over a decade. Radicalized by Qutb’s execution, Zawahiri created his first clandestine cell at age 15 (Gerges 91). By 1974, the year of the Military Academy Group’s coup attempt, Zawahiri’s group had an estimated 40 members (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 9). In the late 1970s, his cells merged with several others to form a loosely-organized, early iteration of a group that would eventually become EIJ (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 10). Zawahiri was a leading figure in the group, but the introverted physician was often overshadowed by his more charismatic and domineering colleagues (Wright "The Man Behind Bin Laden" 13).
In particular, two Egyptian military officers, Colonel Aboud al-Zumur and Major Essam al-Qamari, exerted significant influence and commanded loyalty within the group (Wright *The Looming Tower* 49). Priority was given to recruiting regime insiders, chiefly military officers, because the group believed that a coup would be the most expedient route to seize power and install an Islamist government (Benjamin and Simon 123). Members were part of the Cairo elite and included engineers, doctors, police, and former military (Fandy 609). The nascent EIJ did not expend capital trying to work within the existing political system, like their Muslim Brotherhood counterparts. Nor did EIJ attempt to mobilize the masses, like its larger rival, EIG (Wright “*The Man Behind Bin Laden*” 17). While all of these Islamist elements were essentially “Qutbist” in their outlook, they differed in a variety of ways, including strategy, tactics, composition, and personalities. For its part, EIJ’s approach was totally subversive and covert.

In contrast, EIG was central to the burgeoning movement in Upper Egypt, though it was more a series of connected, but largely autonomous, groupings of Islamists (Meijer 190). It was comprised largely of lower and middle-class university students, many of them fallahin, from Assyut University in Upper Egypt (Fandy 611). In addition to its involvement in Islamic study groups, EIG supported students by organizing markets to exchange books, food, and other necessities (Meijer 192). The southern character of Assyut University was imposed by Ministry of Education regulations that required students to stay within their regions—divided along north-south lines—which was another means of enforcing the segregation of the south. An exception could be made if the program that a student was applying was only offered at a northern university. This systematic separation of northern and southern students contributed to the cultural gap between EIG and their northern Islamist counterparts. EIG gradually took over more student associations at the universities and led from private mosques—the only institutions in Upper Egypt not controlled by the traditional power structures or Cairo (Fandy 611; Meijer 195).
From the outset, EIG’s rhetoric and statements focused more heavily on poverty, corruption, and injustice in Upper Egypt than larger Middle East questions like Egypt’s relations with Israel or the West (Fandy 610). In the early 1970s, it did not have a clearly defined objective other than encouraging piety (Meijer 193). EIG developed an agenda to transform Egyptian society over the course of the decade. Fandy argued that “[t]he Islamists' reform and revolt in the south is informed by the fallahin's desire to rearrange the rules of southern social structure and center-periphery relations” (614). EIG’s concern with the inequity in Upper Egypt was evident in its members’ regular invocation of the Prophet’s declaration that “[a]ll are equal in Islam: no difference between Arab and non-Arab except piety” (Fandy 614). EIG’s interpretation of Islamic law also coincided with southern tribal traditions. For example, the principle of an-eye-for-an-eye often interpreted as EIG’s insistence on the application of a strict form of sharia bore a strikingly close resemblance to the southern custom of tribal honor and revenge (Fandy 622). EIG began policing “moral corruption,” such as liquor stores, and its membership increased into thousands as the decade wore on. Moral policing led to more direct confrontations with the authorities, which sought to limit the group’s influence by suspending student leaders from universities (Meijer 193-4).

These events coincided with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the accompanying mobilization of Islamist fervor to oust the infidel Communists from the Muslim land. Egyptians Islamists were among those who flocked to South Asia in significant numbers. Dr. Zawahiri was one of the earliest volunteers to travel to Pakistan in 1980 and 1981, working at the Red Crescent Society as physician treating the Afghan refugees and wounded combatants who poured across the border to escape the violence (Wright The Looming Tower 44; Reidel 18-9). He was primarily based in Peshawar, though he took a few excursions into Afghanistan (Reidel 19). When he returned to Egypt, he recounted anecdotes about the tenacity of the Afghan mujahidin and was accorded
respect for his contribution to that popular cause (Reidel 19). However, even while in Pakistan, Zawahiri was still focused on the prospects for radical transformation at home.

Change in Egypt was indeed on the horizon, but the outcome would not be what Islamists expected. On October 6, 1981, Islamic militants hailing from a radical organization called *al-Jihad* assassinated President Sadat during a military parade being held in honor of the anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It was no coincidence that Sadat's assassin and most of those subsequently convicted of participating in the plot hailed from Upper Egypt or that an uprising in Assyut followed in the days after his assassination. The assassin, Khalid Islambouli, and four of his co-conspirators were executed, including the man who gave the religious justification for this action, Faraj. Out of the 280 people implicated in the conspiracy surrounding the assassination of President Sadat, 183 were Upper Egyptians and another 73 were from neighborhoods in Cairo where migrants from Upper Egypt concentrated (Nedo). Early iterations of EIG had cooperated with *al-Jihad* in the years leading up to the assassination, though the group's divergent approaches eventually led them to pursue their own paths (Meijer 198).

For his part, Zawahiri did not play a role in the attack, but he was aware of the plot and he later told interrogators that he thought it was ill-conceived (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 14). However, with Hosni Mubarak's ascension to the Presidency, Egyptian authorities were not interested in such distinctions and responded to Sadat's assassination with sweeping, large-scale arrests, collective punishment measures, and harsh interrogation techniques. Zawahiri was among the hundreds of Islamists who were detained. He had narrowly avoided arrest on several prior occasions, but few were spared in the post-assassination dragnet (Wright *The Looming Tower* 49). Zawahiri was then compelled by authorities to help entrap Major Qamari, who was planning follow-on actions, and then to testify against him and thirteen other associates. In return for his
cooperation, Zawahiri was placed in a cell with the friend he had just betrayed (Wright *The Looming Tower* 52-3).

During the ensuing trials, Zawahiri gained prominence as a spokesman for the prisoners, primarily because of his advanced education and command of English, which was advantageous to garner international media coverage. He accused the Egyptian Government of mistreating and torturing the prisoners—charges that were subsequently confirmed by other investigations (Wright *The Looming Tower* 55). He bitterly blamed the regime for the death of the man who founded the refugee clinic where Zawahiri worked in Pakistan, claiming that he had been tortured to death. Egyptian authorities claimed he committed suicide (Higgins and Cullison 3).

The trials dragged on for three years, during which time, the imprisoned Islamic militants remained divided and prone to infighting (Burke 138). The rivalry between EIG and EIJ in particular divided the Egyptian jihadist milieu and influenced their respective alliance decisions. The two had cooperated previously under the authority of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rehman, aka the Blind Sheikh, who was the spiritual advisor of EIG. The Blind Sheikh’s jihadist credentials dated back to Nasser’s regime, during which he had been imprisoned and placed under house arrest (Benjamin and Simon 76). For three years prior to Sadat’s assassination, Rehman resided in the Gulf where he gained access to generous donors supportive of his cause in Egypt. He returned to Egypt in 1980 to provide welcomed theological authority—he was a well-known professor at Assyut University with a PhD in theology—for the campaign against Sadat.

His willingness to provide religious sanction for actions against Sadat soon caught up with him. Rehman was charged as a co-conspirator because he issued the fatwa that legitimized the assassination of “a heretical leader.” Because he did not specifically name Sadat and authorities did not want to concede that Sadat was a heretical leader, Rehman was released from prison after six
months (Wright The Looming Tower 57). With his profile, credentials, and access to funds, the Blind Sheikh was well positioned to lead the jihadi movement.

In the wake of Sadat’s death and the regime’s heavy-handed response, EIG used its time in prison to evolve (Ashour 610). It had been a decentralized movement prior to Sadat’s assassination. In prison, EIG developed greater organizational coherence, including organizational frames, routines, and culture, and solidified its organization identity as an Upper Egyptian Salafist organization. It fleshed out its ideological tenets and beliefs in writing. One of the main outputs of the prison period was the EIG’s prolific literature. These works provided the theological justification for continuing the confrontation with the state (Ashour 608-9). The group’s reputation for writing influential tracts that navigated the course ahead from prison established an important precedent for the group.

While they had a common strategic goal and ideology, not to mention a shared enemy, the EIJ and EIG groups quarreled over the best way to precipitate the overthrow of the Egyptian Government and who should lead the effort (Wright The Looming Tower 57). EIJ’s leaders, particularly Zawahiri and Qamari, rejected the Blind Sheikh’s leadership, and sought to install an EIJ figure at the helm of the movement. They argued that a blind man could not be the emir. EIJ even issued a 64-page polemic entitled “The Case for the Ineligibility of a Blind Man to Govern,” citing Koran passages to support its position (Scheuer 186). The Blind Sheikh fired back that sharia precluded a prisoner from being an emir, which excluded Zawahiri or Qamari from candidacy, and advantaged Rehman, who was released before most other prisoners (Wright The Looming Tower 57).

These disputes created bitterness on both sides and laid the groundwork for repeated failures to bridge their differences and join forces—due in no small part to the conflict between their leaders and both groups’ unwillingness to be the subordinate (Wright The Looming Tower
While neither entity admitted its prejudices—to do so would have threatened their Islamic credentials—they were thinly veiled. The EIG’s Upper Egyptians, who had long been dominated and treated as inferior by Cairenes, were likely not interested in being subservient to them once again. Conversely, the elite, urban EIJ Cairenes were not willing to be subordinated to the backwards Upper Egyptians.

Zawahiri was finally convicted in 1984 of dealing weapons and sentenced to three years in prison. By that time, he had already served most of this time over the course of the lengthy trial. Upon his release that year, determined to get out of Egypt, Zawahiri used a false passport to travel to Saudi Arabia to practice medicine (Wright *The Looming Tower* 58). While he was already a committed jihadist for decades, when he emerged from prison, Zawahiri was hardened, bitter, and determined to exact revenge against Cairo (Gerges 93-4). In this respect, Zawahiri was not unusual. Investigative journalist Lawrence Wright wrote that, “Egypt’s prisons became a factory for producing militants whose need for retribution—they called it ‘justice’—was all-consuming” (*The Looming Tower* 61). Like bin Laden in 1991, what Zawahiri probably did not fully realize was that this departure from his homeland would be his last. Exile became Zawahiri and the EIJ’s permanent condition, which had fundamental consequences for its alliance decisions. Although he played a secondary role in the events to date, Zawahiri was poised to become a central figure in the next phase of EIJ’s jihadism, which was shaped by events outside of Egypt, such as the Afghan-Soviet War and the first Gulf War (International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa*3).

EIG’s circumstances after Sadat’s assassination differed from EIJ’s in large part due to its broader base and mission. EIG’s members were divided into three parts—those overseas, those in Upper Egypt, and those still in prison—a division that would persist from that point forward. It also became a more coherent and disciplined organization with differentiated functions (Meijer 199). Like EIJ, some of its members fled to Pakistan under the guise of going to fight in the anti-Soviet
jihad, though they remained focused on Egypt. Others returned to Upper Egypt to continue the mobilization and moral policing efforts, thereby carving out “Islamic space” and gaining control of villages, neighborhoods, and universities in Upper Egypt through a combination of intimidation, proselytization, and service provision (Meijer 200).

However, they soon found that the government was no longer tolerant of machinations of any kind. Cairo cracked down on Islamic companies, student associations, and other Islamist ventures. It brought private mosques under state control, replaced the imams, and took over the zakat funds collected. While the government hindered service Islamist provision in some places, it did not step in the fill the void, which increased disenfranchisement that bolstered EIG’s ranks (Toth 557; Meijer 199). EIG’s stance—already hostile towards Cairo and its proxies—grew more confrontational. The ashraf composition of the police in Upper Egypt exacerbated the ingrained tribal and Islamist need to settle vendettas, which meant that altercations precipitated a spiral of violence (Toth 562).

Of equal importance, some EIG members remained in prison, including most members of its first generation shura council, who became known as the “historical leadership” (Meijer 198). This title is a bit of a misnomer as this contingent continued to exert influence through their publications and writings, even though they were incommunicado for periods of time (Ashour 609). The day-to-day leadership responsibilities were inherited by the second generation, many of whom were radicalized by their experience in prison (Meijer 199). Under this new arrangement, EIG began preparation for the next phase.

The two groups forged their ways ahead separately. They had more similarities than differences to outsiders. But their differences were important. Rather than bridging them, these differences hardened and became irreconcilable.
9.3 EIJ’s and EIG’s Identities and Organizational Characteristics

*EIJ and EIG’s Ideologies and Narratives*

The two groups’ shared an ideology as Salafist jihadist organizations opposed to the Egyptian regime, but their narratives and goals differed. EIJ’s founding goal was to precipitate the downfall of the Egyptian regime by launching a coup, after which it would install an Islamic theocracy. The group believed that the political system in Egypt was fundamentally un-Islamic; therefore it did not seek reform through political participation and condemned those that did (Gerges 90). In 1988, Zawahiri authored a book, *The Bitter Harvest*, which was a platform for a vitriolic attack on the Muslim Brotherhood for its willingness to work within the parameters of the existing system. Zawahiri went so far as to accuse the Brotherhood of blasphemy for substituting democracy for sharia and renouncing violent jihad in Egypt (Gerges 111). Zawahiri rejected democracy because it replaced God’s law for man’s law (Gerges 111). EIJ was thus disinterested in projects to reform or Islamize society as a way to achieve change (International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa* 6). It was, in many respects, a group that was distrustful of the masses. Even the group’s name in Arabic, *al-Jihad*, left no ambiguity about the means by which the group sought to achieve change. There was only one option—violently seizing the reins of power and imposing Allah’s will on the people.

Zawahiri also challenged the “classical” conceptualization of a jihad proffered by Abdullah Azzam and much of the religious establishment as a defensive war against non-Muslim aggressors (Moghadam and Fishman 74-5). Building on Qutb and Faraj, Zawahiri insisted that the fight “against the apostate rulers that govern Muslim lands,” was an individual duty that “takes precedence over fighting any others” (qtd. in Moghadam and Fishman 74-5). More than any other figure, Qutb’s teachings fundamentally shaped EIJ’s thinking. In Qutb’s words, Zawahiri and a generation of
jihadists found a religious justification to attack their governments: to target the corrupt, illegitimate, and impious near enemy who was waging a hidden war against Muslims (Gerges 5).

When EIJ surveyed the world, it saw an *ummah* under attack from all sides—Crusaders, Zionists, and apostate governments all working together to oppress Islam (Reidel 31). While he later portrayed himself as always intending to confront the United States, Zawahiri’s rhetoric and actions over the course of two decades demonstrated a firm commitment to overthrowing the Egyptian Government as his first priority until the late 1990s. Zawahiri was one of the most vocal and ardent advocates of the need to focus first on local regimes, even at the expense of the Palestinian cause (Gerges 13; 50-51). As late as 1995, he wrote that “Jerusalem will not be liberated unless the battle for Egypt and Algeria is won and unless Egypt is liberated” (qtd. in Gerges 33).

The United States was certainly considered one of EIJ’s enemies from the outset, but not the most pressing threat to confront. An EIJ paper from the early 1980s identified the United States as an enemy for three reasons: 1) its essential support up of apostate regimes, namely Egypt; 2) its decision to back Israel; and 3) the threat its global hegemony posed to Islam (Gerges 47). Zawahiri later inverted his argument and advocated that the far enemy must be attacked in order to defeat the near enemy. Unwilling to surrender and unable to continue the fight against Cairo, Zawahiri “made a virtue of necessity” and brought his organization into direct confrontation with the United States, but this change to the group’s narrative and identity was arduous and divisive (Gerges 174; Scheuer 251).

EIJ’s larger rival, EIG, also sought to overthrow of the current system and re-establishment of the caliphate through jihad (Meijer 204). The two groups agreed that the struggle against Cairo was the priority and that an Islamic state was the eventual goal. EIG was also heavily influenced by Qutb’s and Faraj’s writings. In its publications, it endorsed the assassination of Sadat because “he who prefers man-made positive laws to the laws of God is a kafir... and as it is not allowed for a
kafir to rule over Muslims, it is a duty to depose the rulers of our country” (qtd. in Meijer 204). The two groups’ disagreements were thus not primarily rooted in ideological or strategic differences; they were about methods and tactics.

In contrast to EIJ’s plot for a sudden, timely blow to decapitate the regime and seize power, EIG sought to defeat the regime through a combination of popular mobilization and rebellion and frequent, small-scale attacks. It wanted to reform Egyptian society and bring it back to Islam. The group’s constant disruptions to law and order were a way to weaken the state to the point that an Islamist takeover would be possible (Rashwān 62). In the meantime, its efforts to mobilize society involved instilling and enforcing Islamic values and behavior. The International Crisis Group described EIG’s strategy by saying that the group:

sought to combine the da’wa, which it interpreted as involving not only preaching but also the muscular policing of morals—amr bi ‘lmar’uf wa nahi ani ‘l-munkar (commanding that which is proper and repressing that which is reprehensible)—with militant opposition to the state. Thus it was not purely conspiratorial but interested also in a kind of mass agitation and the project of re-Islamising society (Islamism in North Africa6).

Ethnic Identities

Both groups were entirely Egyptian in their composition and thus appeared to outsiders to share an ethnic-nationalist identity. To their fellow Arab counterparts, this Egyptian identity was pronounced and salient as Egyptians were often considered—and viewed themselves—as the center of the Arab and Muslim world. Egyptians were sometimes seen as acting and being treated as superior, including within al-Qaida, for example receiving larger salaries that their counterparts (United States District Court Southern District of New York 311-2). This attitude was sometimes a source of tension with other Arabs. Those that defended the Egyptians pointed to their experience and skills as justification for their status, but nonetheless, the identity was distinct. Beyond a narrow, nationalist ethnic identity, EIG and EIJ had a broader Arab identity that they shared with al-Qaida and many of the other Sunni groups that would soon form.
However, the two groups broke their Egyptian identities down further based on where their respective organizations hailed from within Egypt. EIG recruits came from Upper Egypt and migrant neighborhoods in Cairo (Fandy 608). The EIJ had a more elite, urban-based following from Cairo and Alexandria. It was not an organization of the downtrodden, like EIG. This identity difference was not simply a semantic effort to divide the two groups—though there were plenty of those types of divisions—it had implications for the activities, trajectories, and tactics of the two organizations. In terms of affinity with al-Qaida, al-Qaida identified more with the elite socio-economic composition of EIJ than the under-privileged base of EIG.

_Comparing EIJ and EIG’s Enemies, Tactics, and Targets_

These identity features had implications for the group’s tactics as did the variation in their consistency. EIG’s identity features had more stability and continuity than EIJ’s, which was reflected in their respective actions. The EIJ intended to gradually and clandestinely infiltrate the military and then bide its time until conditions were ripe to execute a coup; however, it grew impatient and decided to modify its tactics in the early 1990s. The EIJ conducted a selective bombing campaign against high-level officials and government targets in an effort to destabilize the regime. The International Crisis Group characterized EIJ, in contrast to EIG, as opting:

for a narrowly conspiratorial, elitist and militarist strategy, relying on targeted assassinations of senior regime figures and terrorist bombings and explicitly rejecting religious proselytizing—the _da’wa_—and political agitation in general as impossible given Egyptian conditions (Islamism in North Africa 6).

It was the nature of its targets, organizational composition, and its project that caused EIJ to become the first Sunni terrorist organization to conduct a suicide attack. In doing so, EIJ challenged a social and religious norm for Sunni Muslims (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden”24-5). It first used the tactic in 1993. Until that point, Sunni terrorist groups had eschewed suicide operations. But Hizbullah’s effective utilization of the tactic against the United States in Lebanon had captured
attention. Suicide operations against hardened government targets or well-protected individuals became EIJ’s signature method. When EIJ was integrated into al-Qaida, it brought this tactic with it.

Targeting was thus another area of divergence between EIJ and EIG, in ways clearly linked to their differing strategies. In contrast, EIG largely opted to conduct low-level attacks against an array of accessible or soft targets. Its members engaged in regular clashes with police, military, and security services, sectarian violence against Coptic Christians, and harassment of foreign tourists and those deemed insufficiently Islamic (International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa* 6). For example, the group attacked liquor stores and theatres for promoting un-Islamic behavior (Schanzer 36). It also engaged in assassinations of government figures or those propagating un-Islamic ideas (International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa* 6; Benjamin and Simon 84).

Unlike EIJ and al-Qaida, EIG did not adopt suicide attacks. While bombs can be characterized as EIJ’s weapons of choice, EIG more often employed firearms or assault weapons.

EIJ deemed EIG’s strategy to be counter-productive and believed it only served to provoke the regime without achieving tangible political gain (Gerges 51). However, as part of al-Qaida and committed to fighting the far enemy, EIJ subsequently revised his stance on the utility of striking soft targets and low-level strikes. Zawahiri then advised that

> [t]racking down the Americans and the Jews is not impossible. Killing them with a single bullet, a stab, or a device made up of explosives or killing them with an iron rod is not impossible. Burning down their property with Molotov cocktails is not difficult. With the available means, small groups could prove to be a frightening horror for the Americans and the Jews (qtd. in Gerges 32).

However, there were also noteworthy exceptions to EIG’s tendency to conduct smaller-scale operations. For example, EIG departed from its modus operandi when the group unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate President Mubarak in Addis Ababa in 1995. Even in this operation, the group did not employ a suicide attack tactic, which, by this point, EIJ had already used and which may have been a more successful way of targeting Mubarak’s motorcade. EIJ’s targeting approach
was much closer to al-Qaida’s than EIG’s, though this similarity was in part a product of their interactions as EIJ and al-Qaida influenced one another’s targeting approaches.

Comparing EIJ and EIG’s Organizational Dynamics

EIJ and EIG’s tactical and ideological differences reflected their respective organizational compositions and constituencies. Consistent with its aspirations to seize power via coup, EIJ was a secretive, small, and elite group with clandestine membership that ranged from the hundreds at its peak and then it dipped to as low as a few dozen (Gerges 129). For his part, Zawahiri hailed from a well-known, respected Egyptian family (Reidel 17). EIJ members generally had religious training, advanced education or professional backgrounds (Scheuer 251). Perhaps most importantly, the group’s ranks included military personnel and police officers (Benjamin and Simon 123). Even Zawahiri served in the Egyptian Army for three years as a surgeon (Reidel 18). Their skills and experience would also be coveted by bin Laden and come to be essential to al-Qaida’s capability.

EIJ was more of a grouping of cells than a structured organization (Gerges 88-9). While it grew more structured over time, it retained a policy of tightly compartmentalizing information by adopting a cellular structure that prevented cells from knowing about one another. Wright described the organizational structure as influenced heavily by Zawahiri:

Obsessed with secrecy, Zawahiri imposed a blind-cell structure on the Jihad organization, so that members in one group would not know the activities or personnel in another. Thus, a security breach in one cell should not compromise other units, and certainly not the entire organization (“The Man Behind bin Laden” 25).

EIJ had several functional committees, which was quite similar to al-Qaida’s structure. There was a senior consultative and advisory shura council, which the group’s emir headed. This committee consisted of eight members plus the emir (United Nations “Narrative Summaries”; Rashwân 74). The group’s perpetually difficult money situation was managed by a financial committee. The civil committee was charged with recruiting, especially cadre from the Army. The sharia committee handled religious matters for the group. It was solely a jihadist organization
committed to conducting operations. It did not have a political wing or a charity or social services function. EIJ was ultimately very much a product of Zawahiri’s leadership style. He was an autocratic leader, in many respects like the dictators he abhorred (Gerges 126). He was intolerant of dissent, imposed his views on his followers, and made important decisions by fiat.

In contrast, EIG had a mass following among the disenfranchised in Upper Egypt where it sought to exploit popular discontent and promote the Islamization of society (Wright *The Looming Tower* 57; International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa* 6; Schanzer 32). It was a social movement, not a conspiratorial sect, and it was not organized just to seize power from the state (Meijer 190). Meijer described EIG as “involved in all aspects of contentious action: building an organization [sic], resource mobilization, identity formation, framing, taking advantage of opportunity structures and choosing from a repertoire of contention” (190). The Blind Sheikh’s role as a professor at the Assyut University bolstered the group’s following among students as well as graduates who found that they were unemployed or underemployed despite their education (Wright *The Looming Tower* 56). EIG dwarfed EIJ with tens of thousands of followers (International Crisis Group *Islamism in North Africa* 7). Fittingly, it had both a grassroots base and developed an armed militant wing (Rashwān 62). EIG was, by comparison, a more coherent organization. It too had a senior consultative and advisory shura. But its leadership was consistently unified and commanded the loyalty of its followers. It had a stable internal dynamic as well with a rank and file largely responsive to its leaders and not beset with dysfunctional levels of infighting (Rashwān 64).

Following Sadat’s assassination and the prison period, both groups needed to regroup and determine the way forward. Their commitment had not waned. If anything, it had solidified and grown stronger. Cairo exported some of its problem to South Asia as recently-released militants fled to Pakistan. This was a critical period, from an alliance perspective. While in Pakistan, both groups kept their eyes set firmly on Egypt, although only EIG would maintain its base there.
9.4 Regrouping in Pakistan

Following their release from prison, Egyptian militants from both groups made their way to Pakistan as the momentum was shifting against the Soviets in Afghanistan, thanks to the tenacity of the Afghan mujahidin and an influx in resources, particularly the introduction of Stinger surface-to-air missiles (Gerges 134). Zawahiri was joined by several of his trusted colleagues, including his brother and EIj’s official leader, Sayyid Imam (aka Dr. Fadl), who also needed some breathing room to recuperate beyond the reach of the Egyptian regime. Imam was an influential religious scholar who had taken on a role of EIj’s emir while Zawahiri and many of his colleagues were in prison. He had retained the position when the tattered group gathered in Pakistan (Wright The Looming Tower 122). Like Zawahiri, he was trained as a surgeon and had begun his jihadist journey at a young age (Rashwān 65). Imam was not in Egypt at the time of Sadat’s assassination and therefore, he avoided imprisonment. Despite his absence, he still faced related charges, of which he was eventually acquitted (Tawil Brothers in Arms 31).

The Egyptians differed from many of the Arab Afghans. When they arrived in Afghanistan, they had experience waging jihad, came from existing albeit damaged organizations, and even had theological works that informed their struggle (Tawil Brothers in Arms 36). For Zawahiri, Imam, and their clique of fellow Egyptians, liberating Afghanistan from the Soviets was not their primary concern while they were in Pakistan. They were intent on rebuilding their organizations and siphoning off resources that were pouring in to the Afghan mujahidin for their war against Cairo (Gerges 95). Unaffiliated Egyptians who went to fight the Soviets were prime candidates to be recruited into one of the two groups (Wright The Looming Tower 122). Although, EIj was seeking new members, it was still selective and elitist in its efforts to bolster its ranks (Tawil Brothers in Arms 32). Zawahiri later said of Afghanistan that he saw it “as an opportunity to get to know one of
the arenas of jihad that might be a tributary and a base for jihad in Egypt and the Arab region” (qtd. in Coll 154). Gerges described the time between Zawahiri’s arrival and the 1989 pullout of the Soviets as a critical period for ELJ. When Zawahiri arrived in Pakistan, ELJ was a motley crew of loosely linked cells and networks and did not constitute a unified structure like its bigger sister, the Islamic Group. Afghanistan enabled Zawahiri to mold and shape Islamic Jihad in his own image and to unify it under his command. Afghanistan provided a political refuge, combat experience, and fresh recruits of young Egyptians journeying to fight alongside their Afghan coreligionists. Afghanistan also afforded Zawahiri an opportunity to assert his leadership over Islamic Jihad. Between 1986 and 1989 Zawahiri succeeded in making Islamic Jihad a power to be reckoned with in the jihadist movement, thanks to the new freedom and resources afforded to him in Afghanistan (88).

ELJ’s ability to regroup during this period was inextricably tied to the close relationships its members developed with bin Laden, which became also a source of tension with other jihadists. The Egyptians had their own camp within bin Laden’s Lion’s Den complex in eastern Afghanistan, and they were often trainers for other camps. In addition, a lengthy manuscript entitled “The Essential Guide to Preparation,” by Sayyid Imam, was used as a manual in the training camps (Tawil Brothers in Arms 38). But with few sources of funding coming in, ELJ soon became financially dependent on the Saudi for its members’ salaries and expenses (Wright The Looming Tower 128). Others soon began grumbling that bin Laden paid the Egyptians better than other nationalities (Benjamin and Simon 114). ELJ members formed bin Laden’s inner circle—a position they zealously guarded—drawing accusations that they were manipulating bin Laden and deliberately isolating him in order to use him for their own purposes (Wright The Looming Tower 113). As discussed in Chapter 8, Zawahiri in particular sought to drive a wedge between bin Laden and his mentor, Abdullah Azzam.

While Zawahiri was a radicalizing influence on bin Laden, Zawahiri also cautioned bin Laden about his nascent efforts against the United States, not because he disagreed with bin Laden’s analysis, but because he believed doing so dangerously widened the conflict. Bin Laden spoke occasionally at the hospital where Zawahiri worked. On one such occasion, bin Laden gave a lecture
about boycotting American products as a way to punish the United States for its support for Israel, which prompted Zawahiri to warn him that “hitting the snake on the head” was a hazardous endeavor (Coll 163).

EIJ members were essential to bin Laden because they differed from many of the inexperienced, but enthusiastic, volunteers who journeyed to the region to participate in the anti-Soviet jihad. The Egyptians were educated, had military skills, and were hardened from their mistreatment in Egyptian prisons (Wright The Looming Tower 128). A filmmaker who created a documentary on the mujahidin described their symbiosis:

bin Laden had followers, but they weren’t organized. The people with Zawahiri had extraordinary capabilities—doctors, engineers, soldiers. They had experience in secret work. They knew how to organize themselves and create cells. And they became the leaders (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden”).

While it did not have many former military or police officers in its ranks, EIJ members were also knowledgeable jihadists who had done hard time in prison. Their combined experience led bin Laden to focus on building relationships with these two groups, “his most militarily proficient allies” (Scheuer 182).

Bin Laden unsuccessfully encouraged their unity, while inadvertently stoking their competition (Scheuer 182). Indeed, the Egyptians who re-located to Pakistan did not leave their rivalries behind in Egypt, and Zawahiri was not the only Egyptian in Peshawar who sought to build his influence. The Blind Sheikh periodically visited Peshawar as well. Soon, Zawahiri renewed his attacks against the Blind Sheikh’s leadership (Benjamin and Simon 103). The two groups set up competing guesthouses in Peshawar, jockeyed for recruits and support, and undertook aggressive campaigns to publicly discredit one another (Wright The Looming Tower 138). While they were already disposed to vie for primacy over the Egyptian movement, Wright remarked that now “[t]he unstated cause of these slanderous salvos was the question of who was going to control bin Laden, the golden Saudi goose” (The Looming Tower 138). EIJ scored an important victory when bin Laden
provided the group with an estimated $100,000 to begin “its work,” a likely reference to operations in Egypt. This move was seen as an endorsement of EIJ over EIG, although it is not clear that bin Laden intended it as such (Wright *The Looming Tower* 138). Practically speaking, EIJ had more of the type of personnel that bin Laden sought—former military officers, police officers, engineers, and doctors—than EIG, which may explain his closer relations with EIJ’s members from the outset. Yet this influx of funds was apparently not enough to remedy the EIJ’s ills, and members lamented that bin Laden abandoned them in Pakistan when they were in a financial crisis (Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15).

EIG also engaged in an intensive rebuilding phase in Pakistan during the 1980s, though it was secondary to the efforts underway concurrently in Egypt. In Egypt, EIG sought to expand its following into urban areas, especially Cairo, through *dawa* and to create a military capability. This *dawa* mission included policing behavior it deemed un-Islamic, as it was committed to “commanding right and forbidding wrong,” including using violence to punish those who deviated (Meijer 191). In creating a military capability, it had the advantage over EIJ in size, but was disadvantaged in that EIJ had former military in its ranks. Some of EIG members were deployed to Afghanistan and Pakistan specifically by EIG to acquire the requisite training for this venture. Upon their return, they were immediately tasked with the attack that would mark the beginning of an open war with the state. The group attempted to assassinate the former Interior Minister, General Zaki Badr in 1989 (Ashour 610). When EIG’s speaker was killed in 1990 by security forces, EIG interpreted this act—in typical Upper Egyptian tribal fashion—as retaliation. The cycle of vendettas was underway.

While this escalation of violence was instigated by events on the ground in Egypt, the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 emboldened jihadists everywhere. Zawahiri trilled that “it is as if 100 years were added to my life” (Higgin and Cullison 3). The conflict in Egypt was augmented by the
reinsertion of triumphant mujahidin. Those who did not return to Egypt, including most of EIJ, still sought ways to destabilize Cairo from their new safe haven in neighboring Sudan (Burke 139).

### 9.5 Terror Unleashed in Egypt

In 1990, EIG retaliated for the death of its speaker by assassinating the speaker of the Parliament (Benjamin and Simon 120; Meijer 207). EIG members engaged in frequent small-scale attacks on “un-Islamic” forces and clashed with security services. In 1992, it began targeting tourists, thereby striking at one of the economic pillars of the regime, which provoked a more concerted effort to dismantle EIG’s infrastructure (Meijer 207). Bin Laden provided funds for the EIG via its members in Sudan, but the group also had its own sources of money (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Activities” 2). Beyond its attacks, EIG sought to implement Islamic law into practice in Egyptian society, and maintained a level of popular support that its rival lacked (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 103).

EIG’s spiritual leader, the Blind Sheikh, made his way to the United States that year, where he sought asylum and once again, garnered followers and provided them theological cover to engage in violence. His standing in the broader jihadi milieu had improved with the death of Azzam. He was the heir apparent for the role of the leading militant theologian among the Arab Afghans (Coll 250-1). He retained his standing as a religious authority for the EIG, but he was not engaged in managing the group’s actions in Egypt. EIG had an infrastructure and command within Egypt that directed its actions there. Accordingly, it was EIG, not EIJ, which was responsible for the vast majority of attacks in Egypt during the 1990s (al-Zayat 60; Burke 139).

In 1992, Zawahiri ascended to the top position in EIJ, and the group prepared to initiate its own attacks in Egypt. Accounts of his predecessor, Sayyid Imam’s resignation attribute the change primarily to two issues. First, Imam disagreed with the growing sentiment within the group that it
should commence its own operations in Egypt. Some in EIJ chafed at the idea of being outmaneuvered by its rival and missing opportunities to exploit the unrest in Egypt (al-Zayat 60). For his part, Zawahiri thought that the EIG’s targeting of “low hanging fruit” such as policemen, tourists, and Coptic Christians was unwise and simply provoked the regime’s ire without tangibly weakening it (Wright The Looming Tower 184). But he agreed that EIJ was ready to prepare its own selective, high-level attacks against the Egyptian Government as part of a decapitation strategy (Gerges 95). Imam remained committed to the original plan of laying groundwork for an eventual coup, rather than engaging in such operations (Gerges 97). This position put him at odds with his followers. Others attributed his resignation to the backlash caused by the arrests of hundreds—some say as many as one thousand—EIJ members and associates in Egypt in 1992. They were put on trial in a case known as the “Vanguards of Conquest.” This devastating blow to the group’s infrastructure in Egypt spurred an internal crisis that forced or contributed to Imam’s decision to offer his resignation. The combination of the two issues threatened to destroy EIJ, and a faction of the group threatened to break away. Imam was unable or unwilling to heal these rifts, and the search began for a candidate who could do so. Among the candidates considered was bin Laden’s esteemed lieutenant, Abu Ubaidah al-Banshiri (Tawil Brothers in Arms 48; 91; 101). EIJ sought to hastily assemble the minimum fifty-two members required by the group’s regulations. Zawahiri was able to get enough of his supporters, including al-Banshiri, to attend the meeting to secure the requisite votes, and all the attendees pledged their loyalty to him (Tawil “Brothers in Arms”102-3).

A year later, EIJ conducted its first operation in Egypt, an assassination attempt against the Interior Minister, Hasan al-Alfi, in August 1993 (Wright The Looming Tower 185). Al-Alfi was a particularly attractive target because of his active role in the crackdown against Islamists (Wright The Looming Tower 185). As noted earlier, this unsuccessful attack introduced a new dimension into the Sunni militant landscape; it marked the first time that a Sunni terrorist group had
conducted a suicide attack. Undeterred by its failure to kill al-Alfi, EIJ then targeted another senior Egyptian official, Prime Minister Atef Sidqi. A car bomb remotely detonated as Sidqi’s motorcade passed a girls’ school in Cairo. Sidqi survived the attempt, but a young girl was killed and 24 bystanders were wounded (Wright *The Looming Tower* 186). The child’s death caused an outpouring of public outrage against EIJ.

EIJ’s operations in Egypt in 1993 were enabled by its two proximate safe havens: Sudan and Yemen (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 90-1). The sanctuary in Sudan had the added benefit of being actively cultivated by the government and sharing a long and porous border with Egypt. Bin Laden provided EIJ with money and weapons to assist with these operations, and they ran training facilities in Sudan (District Court Southern District of New York 223). But he was increasingly preoccupied with his vendetta against the United States, and bin Laden’s campaign to persuade his closest ally to look beyond Cairo was having some success (Reidel 54). For example, one of bin Laden’s trusted Egyptian lieutenants was dispatched to Somalia to determine ways to support Somali resistance to the U.S. military presence during the famine mission. But others in EIJ chafed at the way bin Laden treated the EIJ, and resented his efforts to shift their attention from their founding cause (Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15).

These developments were the same year as the first attack on the World Trade Towers in New York City. The Blind Sheikh, still resident in the United States as an asylum seeker, was part of the overall conspiracy, while bin Laden’s money also enabled the attack (Wright *The Looming Tower* 176-7). The EIG figure was arrested in June of that year and subsequently indicted and convicted of conspiracy for his role in assassination and bombing plots in the United States (Fried 3). EIG was initially silent about his arrest and denied involvement in the attack, though it protested when he was given a life sentence (Meijer 208). A month after the World Trade Center attack, Zawahiri tried in vain to put his group on more secure and independent financial footing, including
traveling to the United States on a fundraising tour that yielded a meager $2,000 (Wright *The Looming Tower* 183).

In Egypt, authorities aggressively pursuing EIJ soon caught a major break when they arrested the group’s membership director, Ismail Nassir in 1993. The group’s compartmentalized structure and culture prevented all but a few individuals from having information about the group’s various cells and members’ locations. Nassir was one such member. He had a wealth of knowledge about the group’s operatives, their whereabouts, and their aliases. An EIJ member lamented that Nasir “had a computer containing the entire database. Where the member lived, which home he might be hiding in, even what names he uses with false passports” (“The Man Behind bin Laden” 25). With this information in hand, the Mubarak regime proceeded to decimate EIJ’s underground network in Egypt, arresting over a thousand suspects. The ensuing military trials were light on evidence, but were sufficient for the regime to imprison or execute those deemed a threat (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 25). The group’s capability within Egypt was in shambles.

EIJ was also laboring under Cairo’s anti-terrorism efforts. By 1995, it was on the defensive (Meijer 208). Throughout Upper Egypt, displays of Islamist sentiment, including dress, became grounds for police to harass or detain people and females were routinely detained in order to compel their male relatives surrender. Homes of suspected militants were bombed and burned. Toth observed that Upper Egyptian militants rarely received trials as: such a luxury was reserved mostly for their more prominent Cairene counterparts—but instead were either fatally shot in police cross-fire when security forces came to arrest suspects or else were jailed indefinitely without appearing in court.... Anger swelled, and in response many acts of police misconduct were repaid by outraged relatives—not through organized retribution but through individual acts of revenge. Police misconduct also occurred in Cairo, Alexandria, and the Delta. But without this remnant of tribal tradition, such acts elsewhere went unavenged.

Beleaguered within Egypt, EIG cadre outside of Egypt took on a larger role and in doing so, gained more authority within the organization (Meijer 208).
Grappling to respond to Mubarak's crackdown and at bin Laden's urging, the Egyptian rivals' representatives in exile unsuccessfully explored ways to work together (Meijer 208). In Sudan, the efforts to forge unity between EIJ and EIG ran into familiar roadblocks. Once again, even in the face of shared adversity, the groups could not set aside their differences. In 1995, Zawahiri chaired a meeting in Khartoum attended by rival EIG members, but he was unable to make progress in reconciling the differences that had dogged their relationship to date (Reidel 55). The prospects for improved relations were dealt a further blow by the death of bin Laden's esteemed Egyptian lieutenant, Abu Ubaydah al-Banshiri in 1996. Respected by all for his military prowess and charisma, he acted as an intermediary and mediator between the two groups. In his absence, there was no one well positioned to take on this liaison role. EIG members increasingly resented bin Laden's relationship with Zawahiri and what they regarded as bin Laden's preferential treatment of EIJ (Scheuer 186).

At this juncture, Zawahiri remained unequivocal in his commitment to attacking the Egyptian regime, though he was under increasing pressure from bin Laden to revise his stance. He issued a statement in 1995 about the primacy of the battle against the near enemy. “The road to Jerusalem runs through Cairo,” Zawahiri asserted in EIJ's al-Mujahidin's newsletter (Gerges 33). This was not only a strategic calculation; it was also a religious one. Zawahiri justified his position by invoking the Koran: “[I]ight those of the disbelievers who are close to you” (al-Zayat 63). Some EIJ members refused to make a choice between the two goals and swore allegiance to both al-Qaida and EIJ (United States District Court Southern District of New York 221).

EIJ struggled in the wake of the Mubarak regime's response to its two attacks in 1993. The alliance with bin Laden was now essential for the impoverished and besieged organization, but bin Laden balked at continuing to fund EIJ's campaign in Egypt (Burke 136). Bin Laden argued that EIJ's operations in Egypt were too costly and required too much manpower. The costs were
compounded because families of detained operatives had to be supported when Cairo invariably responded to attacks with a slew of arrests (Scheuer 184). One EIJ fighter claimed that bin Laden even expressed “displeasure whenever Jihad members carried out operations inside Egypt” (Scheuer 184). He became increasingly insistent that EIJ shift its attention to attacks against Americans.

Both Egyptian groups executed a major attack outside of Egypt in 1995 that disguised their growing desperation and reflected their reduced ability to operate effectively in Egypt. In a departure from its typical modus operandi of conducting attacks within Egypt, EIG—with al-Qaeda’s assistance—attempted to assassinate Mubarak by ambushing his motorcade in Addis Ababa (Reidel 55; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Activities” 1-2). The armored vehicle protected Mubarak from the EIG gunmen (Reidel 55). The Sudanese Government refused to extradite any of the EIG leaders to Egypt to stand trial for the attack, which caused increased international condemnation of Khartoum. Lawrence Wright reported that the Mubarak regime, which had not been squeamish about using heavy-handed measures up to this point:

> responded with a furious determination... The security forces used exemplary punishment... They torched houses in a village because a member of Jihad had come from there. A mother would be stripped naked in front of a guy, who was told, ‘Next time we’ll rape her if your younger brother is not here.’ A recently instituted anti-terrorism law had made it a crime even to express sympathy for terrorist movements. Five new prisons were being built to hold political prisoners (“The Man Behind Bin Laden” 25).

Unable to operate in Egypt, but determined to respond to Mubarak’s campaign, EIJ operatives drove a truck bomb into the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in November 1995. Sixteen people were killed and 60 more were wounded in the suicide attack (Wright The Looming Tower 217). Zawahiri later claimed that the initial target was the U.S. Embassy, but that it was too well fortified to attack. Terrorism expert Bruce Reidel characterized this operation as “the perfect mixture of jihad ideology” because it hit at the crux of the alliance between the Egyptians, the
Americans, and the Indians, who all allegedly worked together in Islamabad against the militants and the Pakistani Government (Reidel 22).

However, not everyone was thrilled with the operation, including by some accounts, bin Laden (Wright *The Looming Tower* 217). Sudan was growing less secure, and Pakistan was still an important, albeit more limited, sanctuary for Arab Afghans and the primary route into Afghanistan, so this attack endangered those assets. Within EIJ, there was also some unease about the targeting of civilians in the Embassy as well as discomfort about the use of suicide operations, causing EIJ’s numbers to dwindle further. The Pakistani Government responded by rounding up 200 Arab Afghans and expelling them. Most made their way to Sudan, courtesy of bin Laden, and fortified the ranks of militant groups in residence there. This solution was not necessary ideal because Khartoum’s support was starting to waver under the weight of international pressure (Wright *The Looming Tower* 217-8).

His subsequent assertion about the intended target aside, Zawahiri went to great lengths to justify striking the Embassy. In addition to EIJ’s claim immediately after the attack, he issued a publication in March of the following year, explaining that the Embassy was a spy den where un-Islamic means, including sex, were used to gather intelligence, recruit agents, and target EIJ. Attacking the Egyptian Embassy in Pakistan in particular was a response to the recent extradition agreement signed between the two countries, and Islamabad’s persecution of the *mujahidin* in Pakistan (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 108). That Zawahiri felt it necessary to defend the attack in this manner several months after the attack was an indication of the turmoil roiling within the group.

The attack on the Egyptian Embassy was the product of multiple pressures: EIJ’s competition with EIG, a reaction to the Mubarak regime’s oppressive measures, and Zawahiri’s need to shore up internal support. His reputation had been badly damaged by his handling of two boys who were exposed as agents of Egyptian intelligence earlier that year (Wright *The Looming Tower* 217-8).
The two youths had been forcibly and brutally coerced by Egyptian intelligence into becoming assets. Upon learning of their betrayal, Zawahiri had both boys killed, despite EIJ and al-Qaida members’ objections and the fact that one of the boys was the son of an EIJ member. Several EIJ members left the group in protest (Wright *The Looming Tower* 216).

Furthermore, this “administration of justice” had caused strife with Khartoum. The Sudanese Government was furious that EIJ usurped its authority by conducting its own “trial” and execution within the government’s sovereign territory, especially on top of the international censure the Egyptians’ attacks had provoked (Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15). Militants were not permitted to act as a state within a state in Sudan. Shortly thereafter, Khartoum made it clear that the Egyptians were no longer welcome to stay in Sudan. Zawahiri and his followers left abruptly, with barely enough time to pack their belongings. At this point, there were less than a hundred members left in EIJ, and they dispersed to the Middle East, Europe, and South Asia (Wright *The Looming Tower* 216).

Back in Sudan, bin Laden felt the loss of his Egyptian cohorts acutely (Wright *The Looming Tower* 219). He had come to depend on them both for council and for security. Security was in short supply even in Sudan. Bin Laden survived at least one assassination attempt (Coll 269). In 1996, he departed Sudan for Afghanistan under duress, either at the request of Khartoum or of his own volition. His financial situation deteriorated because he left a small fortune in land investments in Sudan. He soon found his way to Afghanistan.

With his group in tatters and in exile, Zawahiri was forced to suspend attacks in Egypt. He conveyed these orders to the group through a secret memo (Gerges 129). The loss of the Sudan safe haven coupled with the Egyptian regime’s relentless crackdowns proved too costly for EIJ to continue its operations. Zawahiri’s decision was not made public nor did the group seek any kind of deal with the government. EIJ had not forsaken its intent to forcibly topple the regime, but it needed
a temporary reprieve (Gerges 129). Instead, this unofficial ceasefire became a permanent condition for EIJ; the group was unable to conduct another attack in Egypt or any operations against Egyptian targets outside of Egypt. Moreover, it was now doubly exiled, from both its home country and from its nearby sanctuary, with nowhere to go.

Zawahiri’s travels following his hasty departure from Sudan are not entirely clear. Egyptian intelligence claimed he went to Switzerland and Sarajevo. EIJ’s newspaper was run out of Copenhagen, so there is some speculation that he may have gone there (Reidel 23). Other possible locations include Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Some of this conjecture may have been an attempt by Zawahiri and EIJ to disguise his movements in order to elude Egyptian security services (Higgins and Cullison 4; Tawil Brothers in Arms 109).

Zawahiri was on the move because had to find a new base for his organization. He decided to explore the prospects in Chechnya, a risky, but necessary expedition (Higgins and Cullison 5). It seemed like a promising prospect, and it was the site of a respected jihad. Then he and two associates were arrested in Dagestan by Russian authorities and imprisoned for six months. However, the Russians failed to detect his true identity (Higgins and Cullison 1; Wright The Looming Tower 249). Prior to his arrest, he reported to his followers that Chechnya was a promising potential base for EIJ. So when he abruptly disappeared, no one knew where he had gone. This also prevented Cairo from learning of his arrest and seeking his rendition, but Zawahiri’s abrupt disappearance left confused EIJ members to fend for themselves (Tawil "Interview with Hani al-Sibai"15). When he finally resurfaced, Zawahiri was cagey about his circumstances and was unwilling to disclose what had transpired (Higgins and Cullison 6). He faced mounting criticism from beleaguered followers who viewed the mission as a yet another failure under Zawahiri’s leadership (Higgins and Cullison 6).
Despite the perception that Egyptians received special privileges from bin Laden, he was either unwilling or unable to provide much assistance to EIJ members during Zawahiri’s abrupt disappearance (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 27). It coincided with bin Laden’s move to Afghanistan and loss of assets in Sudan, which may explain some of his reluctance. Nonetheless, this caused some bitterness among EIJ’s rank and file. More of them drifted away from the increasingly rudderless group or opted to become more deeply embedded in bin Laden’s organization.

Overall, violence in Egypt was on the decline by the mid-1990s, and the militant groups’ support base had eroded. Egypt’s economy tentatively began to recover from the onslaught, including its tourism sector, which had been badly damaged by the violence in 1992 and 1993. Unlike EIJ, EIG had retained some ability to operate within Egypt. While EIG received donations both from bin Laden, it had other sources of funds and thus was not dependent on bin Laden to the same degree as EIJ (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Funding” 2-3; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Terrorism: Usama bin Laden’s Activities” 2). Laboring under the Mubarak regime’s assault, EIG’s operational tempo slowed. It compensated by conducting less frequent, but more lethal and sensational attacks.

A prime example of this was EIG gunning down eighteen tourists at a hotel in Cairo in 1996 (United States Department of State 1996 Patterns). At that time, it was the largest number of deaths in a single attack in Egypt. The act found no public support as the group’s continued violence hurt the people as well. The public was weary of militants and tired of suffering from the regime’s repressive measures and the financial hardship that the militants’ acts caused by damaging the economy. This desperate act appeared to be a last gasp, as the 1996 Department of State’s annual report noted in Egypt the “number of fatalities—including noncombatants (105), police (59), and extremists (38) killed—fell sharply from 375 in 1995 to 202.” EIG’s ability to operate in Egypt was in mortal danger.
9.6 Defeat in Egypt and Afghanistan Redux

According to official tallies, the death toll between 1992 and 1996 was 471 EIG members, 401 security force personnel, 306 Egyptian civilians, and 97 tourists. The number of detainees, at its height, was 30,000 people (Ashour 612). These numbers fail to capture the scope and impact of the violence. Both EIG and EIJ were on the verge of defeat. However, the way they handled their circumstances was dramatically different.

After being released from Russian prison, Zawahiri did not immediately join bin Laden in Afghanistan. He still sought ways for EIJ to self-reform in order to become independent and continue its campaign against Cairo. He came up empty handed. His group was living hand to mouth, occasionally receiving resources to make it by, but never knowing when and if the next influx of money was coming. In 1997, Zawahiri returned to South Asia and was re-united with bin Laden in Afghanistan. With the Taliban takeover, he realized that it was the safest country, especially for a man not known for his physical prowess (Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15).

Once again, his re-location to the region coincided with EIJ’s downturn. It had few reliable sources of income, other than bin Laden (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Incorporation” 2). Expectations of bin Laden’s largess outstripped reality, leaving some EIJ members frustrated and bitter. In addition to losing money when he left Sudan, by this point, bin Laden was determined to focus his resources on attacks against the United States, rather than pouring money into losing battles against the “near enemies,” like the Egyptian Government (Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 27-9). Outside of Afghanistan, EIJ members were forced to get jobs and send ten percent of their earnings to their colleagues in Afghanistan (Gerges 122-3; Bergen 199). One detained member told Egyptian authorities that the group got some money from odds and ends projects like “trading in sugar or trading in South East Asia or rearing goats in Albania, and renovation of an old building
in London” (Bergen *Holy War, Inc* 199). But the group was not self-sufficient, and there were few remaining avenues for it to become independent.

With al-Qaeda’s move to Afghanistan, bin Laden conducted a review of al-Qaeda’s organization and strategy. Egyptians were appointed to fill senior posts in the group. Many of senior posts, particularly on the military committee, were occupied by Egyptians with dual loyalties with EIj. While EIj was floundering, bin Laden was becoming more dependent on its cadre to rebuild and expand his organization (Tawil *Brothers in Arms* 151-2; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Incorporation” 2).

EIj was also faced with the recognition that it could no longer carry on the fight in Egypt. Acknowledging the group’s inability to self-reform, in July 1997, during the proceedings of a military tribunal, an EIj member stunned the audience by reading a statement signed by six of EIj’s historical leaders calling for a unilateral ceasefire and a cessation of all attacks in Egypt and abroad. At first, the statement was dismissed as a ploy by Cairo or product of prolonged torture. This was not the first ceasefire attempt by the group or the government, but it was the first that had this level of leadership support (Ashour 614-5). The announcement was quickly condemned by EIj members in Afghanistan who had grown closely allied with al-Qaeda as well as some EIj members within Egypt. Low-level violence persisted in Upper Egypt, and it appeared as though this ceasefire initiative would collapse under the weight of the conflict. Then the ceasefire declaration received a boost when the Blind Sheikh issued a statement of support from prison in the United States (Meijer 210).

However, some EIj members in Egypt were not ready to lay down their arms and committed a final act of desperation, which initially set back the ceasefire initiative, but ultimately bolstered it. On November 17, 1997, EIj operatives gunned down 62 tourists and policemen in Luxor. The gruesome murders, which included the beheading and desecration of some of the
victims’ bodies and the attackers’ subsequent suicides, horrified the public. Any vestiges of grassroots support that the group once commanded evaporated (Reidel 23). Head of the overseas shura Rifai Taha took responsibility for the attack from Afghanistan. While it was condemned by the historical leadership as well as other EIG figures in Europe, the attack seemed to demonstrate that the ceasefire initiative was meaningless (Ashour 613; Meijer 209).

The public’s ire was so great that it was not solely focused on the perpetrators. The violence-weary public also held EIJ responsible for the attack, despite its lack of involvement, because the public viewed the Luxor attack as the culmination of the militants’ excesses. By now, the violence had already claimed the lives of over 1,000 people (Bergen *The Osama bin Laden I Know* 202). In addition, the Luxor attacks shattered Egypt’s fragile tourism industry, which had just started to recover. EIG’s attack in Luxor thus took a toll on the economy in a way that hurt average Egyptians (Reidel 23). It was a counter-productive attack and, ultimately, the backlash was so overwhelming that the EIG in Egypt capitulated and agreed to adhere to the ceasefire. It was EIG’s last major operation in Egypt (Reidel 23; Meijer 209).

In response, the Mubarak regime unleashed yet another torrent against what remained of the two terrorist groups. Within Egypt, the security services presence multiplied, and the government leveraged the public’s outrage to bolster its informant networks (Reidel 23). The fight between the regime and the remaining militants became increasingly personal, and they engaged in a cycle of score-settling, vendettas, and revenge, which caused militants to further lose sight of their goals and alienate the public (Gerges 153). Cairo did not limit its efforts to its own borders and found that countries that were previously leery of Egyptian security services were increasingly willing to cooperate against EIG and EIJ operatives in their territory.

The ceasefire declaration and response to the Luxor attacks revealed the schism between EIG members in exile and those in Egypt. The ceasefire declaration was met with panic in
Afghanistan. Even Zawahiri, who had long been one of the greatest obstacles to improved relations between the two groups, frantically sought re-assurance that this edict was contested within EIG and had been coerced by Cairo (Gerges 151). With no infrastructure of its own left in Egypt, EIJ realized that if EIG abdicated the fight, the jihad in Egypt would be lost.

Zawahiri appealed to EIG’s military commander, Rifai Taha, who was co-located in Afghanistan. In Taha, Zawahiri found an ally. Taha opposed the ceasefire and even endorsed the Luxor attacks. But these exiled Egyptian militants had lost touch with the ground realities in Egypt and did not fully appreciate how thoroughly discredited their cause was at home (Wright The Looming Tower 259). After the Luxor attack, the EIG’s ceasefire held in Egypt. While the regime denied that a deal was struck, it released 2,000 EIG members the following year (Wright The Looming Tower 256). Whether the decrease in violence was due primarily EIG members’ adherence to their leaders’ edict or because the group was incapable of mounting an operation after the losses it had sustained is not entirely clear. Either way, EIG was silenced in Egypt. For its part, EIJ was in no position to conduct operations in Egypt either. A few EIJ members even joined the EIG’s ceasefire, an option Zawahiri would not even consider (al-Zayat 76-7).

1998 World Islamic Front declaration

It was in the wake of this resounding strategic defeat in Egypt that Zawahiri signed bin Laden’s 1998 World Islamic Front declaration (Gerges 159). The statement presents the alliance as a product of a shared ideology and a common narrative, and, most of all, a mutual foe, the “Crusader-Zionist” alliance. Their argument had a balancing logic to it—while invoking the Quran as the basis—“fight the pagans all together as they fight you all together.” They portrayed the alliance as a defensive response against a shared threat as “these crimes and sins committed by the Americans are a clear declaration of war on God, his messenger, and Muslims” (Open Source Center 2). In particular, the statement points to the Crusader-Zionist occupation of Saudi Arabia and
Palestine as well as aggression against Iraq. EIJ was now ostensibly committed to causes that had not guided its behavior up until that point because the battle for Egypt took precedence. Notably, the statement made no references to Egypt.

Rhetoric aside, rather than a common enemy instigating EIJ’s alliance with al-Qaida, the common enemy was a product of the alliance. EIJ had always regarded the United States as an enemy, but had not been willing to focus its always-scarce resources on it or on Israel. Now, when his group was at its lowest point, Zawahiri committed his group to shifting course to pursue al-Qaida’s agenda. The action would, in fact, create a common enemy and a shared threat as the United States began to target EIJ overseas with a previously-unseen intensity following the statement. The road to Jerusalem no longer went through Cairo. Instead, the road to Cairo went through Washington.

More than any other factor, Zawahiri’s move was based on his calculation of what was required to ensure organizational survival in the face of the defeat of its animating cause (Higgins and Cullison 2). In his highly-acclaimed book, Ghost Wars, investigative journalist Steve Coll summed up Zawahiri’s situation at this juncture saying, that Zawahiri “spent most of his life in determined personal warfare against the government of Egypt, but by early 1998, exiled to Afghanistan and repudiated by many of his Egyptian colleagues, he had no plausible way to carry that battle on” (382). Some EIJ members criticized the 1998 statement as hastily written and insufficiently studied and sanctioned by religious authorities. Nonetheless, Zawahiri refused to retreat from his signature, which was the second one following bin Laden’s signature, a position that some attributed to his ego rather than his beliefs (Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15).

Either way, by signing it, Zawahiri publicly abdicated his long-standing stance, backed by a different Quranic verse, that the fight against “apostate” regimes deserved precedence and endorsed the need to focus on the far enemy, the United States. By adopting the far enemy
argument, Zawahiri could explain the group’s defeat in Egypt: EIJ had not sufficiently accounted for U.S. support for Cairo. Thus in order to defeat the Egyptian regime, the United States must be confronted first. Faced with internal dissent over the move, he and other advocates of the declaration tried a different tact, and urged their detractors to set aside their differences and unite under the Taliban (Tawil "Interview with Hani al-Sibai" 15). This argument portrayed the Taliban—the one “true” Islamic government in the eyes of all jihadists—as supporting the declaration, though the Taliban probably did not know about it prior to its publication. It was another example of bin Laden making a public pronouncement that rebounded to cause more pressure on his hosts, despite their request that he abstain from doing so.

The 9/11 Commission dated EIJ and al-Qaida’s alliance to the 1998 declaration (67). The Afghanistan-based contingent in EIJ was already both practically and operationally integrated with al-Qaida. The Egypt-based operatives in particular had been financially reliant on bin Laden for years (al-Zayat 109-10; United States Central Intelligence Agency “Incorporation”2). In Afghanistan, it was difficult to separate Zawahiri’s men from bin Laden’s men, and some held dual roles and loyalties to both organizations (Gerges 120).

However, that analysis overlooks the shockwaves that Zawahiri’s signature sent through EIJ. Not everyone in the group agreed that this move was the way to secure the organization’s survival, and the already-high internal dissension escalated further. Some were furious about Zawahiri’s power play. Much of Zawahiri’s organization—particularly what remained of it outside of Afghanistan, including members of the group’s shura council—was stunned by his signature on the 1998 declaration. Zawahiri did not consult with the group’s shura council or inform his followers prior to making the move. Several shura members objected to the decision (Tawil "Interview with Hani al-Sibai" 15).
The internal resistance was sufficiently strong that Zawahiri called an emergency meeting to discuss this situation. Some objected to relinquishing the fight against the Egyptian regime, which had been the main source of their woes. Others believed that confronting the United States was tantamount to suicide, given the group’s weakened state. Several EIJ members complained about bin Laden, who they no longer trusted because they felt he had failed to deliver on previous promises he had made to EIJ, particularly in terms of financial support. Bin Laden’s relative stinginess with EIJ stood in contrast to his increasing generosity with the Taliban during this period (United States Department of State, Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: Taliban” 2-4). Bin Laden was also criticized as self-promoter enamored with his own publicity (Gerges 162-3; Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15; Higgins and Cullison 2). A fax was distributed to EIJ members to provide a read out of the meeting, though one member remarked that accurately recounting the meeting would produce “arguments that would take us 10 years to finish since we would disagree on every word.” Another member relayed concerns that the meeting nearly devolved into fistfights between members and lamented that he “always felt that this entity may dissolve in seconds” (Higgins and Cullison 7).

In the face of this resistance, Zawahiri offered his resignation. This was seen as a ploy to force members to either capitulate to his decision or leave the group (al-Zayat 109-10). By this point, few of the remaining members saw leaving EIJ as a feasible choice. Gerges wrote that Zawahiri’s associates “had no choice but to join because they were stranded in Afghanistan and Yemen and were being hunted by the Egyptian security services with nowhere to go. They felt they were in the same boat with Zawahiri...and that they could not easily disembark” (163). Islamist attorney and one-time prison mate of Zawahiri, Montasser al-Zayyat, concurred, noting that “no members could refuse to join the Front except for the asylum seekers in European countries.
Anyone who refused to join the Front would find himself alone with only his own resources and contacts” (70).

In addition, there was no viable leadership alternative to Zawahiri. As a result, Zawahiri’s gambit worked and the group rejected his resignation. But in the process, its already-tenuous unity was destroyed. Several leading members in Europe were expelled or left, and Zawahiri’s brother—who was the deputy emir and a long-time, influential member—left the group in disgrace, accused of financial mismanagement. It was another blow to EIJ’s unity (Gerges 163; Wright The Looming Tower 260-1). Throughout this upheaval, the always secretive EIJ handled this upheaval internally. There was no public evidence of the convulsions rocking the group. Disgruntled members did not go public with their grievances.

The other Egyptian signatory to the 1998 declaration was also facing a revolt, which became quite public. The Afghanistan-based EIG military commander Rifai Taha’s signature, ostensibly as a representative of EIG, was perhaps the most important. Of the five groups that were party to the declaration, EIG was the largest and most well-known, which gave the declaration heft that it did not command on its own. Moreover, Taha’s move suggested that EIG’s leaders’ recent ceasefire declaration was not accepted by EIG’s followers.

Like Zawahiri, Taha had not consulted his organization prior to offering his signature; however, unlike Zawahiri, Taha was not in a position to coerce his organization into submission. The imprisoned EIG leadership demanded that Taha revoke his signature in July and publicly announced that attacking the United States was not a priority for EIG (Wright The Looming Tower 260; Gerges 155, Tawil “Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15). As recently as September 2012, Taha denied signing the statement at all (Imbabi 1). But why? EIG certainly shared the view that the United States and Israel were adversaries and bemoaned many of the same circumstances that the communiqué cited. It shared an overarching ideological platform with the signatories, so it was not
a lack of ideological solidarity. But unlike EIJ, a critical mass of EIG was not willing to undertake an alliance that would broaden the circle of confrontation in order to rehabilitate the group. Taha alternatively claimed that he had signed for himself, not EIG as an organization, and that he was misled as he was only asked over the phone whether he would join a statement of support for the Iraqi people (Wright *The Looming Tower* 260; Scheuer 186). Regardless of the circumstances that led to Taha’s signature, he withdrew it and was removed from his position on the EIG shura council abroad (Ashour 613). The EIG historic leadership was intent on engaging in self-reform and maintaining what al-Qaida expert Michael Scheuer characterized as an “arm’s-length relationship” with bin Laden. They were a viable alternative to Taha, and thus able to enforce their decision with the rest of the organization, even from prison (Scheuer 185).

Zawahiri went so far as to write the imprisoned EIG leaders and urge them to re-consider their ceasefire deal, to no avail (Gerges 157). Zawahiri described to them how the next phase of the conflict would be as a clash of civilizations with the West that would resonate with Muslims, mobilize the entire *ummah*, and reverse the misfortunates the Egyptian jihadists had suffered (Gerges 158). But there was no love lost between Zawahiri and the EIG leaders, and he was unable to persuade them to change their position. The EIG historic leadership continued to advocate for its ceasefire initiative, which gained acceptance among EIG followers on the outside and inside through the leaders’ publications and talks. The strength of the EIG historic leadership was evident by the absence of further attacks by the group. In March 1999, the group’s internal and external shuras issued a joint communiqué endorsing the ceasefire initiative. The historical leadership had a quorum in support of its initiative, though some members left the group in protest and EIG members in Afghanistan continued to resist (Meijer 210).

*EIJ Feels the Wrath of its New Primary Enemy and the Culmination of an Alliance*
The United States responded to the February 1998 declaration by targeting EIJ (Wright *The Looming Tower* 268). In July, the Azerbaijani service—reportedly working with CIA—captured EIJ veteran Ahmed Salama Mabruk in Baku. It was another major blow for EIJ. In the tightly compartmentalized group, Mabruk was one of very few remaining EIJ members who had extensive knowledge of the current whereabouts and activities of EIJ members worldwide, including in Europe (Wright "The Man Behind Bin Laden" 29). He had also accompanied Zawahiri on the ill-fated trip to Russia (Higgins and Cullins 7). Much of that information was on his computer, which was also seized, and the rest was extracted from him during interrogations in Egypt. Mabruk had acted as Zawahiri’s "right-hand man and secret keeper," though he objected to the alliance with al-Qaida and may have been one of the members alienated after the 1998 declaration (169). Nonetheless, he was a treasure trove of information about EIJ for the group’s enemies. In less than a year, hundreds of EIJ operatives and associates were taken out of commission on the basis of Mabruk’s information (Gerges 169). This confirmed the fears of those who saw the 1998 declaration as endangering the group. One Egyptian militant lamented that the result of the declaration was to cause the arrests of more EIJ members and sympathizers. Another fumed that the alliance was the source of "continuous catastrophes" (Tawil "Interview with Hani al-Sibai" 15; Higgins and Cullison 8).

These conclusions had merit. The CIA and the Albanian service captured another five EIJ members in Tirana later in the summer of 1998. After questioning, they were rendered to Egypt where they were tried and eventually convicted. Their confessions went on for thousands of pages (Wright *The Looming Tower* 269). They claimed that by that time only 40 members were left in the organization, all residing outside of Egypt (Wright *The Looming Tower* 336). These numbers may have been downplayed, but the EIJ’s ranks had been decimated repeatedly, but now there was no means to recover.

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On the other hand, these arrests likely solidified Zawahiri’s conviction that the United States was a primary enemy. Shortly thereafter, a retaliatory attack on the U.S. Embassy in Tirana was narrowly thwarted (Scheuer 266). On August 6th, Zawahiri sent a statement to the Al-Hayat newspaper in London saying, "[w]e are interested in briefly telling the Americans that their message had been received and that the response, which we hope they will read carefully, is being prepared because, with God’s help, we will write it in a language that they understand" (qtd. in Wright The Looming Tower269). The next day, al-Qaida bombed the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The operation had been in the works for five years. But Zawahiri’s message was clear; he regarded the U.S. as the enemy.

EIJ’s fingerprints on al-Qaida’s first attacks were evident. The Embassy attacks bore a striking resemblance to the attack EIJ conducted in Islamabad against the Egyptian Embassy and to the disrupted plot in Tirana against the U.S. Embassy. Indeed, Egyptians with allegiance to both al-Qaida and EIJ played key roles in the planning and execution of the 1998 Embassy attacks (Rabasa et al. 73-4; "Mohammed Atif" 2001). This is perhaps one of al-Qaida’s only attacks that could be considered a joint attack with another organization, and it was with the group that was its closest ally.

While Zawahiri had temporarily silenced his critics in the wake of the 1998 declaration, the frustrations with his leadership were not effectively quashed. Openly allying with al-Qaida and conducting an attack against the U.S. with it was not a panacea for the troubles that plagued EIJ. What remained of the group continued to suffer from chronic money shortages (Gerges 124-5). The EIJ contingent in Yemen, the second largest after Afghanistan, experienced regular turnover in its top position (Higgins and Cullison 9). The group was forced to account for expenses as small as three dollars, and Zawahiri rebuked subordinates for purchases he deemed unnecessary, causing several resign in response (Higgins and Cullins 9).
In the summer of 1999, Zawahiri faced another rebellion, but this time he was forced to step down. The organization that longtime senior member, Tharwat Shehata, inherited was in tatters. He tried to steer the group back to its original mandate against the Egyptian Government and reduce the group’s dependence on bin Laden (Gerges 170). It was a losing proposition for Shehata.

The members not in Afghanistan—derided by Zawahiri as having gone soft—were too dispersed and weakened to unite, and Shehata was not sufficiently capable to overcome these hurdles (Wright *The Looming Tower* 336). EIJ members were constantly at risk of being repatriated to Egypt, even from countries that had previously tolerated their presence, like Kuwait, UAE, and Lebanon (Scheuer 266). Zawahiri and his Afghanistan-based inner circle resisted Shehata at every turn, and he did not have the resources or power base to remold a group that Zawahiri had dominated for years (Gerges 170-1). More veteran members left the group during Shehata’s tenure, arguing that the group was a sinking ship no matter who was leading it, though they kept their resignations a secret outside of the EIJ (Higgins and Cullison 10).

Shehata’s failure was soon evident, and Zawahiri regained control of the organization. He was not satisfied to just regain the helm. He went out of his way to ensure that Shehata would not longer to be a rival. He distributed a report claiming that Shehata was unfit to lead because he made false accusations, insulted EIJ members, and displayed an uncontrollable temper (Gerges 171; Higgins and Cullison 10).

Back at the helm, Zawahiri sought to persuade what remained of his organization that a full merger with al-Qaida was the only “way out of the bottleneck” (qtd. in Gerges 171). He sent a coded letter to his followers, arguing that the merger was essential to rejuvenating the group. The responses were mixed. There was still resistance from several senior lieutenants and shura members, as the reservations raised after the 1998 declaration remained unresolved. While the United States was recognized by all as an enemy, it was not the enemy that motivated them, and
they did not share Zawahiri’s conviction that it was either necessary or wise for the crippled organization to confront the super power. Expanding the battle to include America “is a dangerous matter,” warned Zawahiri’s deputy (Tawil "Interview with Hani al-Sibai" 15). One member wrote to Zawahiri warning him that “going on in this is a dead end, as if we were fighting ghosts or windmills. Enough of pouring musk on barren land” (Higgins and Cullison 10).

While Zawahiri did not repeat the mistake of charging forward without consulting the group, he was already committed to this course and could not be deterred. “Stop digging problems from the grave,” he implored his detractors, with no effort to disguise his desperation, in a letter dated May 31, 2001 (Higgins and Cullison 2). He confided to one of his men that “joining with bin Laden [was] the only solution to keeping the Jihad organization alive” (qtd. in Wright “The Man Behind Bin Laden” 24). Some agreed to the merger, if only to “end the state of inertia we are in now” or conditionally supported it “as long as it leads to stimulating profitable trade” (Higgins and Cullison 10). Zawahiri insisted that the merger move forward because bin Laden had an operation in the pipeline that needed EIJ’s support and held the prospect for improving the situation (Gerges 174; Higgins and Cullison 2-3). “Gathering together is a pillar for our success,” Zawahiri argued (Higgins and Cullison 3).

In June 2001, Zawahiri’s relentless campaign came to fruition, and EIJ publicly announced its merger with al-Qaida; together they formed “al Qaida al-Jihad” or the Base for Jihad (Wright The Looming Tower 336). The united group pledged that the “forces of the Zionist and Christian coalition... they will soon roast in the same flame they now play with” (bin Laden 1). The dissenting EIJ members’ objections fell on deaf ears, but they opted not to go public. The merger solidified the positions of those EIJ members who were already integrated into al-Qaida. Investigative journalist Peter Bergen reported that this was when Zawahiri learned of the details of the impending 9/11 attack, although it was generally known in Afghanistan that a big strike was coming (“Al Qaeda”).
While the Egyptians no longer had their own organization, they occupied top positions in al-Qaida and were a formidable force within the group. Bin Laden had Egyptian co-founders when he created al-Qaida, but only Zawahiri could deliver EIJ—a group that could no longer stand on its own, but which had a rare and valuable reservoir of experienced and trained militants (Gerges 119).

The Egyptians’ influence within al-Qaida had long been evident and was now formalized to a greater degree. Zawahiri was officially anointed as bin Laden’s deputy. Of the nine men who sat on al-Qaida’s shura council, six were Egyptians (Wright The Looming Tower 336). Not all of EIJ went with Zawahiri. Some resisted and tried in vain to maintain a separate group focused on Egypt (Tawil ”Interview with Hani al-Sibai” 15). For all intents and purposes, the group’s fate was, from that point forward, formally and inextricably linked to al-Qaida, and al-Qaida was very much a product of their knowledge, involvement, and thinking.

**EIG Not Sold on Alliance Option, Self-Reform Difficult**

EIG pursued a different path. Its historical leaders offered their followers a comprehensive ideological and theological justification for ceasing violent jihad and rejecting EIJ’s path. The group still consisted of the three parts—prison, overseas, and Egypt-based. The prison segment was the largest, with an estimated 15,000 members (Ashour 616). The prison-led reform was enabled by Cairo, which sought to bring this bloody period to a close, but this also left the effort vulnerable to criticism of being coerced, given the well-known conditions in Egyptian prisons. In particular, shortly after 9/11, EIG’s leaders were permitted by the state to visit the prisons where other EIG members were held to discuss their current thinking. They were received by large crowds with respect and fealty, though some of their followers were still skeptical of the initiative and needed to be persuaded of the religious validity of the change being proposed (Meijer 210).
By engaging in such consultations, debate, and argumentation with its followers, the historical leadership was able to gain more than begrudging adherence; it was able to convince a critical mass of the membership of the validity of its positions (Ashour 616). In January 2002, it issued the first of four revisionist tracts, entitled “The Initiative for Ceasing Violence: a Realistic View and a Legitimate Perspective” (Ashour 613). Just as the group’s literature was central to its early development, these texts were critical to the ceasefire initiative’s legitimacy and longevity. They provided a comprehensive theological justification for the changes. Moreover, these revisions were undertaken by some of the original architects of the group’s ideology, including individuals who had suffered extensively at the hands of the state, which gave them religious and organizational authority (Ashour 615). As Omar Ashour argued:

> [i]n the eyes of their followers, the historical leadership was the only possible source that could bestow ‘Islamic legitimacy’ on a comprehensive ideological de-legitimization of violence. Other sources were not credible enough and were usually dismissed as regime sympathizers or agents who have been co-opted (such as some of al-Azhar scholars) or have been weakened as a result of repression…. From the [E]IG members’ perspective, the historical leadership is credible enough and beyond co-optation and weakening (615).

They tackled difficult subjects, including takfirism, jihad, and hisba—all important tenets of EIG’s ideology—and condemned al-Qaida actions, particularly attacks in Saudi Arabia and the 9/11 attacks (Meijer 211).

The leaders were not immune from charges of fallaciousness. Their revisions were so complete that it raised doubts about their authenticity. But the results cannot be debated; the ceasefire held. Several of the historic leaders were even released from prison in 2003. By 2006, the number of EIG detainees had reduced dramatically from 15,000 in 2001 to less than 2,000 (Ashour 623-4). There were continuing holdouts overseas; these were primarily the individuals co-located with and integrated into al-Qaida. It raised the question: who should be considered EIG? Were the Afghan-based individuals the “real EIG” because they were still committed to violence or were the historical leaders entitled to the mantle for commanding the loyalty of the majority of the group?
Each claimed to be the legitimate representative of the group, and their views diverged sharply when it came to the relationship with al-Qaida.

The historic leadership took a very clear position against al-Qaida, al-Qaida’s tactics, and rejected any alliance with it. While the Afghanistan-based EIG faction backed down to the historic leadership in 1998, it grew more assertive in the years after 9/11. It had commonalities with al-Qaida; it shared an ideology, some identity features, and a primary enemy and threat in the United States. It grew disconnected to its original organizational base. The self-reform undertaken by the rest of the group was unacceptable, but it lacked the capacity to undertake its own reform. So it embraced the alternative. In 2006, Zawahiri publicly announced that these EIG elements had merged with al-Qaida. He singled out the individuals in the group, including the man Zawahiri had once impugned as unfit to lead, the Blind Sheikh, as the “true” EIG representatives. They were now part of the united group, to be known as Gamaat al-Qaida al-Jihad. Zawahiri claimed:

God willed that a fundamental bloc from among the brothers of Gamaa Islamiyya, headed by his Eminence Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman and his Eminence Sheikh Rifa’i Taha (may God liberate them from their captivity) and Sheikh Muhammad Islambouli, Sheikh Abdul Akher Hammad, and Sheikh Muhammad Mustafa al-Qamari, God preserve them, and others among the notables of Gamaa Islamiyya, remain the authorities of jihad. The call in this age is to maintain their pure, clear, undiluted origins and from among this garrisoned, steadfast group is our brother Sheikh Abu Jihad al-Masri Muhammad Khalil al-Hukaymah who reassures in this address the Muslim umma with regard to the reliability of a large amount of people and a great portion from Gamaa Islamiyya onto the frontline of jihad against the enemies of Islam those who [are] the Crusaders, the Jews, and their traitorous agents. The Muslim umma is delighted at the merging of a large part of the knights of Gamaa Islamiyya. Before them is the banner of jihad and the appeal of Sheikh Muhammad al-Islambouli (may God save him) with Gamaat al-Qaida al-Jihad for the purpose of concentrating the Muslim umma’s capabilities in a single rank in the face of its enemies in the most insolent Crusader campaign launched against Islam in its history (1).

The alliance announcement had little tangible impact. It was a formality that cemented these EIG elements’ existing alliance with al-Qaida. South Asia-based EIG members had been dependent on and integrated into al-Qaida for years by the time this alliance was announced. In announcing this alliance, like EIJ, they officially relinquished their originating cause in Egypt, which
by this time, they had been unable to pursue for nearly ten years. It did not change the situation in Egypt; the merger was refuted by EIG’s Egypt-based leaders who continued to eschew an alliance with al-Qaida (Farrall 1-4). The EIG in Egypt continued to adhere to the ceasefire initiative, even after some were released from prison.

A Change in the Environment in Egypt

The Arab Spring changed the conditions in Egypt in ways that required Islamists of all stripes to update their propositions, which largely left al-Qaida on the outside looking in. Even EIG’s main champion of an alliance with al-Qaida, Rifai Taha, was detained, imprisoned in Egypt, and subsequently distanced himself from al-Qaida, now led by Zawahiri. In September 2012 in response to a question about his ties to al-Qaida, Taha downplayed the relationship, saying that “there was a relationship between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Group, but it was not in the form of a common organizational framework. It was similar to a relationship between any two political parties. There were exchanged benefits” (Imbabi 1). He even dismissed the need for al-Qaida to operate in Egypt since the revolution, a position that his one-time ally Zawahiri clearly does not share (Imbabi 1).

From South Asia, Zawahiri has sought to interject al-Qaida into events in Egypt, largely through public statements, including a series with nearly a dozen episodes entitled, “A Message of Hope and Glad Tidings to Our People in Egypt.” Zawahiri does not want to miss the historic opportunity in Egypt and the Middle East, but decades of exile have left him far removed. His longstanding enmity towards the Muslim Brotherhood has not abated nor has his distrust of democracy. Several months after the election of the Muslim Brotherhood’s candidate Mohamed Morsi as Egypt’s President, Zawahiri accused the U.S. of hijacking the revolution to produce this result, claiming that “America wants to establish in Egypt and other Muslim territories a fake political life in which parties fight in elections and the parliament, whereas America and its agents monitor the game from behind the curtain and only intervene when necessary” ( “Zawahiri Charges
America with Hijacking the Egyptian Revolution”). In October 2012, he exhorted the Egyptian people:

The battle isn’t over, but it has started…. [E]very sincere person in Egypt should wage a popular campaign to incite and preach in order to complete the revolution, which was aborted and its gains were played with; to achieve for the Muslim jihadi and stationed people of Egypt what they want of Shariah-based governance, honor, justice, freedom, and dignity; to force the corrupt forces in Egypt to submit to the demands of the people through popular revolutionary, preaching and inciting work.

Despite the years of seeking change in the region, neither EIJ nor EIG was the source of the revolution when it finally occurred. However, members of EIG in Egypt were better positioned to participate and seek to shape the environment than the holdouts in South Asia who allied with al-Qaida.

9.7 Leadership: The Key Difference?

The two Egyptian groups had different loci of trust and affinity with al-Qaida, which were consequential to their respective relationships. In the EIG and al-Qaida dyad, trust was concentrated in key liaisons and nodes outside of the Egypt; fittingly, these were the parts of the EIG that subsequently allied with al-Qaida. In the EIJ and al-Qaida relationship, there was both key liaison and leadership trust and affinity. The EIJ and al-Qaida alliance was inextricably linked to the dynamic between Zawahiri and bin Laden. Opinions vary about which man was the real locus of power in the relationship, but it is clear that they complemented and influenced one another. The result was—no matter who was the dominant personality—a reciprocal one (Reidel 24). As Lawrence Wright explained:

Each man filled a need in the other. Zawahiri wanted money and contacts, which bin Laden had in abundance. Bin Laden, an idealist given to causes, sought direction; Zawahiri, a seasoned propagandist supplied it. They were not friends but allies. Each believed he could use the other, and each was pulled in a direction he never intended to go. The Egyptian had little interest in Afghanistan except as a staging area for the revolution in his country. He planned to use the Afghan jihad as an opportunity to rebuild his shattered organization. In
bin Laden, he found a wealthy, charismatic, and pliable sponsor. The young Saudi was a devout Salafist but not much of a political thinker (*The Looming Tower* 127).

Personality-wise, they were quite different, in ways that were complementary within an organization. Zawahiri was combative, dictatorial, and intolerant of dissenting views. Bin Laden listened more often than he spoke at meetings and placed a premium on building unity, though he too made important decisions that contravened his advisors’ wishes (Coll 382). Conversely, they shared important characteristics. Over the course of their relationship, both men became permanent exiles—a shared predicament bin Laden invoked when others expressed resentment about the Egyptians’ dominance in al-Qaida (Gerges 42). They shared a deeply religious outlook, despite being the product of privileged backgrounds that did not always promote or welcome such religiosity (Coll 381). Wright pointed to other similarities:

Both were very much modern men. Bin Laden, who was in his early twenties, was already an international businessman; Zawahiri, six years older, was a surgeon from a notable Egyptian family. They were both members of the educated classes, intensely pious, quiet-spoken, and politically stifled by the regimes in their own countries (“The Man Behind Bin Laden” 2).

When they met, Zawahiri was senior to bin Laden, both in age and experience, and probably saw himself as such. He was more worldly, sophisticated as well as much more hardened than his Saudi counterpart (Coll 381). While Zawahiri probably hoped to use bin Laden to further the interests of EIJ, eventually, the opposite occurred (Gerges 128). This result, Gerges argued, suggests that the often suggested “banker-theoretician dichotomy” is an oversimplification of the relationship between the two men (120). If Zawahiri was the brains or the puppet-master behind the scenes, as he has sometimes been portrayed, it seems likely he would have persuaded bin Laden to more fully support his group’s activities in the 1990s and to sign on to his near enemy agenda. Yet Zawahiri was undoubtedly a radicalizing and powerful influence on bin Laden—“transforming him from a guerilla into a terrorist”—and he cultivated that role by separating bin Laden from
competing influences (Gunaratna 26). He virtually always appeared by bin Laden’s side in media and public appearance after their reunion in Afghanistan in 1997 (Gunaratna 26). Coll wrote that bin Laden’s “alliance with al-Zawahiri and other hard-core Egyptians had delivered him to a new phase of ambition” (402). Ultimately, irrespective of the power he wielded behind the scenes, Zawahiri was willing to subordinate himself and his organization to bin Laden and al-Qaida—a move he clearly did not take lightly, given his refusal to take a similar position under the Blind Sheikh.

But the relationship between EIJ and al-Qaida was not concentrated in these two men alone. Trust existed between key nodes as well for a number of years, particular those EIJ members co-located with al-Qaida or who had dual loyalties. Eventually, these grew to become institutionalized and embedded in the two organizations. It became a part of their respective organizational cultures, frames, and routines until the groups were indistinguishable and those who objected either left or grew silent.

In contrast, the historic leadership of EIG never developed personal relationships or trust with bin Laden. Most were imprisoned prior to the migration of jihadists to Pakistan or shortly thereafter, so their interactions with bin Laden were minimal. The interactions between EIG and al-Qaida occurred between key nodes, namely EIG members abroad who, like bin Laden and Zawahiri, were in perpetual exile and saw no alternative to fighting. For example, the Blind Sheikh’s sons ultimately joined al-Qaida and close to bin Laden—a propaganda coup for al-Qaida (Miller 1; Clark 3). The trust did not expand beyond this level, which is one of the reasons why the alliance was bifurcated and only applied to a segment of EIG.

9.8 Findings and Conclusion of al-Qaida’s Relationships with EIJ & EIG

ElJ and Al-Qaida: Far From “Natural” Allies

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The EIJ and al-Qaida alliance was initiated when both were vulnerable and had acute organizational learning and adaptation requirements: al-Qaida was the younger group and still more of an idea than a reality, while EIJ was struggling to rebuild in exile after major setbacks. EIJ's initial interest in bin Laden was motivated by his ample treasury, rather than his ideology, aims or vision. In EIJ's cadre, bin Laden saw the building blocks for his Islamic Army. Co-located in Pakistan, they shared an immediate goal of expelling the Soviets and a belief that the jihad should not end with this achievement. Their respective conceptualizations of the enemies were not contradictory, but their longer-term priorities and definitions were not in sync at this juncture. While the enemy narrative affinity was somewhat limited, they shared ideological affinity as Sunni jihadists and ethnic affinity as Arabs. Over the course of their continuous interactions, they built trust, shaped one another's identity evolution, and developed a closer and deeper affinity, including shared narrative of the enemy. Their early affinity was based on leadership and key node affinity. This affinity grew and became embedded within both organizations.

Bin Laden began as a relatively uncritical financier of EIJ's efforts, members, and agenda. EIJ occupied a privileged position with bin Laden as its members formed his inner circle and lent their expertise to his burgeoning project. His aid was vital to EIJ's ability to recover during the anti-Soviet jihad, establish a base in Sudan, and launch operations in Egypt in the early 1990s. As the costs of EIJ's attacks mounted without results, bin Laden started to resist pouring more resources into EIJ's counter-productive mission. He gradually used his resources to channel EIJ's energies and personnel into his project against the United States. While individual EIJ members embraced bin Laden's mission, as an organization, EIJ did not reconcile itself to this shift easily. Rather than abdicate its founding cause, EIJ attempted to undertake self-reform to reduce its dependence on bin Laden and maintain its course, but it repeatedly found itself drawn back to him when it could not independently secure its survival.
EIJ could claim few successes during its tumultuous lifespan. Its members suffered dearly from the fallout from Sadat’s death, despite their lack of meaningful involvement in the plot. Forced into exile beginning in the mid-1980s, the group’s high water mark was in 1993 when it possessed a haven in Sudan, a covert presence in Egypt, and was financially supported by bin Laden. This was the only year that it was able to pursue its aims through attacks in Egypt. Even then, its two assassination attempts against senior Egyptian officials failed and succeeded only in instigating a brutal government response and alienating the public by killing a child. Moreover, EIJ was consistently overshadowed by its larger rival, EIG. EIJ’s only operational “success” was its attack on the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in 1995. Even that came at a high cost and was more of a last gasp than a show of strength. It was, however, a harbinger of things to come from al-Qaida; al-Qaida’s operational capability and approach clearly stemmed from EIJ’s expertise and influence.

EIJ frequently teetered on the edge of disaster as a result of its dismal financial situation, internal woes, and exiled state, though it remained committed to its founding mission until the late 1990s. But its ability to realize its goal of launching a coup and imposing an Islamic state in Egypt steadily grew more elusive. Over time, the group lost touch with its roots and became a product of its environments in exile (al-Zayat 95). By the mid-1990s, EIJ had few supporters left in Egypt. Returning meant facing nearly certain arrest—an experience few were willing to endure again—thus it was forced once again to find a base and haven. After failing to secure one of its own, this need ultimately led to Zawahiri’s return to Afghanistan and by extension, to bin Laden.

The two groups developed a high degree of inter-dependence from an early point in their relationship. EIJ was at least partially subordinate to al-Qaida for much of the relationship as a result of its financial dependence on bin Laden. The two groups shared operatives, knowledge, and resources for a number of years before formally merging. Still, efforts to increase the level of inter-dependence and publicly formalize this relationship provoked bitter battles each step along the
way. The complexity of EIJ and al-Qaida’s relationship is often under-appreciated in the abundant literature on al-Qaida. The eventual merger of these two groups, which shared an ideology and enemies, has been aptly characterized even by experts who disagree about many issues as “an alliance of necessity” or “a marriage of convenience.” This captures the need—not love or solidarity—that propelled these two groups to unite (Gerges 225; Gunaratna 136).

For EIJ, this result was the result of its organizational failure. The engine of the merger was Zawahiri’s conviction—not shared by all—that it was the best, and perhaps only, available route for organizational survival. Even if EIJ refused to merge and denied its defeat in Egypt, bin Laden was no longer willing to support EIJ’s ventures there, so it had no way forward. Allying with bin Laden and confronting the United States was a high-risk gamble for EIJ. But it was one, Zawahiri believed, that held the potential to keep the group alive.

Al-Qaida found EIJ to be a partner that could assist with its organizational gaps at various points in its development. In the early years and up until 9/11, al-Qaida drew upon EIJ’s expertise in order to be a jihadist service provider to other groups, employing them as instructors in bin Laden-financed camps or as trainers deployed to conflict zones working with groups al-Qaida sought to influence. Al-Qaida used EIJ’s reputation and notoriety to bolster the prestige of bin Laden’s lackluster “International Front” declaration and depended on EIJ’s operational experience in preparing and conducting its first attack in 1998. Finally, al-Qaida was able to shore up the loyalty of the EIJ’s capable cadre as it prepared for its largest and most important attack to date.

Ultimately, EIJ threw in its lot with al-Qaida and experienced the success of 9/11 and the full brunt of corresponding fall out. Many of its members have been killed or detained since that time, including those who were unenthusiastic about the alliance. Unrepentant, Zawahiri maintains that 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that followed succeeded in reducing the United States’ international influence and weakened it internally, thus validating his decision to merge with bin
Laden ("Zawahiri Urges Egyptians to Demand Change, Comments on US Influence"). Moreover, with bin Laden's death, Zawahiri is once again at the helm of an organization that has faced a prolonged assault, is weakened, and faces critical questions about how to proceed. Whether he will handle this challenge more ably this time remains to be seen.

His ascension to the top spot in al-Qaida coincided with the revolution in Egypt, raising questions about the genuineness of his embrace of global jihad and whether he will shift the organization and its allies back towards the “near enemy” agenda he forsook more than a decade ago. His rhetoric has indeed revisited shades of his Egypt-centric past, for example, referring to Cairo and Damascus as “the Two Gates of Jerusalem” in an October 2012 call to continue the revolts in those countries until sharia law is imposed ("Zawahiri Calls for Continuing Egyptian Revolution, Kidnapping Westerners") and claiming that:

> every free, honorable person must remember in Egypt in general and the Islamic movement in particular, the role of Egypt as a pioneer and a leader in the Islamic and Arab world, and that Egypt is not a free trade zone, or an agency to America, or a broker for Israel, or a tourist park. Egypt is the castle of Islam and the fortress of pan-Arabism; the land of garrison, jihad, knowledge, and preaching.

Back in Egypt, the enlarged space for contestation between Islamists revealed that many of the old divides remain intact, particularly between those willing to work within the evolving political space and those who reject any compromises short of the imposition of an Islamic state. In the latter category, some, like the previously unknown Ansar al-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula, still seek validation from al-Qaida (“Ansar al-Jihad in the Sinai Peninsula Pledges to Zawahiri”). But for others, particularly the ascendant Muslim Brotherhood, which would be hard pressed to forget Zawahiri’s years of unstinting criticism, Zawahiri remains an adversary. The amount of attention Zawahiri has paid to the situation in Egypt suggests that his nationalist and Arab-centric streaks have not been fully subsumed by the global jihadist agenda. Moreover, if the EIJ experience is any indication, his style and tenure as al-Qaida’s leader is likely to be contentious. As Zawahiri seeks to
shape events in Egypt from afar from this position, one can simultaneously see simultaneously al-Qaida’s new leader and EIJ’s once-divisive emir.

*Same Ideology, Same Enemy, Different Outcome*

Why did EIG and EIJ have such difference relationships with al-Qaida? Both EIJ and EIG shared the same overarching Sunni jihadist ideology with al-Qaida, viewed the same governments as enemies and threats, and had other shared identity features, including ethnicity. Moreover, both Egyptian groups interacted extensively with al-Qaida, including extended periods of co-location and shared experiences conducive to trust building. Both groups suffered from internal tensions vis-a-vis their relationships with al-Qaida. Despite these similarities, their relationships with al-Qaida showed significant variation. EIG was an al-Qaida partner during the early 1990s, but then EIG rejected the idea of an alliance as early as 1996 and would remain unwilling to ally with al-Qaida, except for a co-located faction in exile and alienated from the larger group.

Ideological solidarity is not sufficient to explain the differences in their alliance decisions and outcomes or either group’s relationship with al-Qaida. There were ample ideological debates between the two Egyptian groups; most were thinly-veiled bids for primacy, rather than genuine theological differences. They diverged in their tactics and strategies, in part due to ideological questions such as whether Egyptian society could be reformed or what was the best means to overthrow the Egyptian Government and form an Islamic state. But rather than being purely doctrinal-based arguments, these could be traced back to their differing organizational composition and strengths. Even accounting for these differences, their degree of ideological compatibility with al-Qaida did not differ markedly. Thus they should have had roughly similar alliances with al-Qaida, if ideological similarity acted as the main driver of alliances. Yet as this chapter has demonstrated, they did not follow the same alliance trajectory.
Conversely, ideology was not irrelevant. In both dyads, a common ideology helped build some affinity and facilitate regular opportunities for interaction and trust building. EIJ and EIG’s co-location with al-Qaida in the same conflicts and safe havens was in part a consequence of their shared ideology. These environments then reinforced and perpetuated a shared ideology and common experiences that helped to nurture a converging worldview. If there had been marked or highly salient ideological differences, this period of co-location would have likely produced conflicts, rather than cooperation. Thus it is telling that the main advocates of an alliance in both Egyptian groups were those who were co-located with al-Qaida over the course of many years.

Given the prevalent Sunni jihadist ideological current of this time, numerous ally options existed that would have fulfilled the ideological solidarity criteria for the Egyptian groups. The Egyptian groups were not more ideological similar to al-Qaida than the other Sunni jihadist groups. In fact, EIJ and EIG were probably more ideologically compatible with other Sunni jihadist organizations that also focused on national-level priorities than with al-Qaida. They also had ample interaction with many of these groups, and even cooperated with some of them, like LIFG. But neither Egyptian group forged alliances with other Sunni jihadist groups, independent of al-Qaida. Thus while a shared ideology helped to facilitate and reinforce relationships, it was not the primary cause of these diverging outcomes.

Likewise, a common enemy does not illuminate the differences in alliance outcomes. Both Egyptian groups viewed Cairo as their primary enemy and most pressing threat. They had ample antipathy for Israel and the United States, but this sentiment did not drive their activities or operations as organizations. EIG and EIJ shared the same adversaries with al-Qaida, and both of their prioritization of these enemies differed from al-Qaida in the same manner. Over time, there were shifts in conceptualizations of enemies and threats towards al-Qaida’s view by co-located elements of both groups led those members to advocate for alliances.
EIJ eventually adopted al-Qaida’s conceptualization of its enemies as an organization, as did a faction of EIG. This change of enemies by EIJ was both a result of the alliance more so than a cause of it. The clearest illustration of this dynamic occurred when, in 1998, EIJ both publicly adopted al-Qaida’s mission against the “Crusader-Zionist alliance” and then assisted with 1998 Embassies bombings. The U.S. responded by targeting EIJ and working with Cairo, thus becoming an increasingly salient enemy and threat for the group. This helped to reinforce EIJ’s decision to view the U.S. as its primary enemy, though it was not the sole, or even primary, cause of the alliance.

The direct threat from Cairo to EIJ members resident in Afghanistan diminished over time. However, members located elsewhere lived under the constant threat of extradition or rendition from Cairo or as a consequence of their Afghanistan-based leaders’ decision to provoke the U.S. in 1998. Thus this sense of threat may have exacerbated differences over whether to ally with al-Qaida alliance, though not quite in the way that balance of threat would predict. In a sense, the less threatened members of EIJ in Afghanistan had to the luxury of allying with al-Qaida publicly because they faced less risk in doing so. Thus common enemies and shared threats were not the primary drivers of EIJ’s alliance with al-Qaida, though they played a supporting, if self-fulfilling, role.

This shift in enemies and threat was not as apparent for EIG, in part because a critical mass of the group remained in Egypt. The situation was similar to EIJ’s in that the group did not uniformly face the same threats. EIG members in Egypt, especially in prison, faced an ongoing, pressing threat from Cairo that their counterparts in Afghanistan grew more immune to. Unlike EIJ, with many, including its historic leaders in prison there, Egypt remained the epicenter of EIG. Those EIG members resident in Afghanistan were literally and figuratively cut off from EIG after the 1997 ceasefire announcement as well as the 2002 de-radicalization effort. Moreover, they faced no guarantees that they could safely return home and, like, EIJ, they found survival with al-Qaida. Their
connection to their parent organization only withered further in the post-9/11 environment as they continued to be co-located with al-Qaida, while EIG in Egypt continued its demobilization efforts. They thus faced the same threats as al-Qaida and, like EIJ, these EIG members became integrated into al-Qaida’s organizational structure and culture. Thus by the time the “faux affiliate” announcement was made in 2006, these EIG members already de facto shared al-Qaida’s enemies and threat. Shared threats and enemies buttressed, but did not independently cause, al-Qaida’s relationships with this EIG faction, such that after nearly ten years of co-location and separation from the mainline EIG, they were willing to publicly merge with al-Qaida.

Organizational dynamics—both over time and at key junctures—exerted the most decisive influence over the EIJ and EIG’s differing alliance trajectories, but this explanation also has limitations. Alliance decisions closely coincided with the organizational conditions and the location of the groups’ respective basis of power. Exile was a critical determinant of organizational needs and, by extension, alliance choices. Both groups were effectively defeated in Egypt by 1997. At this time, EIJ was completely in exile. In contrast, EIG remained largely in Egypt. It was at this juncture—as al-Qaida pushed for a public formalization of relationships—that their organizational conditions pushed them in very different alliance directions.

EIJ’s state of complete exile had by then created an acute and perpetual organizational need for sanctuary. Much of the organization was already in exile, and it had been unable to secure a haven after being ousted from Sudan, despite Zawahiri’s attempt to find a location. Internal dissonance was mounting, and finances were scarce. Zawahiri’s relocation to Afghanistan and agreement to sign the 1998 statement were an effort to use alliances to adapt and fulfill these organizational needs, even at the expense of the group’s aims, after self-reform efforts failed. This decision compounded the internal fissures, but with their sanctuary and greater access to bin Laden and his money, Zawahiri and the Afghanistan-based EIJ members, were in a more powerful
positions than their other exiled counterparts, and were thus able to dictate the direction of the relationship.

Mainline EIG—meaning EIG in prison and within Egypt—was also on the verge of defeat. Rather than flee Egypt and settle elsewhere, it announced a ceasefire. Exile—and by extension an alliance with al-Qaida—was not a viable option for EIG for several reasons. First, EIG’s historic leadership and thousands of its members were in prison and thus could not re-locate. Second, as discussed, EIG was significantly larger than EIJ, and had a grassroots movement embedded within Egyptian society. Unlike EIJ, EIG could not transport itself out of Egypt. Relatedly, as opposed to EIJ’s elite cadre, EIG drew its members from lower-classes and less affluent members who could not as easily flee Egypt. EIG was simply too large and too wedded to the Egyptian context to go into exile as an organization. Thus, while also on the ropes, EIG did not have the option to go into exile; therefore, it did not have the organizational adaptation needs that accompanied exile. In its circumstances, an alliance with al-Qaida would not have served an organizational purpose except to make conditions for it in Egypt more difficult.

The other major difference in their organizational needs was financial. EIJ’s second major need was funding. Like its problems finding haven, it simply was not unable to come up with a strategy to fill this continuous and sometimes extremely acute need. Once again, this was a need that bin Laden was positioned to fulfill. No other ally could solve EIJ’s chronic money problems and self-reform measures perpetually failed. This further propelled EIJ into an alliance and eventual merger with al-Qaida. Similarly, EIG was not a wealthy organization and its membership was far from affluent. But EIG did not grow dependent on bin Laden for funds. Moreover, bin Laden was no longer interested in funding Egypt-oriented activities, thus his treasury did not match EIG’s circumstances. Because EIG’s financial situation was not as dire, he also could not use funds to re-orient it.

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In terms of operational capability, in comparison, EIG and al-Qaida were not as well suited as EIJ and al-Qaida. EIG was operational for almost a decade before al-Qaida, thus it did not need al-Qaida to teach it operational skills. Conversely, EIG was not ideally positioned to teach al-Qaida operational skills because EIG had ceased using violence by the time al-Qaida conducted its first attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. In addition, their tactics differed. EIG tended towards small arms attacks and did not conduct suicide attacks, so it was not well-positioned to assist al-Qaida to conduct such attacks. In comparison, EIJ had members with the requisite military experience and technical skills. It had conducted suicide attacks. It had even struck an Embassy using the same modus operandi—the intended target of al-Qaida’s pending first operation. EIJ thus possessed a more complementary set of operational capabilities. This offered an avenue for EIJ to reciprocate for al-Qaida’s assistance in other areas.

Bin Laden wanted the Egyptian groups to work together and ally with al-Qaida. But, in the face of the Egyptians’ persistent failures to bridge their differences, bin Laden demonstrated a preference for EIJ, or at least EIJ members, probably because of these skills they could bring to his organization. His favoritism towards EIJ—or at least the perception of it—reduced the sense of affinity between al-Qaida and EIG. The competition between the Egyptian groups had consequences for their respective alliances as al-Qaida, more specifically bin Laden’s treasury, was another venue for their competition.

The final difference between the two groups was their level of organizational cohesion. While EIG was a larger and, therefore, a more unwieldy organization, but it did not suffer from the same degree of disunity as EIJ. Even when EIG declared a ceasefire, it had greater internal cohesion than EIJ. But it was clearly not free of internal tensions. The ceasefire was tenuous, and the EIG representative in Afghanistan’s decision to sign onto bin Laden’s 1998 statement challenged the ceasefire and exacerbated internal turmoil. However, the power and credibility in the organization
still lay with the imprisoned leaders; their ceasefire gained traction and Taha was forced to back away from his union with al-Qaida. Instead, EIG undertook self-reform and retained its independence.

Zawahiri’s leadership style surely contributed to EIJ’s constant internal problems. Some of his critics accused him of undertaking the alliance with al-Qaida in order to retain a position at the helm of an organization, even if it meant abandoning the cause that had animated his group (Gerges 128). Gerges argued that “Zawahiri’s alliance with bin Laden afforded him an opportunity, which had previously eluded... him, to lead an international network with impressive human and financial resources” (Gerges 131). Coll summed up EIJ’s dilemma by saying that “Zawahiri and his Egyptian colleagues endured endless internal battles over ideology, power, and leadership struggles in which al-Zawahiri became increasingly isolated and reviled even among hard-core Egyptian radicals” (382). On its own, EIJ was a weak and unstable group. But as part of another organization with more resources and better leadership, it served as a powerful core. It had the skills to fulfill al-Qaida’s learning needs—intelligent, motivated, and elite operatives with military knowledge and covert experience—as al-Qaida prepared to confront the world’s remaining superpower.

In the face of defeat, the two groups opted for very different strategies to ensure survival, and it would have been hard to predict these strategies. Each tried to persuade the other of the wisdom of its approach to no avail. Both options were extremely risky; one was a self-reform measure and the other was an alliance strategy. For EIG, its experience with the regime offered few reasons to hope that a unilateral ceasefire would be an effective way to end the conflict. The regime had rebuffed previous attempts at negotiations and now that it had the upper hand, it was quite plausible that it would simply use this advantage to decisively eliminate EIG, and the ceasefire initiative would leave the group confused, vulnerable or divided. But the timing of this ceasefire was critical because the public desperately wanted the violence to stop as well. Because EIG had
been a broader movement, it was more responsive to public opinion than EIJ. EIJ would not consider the ceasefire option, though selected EIJ members in prison in Egypt signed onto it. This suggests that most of the militants in Egypt agreed that the ceasefire was the best adaptation option in that environment, and that exile strongly shaped perceptions of whether to surrender or pursue an alliance with al-Qaida.

For EIJ, an alliance with al-Qaida was the alternative adaptation strategy. It offered a rationale for its failure in Egypt that did not require fully abdicating its previous positions, though it did also require a revision of its narrative and ideology. Instead, it maintained that the defeat was the result of an incorrect assessment of the scope of the conflict. With the United States behind Cairo, the regime would not fall, EIJ now reasoned. Thus EIJ must work with al-Qaida to target the United States in order to ultimately achieve their aims in Egypt. An alliance offered the possibility of organizational survival with a new mission under the changed conditions. Five years after 9/11, the EIG members co-located in Afghanistan agreed with EIJ and agreed to be subsumed into al-Qaida as well.

Ultimately, these positions hardened over time as EIG ceased to be an active violent organization and EIJ became completely integrated with al-Qaida. Neither group was monolithic to start nor were their alliance decisions pre-determined by their ideologies or enemies. Both options faced internal resistance and dissent. Their alliance decisions were a product of different organizational conditions and differing adaptation requirements and decisions.
CHAPTER 10:

AL-QAIDA: THE SALAFIST GROUP FOR PREACHING AND COMBAT AND ARMED ISLAMIC GROUP

“The joining was a legitimate necessity by the book of our God and the sunnah of our prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. It was a mindful necessity imposed by the actual reality and the international system that is full with injustice against the Muslims. Many analysts and observers are mistaken when they think that our joining was a result of secular accounts and self interests. We are a jihadi ancestral community. We rely on legitimacy before anything else as a base of our decisions.”

--Abelmalek Droukdal, leader of al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb, formerly the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, on his group's alliance with al-Qaida

10.1 Introduction

The Islamist conflict against the government in Algeria is the longest lasting of the post-Soviet jihads against so-called apostate regimes in the Arab world. Their contemporaries’ campaigns in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia were decisively defeated by the late 1990s, with most jihadists in prison, hiding or in exile. But the durability of the conflict in Algeria should not be taken as indication of its success. To the contrary, Algeria became a cautionary tale for jihadists. Seemingly poised to take over the state either through elections or violence in the early 1990s, the jihadist movement self-destructed and spent the rest of the decade devouring itself. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA)—the pre-eminent group in the insurgency in the early years—escalated its violence until it spiraled out of control, and the group had alienated itself from both the Algerian people and international jihadists, including al-Qaida.

To salvage the revolutionary jihad against the Algerian Government, a faction calling itself the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) broke away from the GIA and pledged to continue the campaign against the state, and in so doing, recalibrated the use of violence to avoid killing civilians or viewing them as legitimate combats. It pursued that strategy while being pushed further into the periphery of the country to the point that it teetered on irrelevancy. The 9/11 attacks and the counterterrorism pressure that ensued, coupled with the saliency of the war in Iraq in Algerian, stoked divisions within the GSPC about how to respond to a dramatically-changed
environment. The group split, with some opting to surrender and others deciding to expand their battle by bringing themselves in line with al-Qaida. This produced an alliance between that reinvented and rejuvenated the GSPC and gave al-Qaida a representative to pursue its agenda in the strategic region of northern Africa.

This chapter is a cross-case comparison over time of the variation in the GIA's and GSPC's relationships with al-Qaida. The two groups shared many characteristics in terms of overarching ideologies, enemies, threat perceptions, and even membership. They both fought against the same primary enemy—the Algerian Government—and adhered to a Salafist jihadist ideology. As a splinter organization of the GIA, the GSPC drew most of its personnel from its parent group. It even advertised itself as following the GIA's agenda before the GIA “deviated.”

Yet their relationship with al-Qaida varied significantly. The GIA worked with al-Qaida from an early point in its formation, enjoying some of al-Qaida's jihadist lender support as it fought an Algerian Government that had been ostracized by the international community, except for its colonial nemesis, France. But the GIA then broke ties with al-Qaida, though it was conducting operations in many ways consistent with al-Qaida's far enemy agenda. At the time of its formation, the GSPC faced the same enemy as the GIA, but eschewed an alliance with al-Qaida. Then after 9/11, when the group confronted an Algerian Government that was backed by the United States and positioned as a regional leader on counterterrorism, the GSPC opted to ally with al-Qaida. This raises a theoretic question—did this variation in the enemy configuration and threat environment impact their respective alliances with al-Qaida? This case offers is both within case variation as the GSPC operated both before and after this change in threat as well as cross-case comparison opportunities with the GIA.

The chapter is comprised of seven sections. The first section examines the history of Algeria and the events leading up to the cancelled 1992 elections, which played an important role in the
environment both groups faced. The second section discusses the emergence of the Islamist insurgency and how GIA emerged as the most powerful group and developed a relationship with the nascent al-Qaida organization during this period. The third section analyzes the GIA's implosion and the factors that led al-Qaida and other Sunni jihadist partners to break ties with it. The fourth section explores the GSPC's rise to become the most powerful insurgent organization in Algeria and its decision to limit its association with al-Qaida. The fifth section examines the events that led up to the GSPC's decision to change its posture towards al-Qaida and al-Qaida to overlook the sordid past in Algeria. The sixth section scrutinizes what impact the alliance had on the GSPC. The final section analyzes and compares the two cases based on the theoretical frameworks and their accompanying hypotheses.

10.2 A Revolutionary Legacy and Burden

The National Liberation Front’s (FLN) bloody and brutal campaign against France for independence from 1954 to 1962 was simultaneously heralded as the model for national liberation struggles and a textbook example of ruthless, but effective, counter-insurgency. Despite the FLN’s celebrated victory, Algeria sustained tremendous losses—as many as 250,000 killed, hundreds of thousands displaced, and billions of dollars in damage—and emerged divided and weak after the ouster of its colonial master (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research Department of State “Political Dynamics” 1). With the FLN's focus on achieving a military victory, there was little legwork done to prepare to govern the impoverished new nation. Disagreements previously submerged beneath the urgency of the battle against a common enemy soon surfaced (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 45). The United States’ Intelligence Community concluded that:

[t]he revolution was led and won, not by a ruling house or strong political party, but by a loosely organized group of political leaders and military bands. They were effective in
forcing the French out, but lacked the organization and expertise necessary to deal with many of the new country's monumental problems (United States Central Intelligence Agency “The Maghreb” 12).

Ultimately, the FLN was a nationalist, revolutionary movement, which was sufficient to unify Algerians against France, but could not readily transform into an effective governing apparatus. Moreover, those who played a major role in the revolution expected commensurate positions in the post-war order, leading to a system of patronage at the expense of merit. The 1963 Constitution codified the FLN’s role as the nation’s “formulator of policy” (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 34). Moreover, with the mass exodus of approximately 800,000 Europeans who had administered the state—albeit in a self-serving, predatory way—there was a dearth of skilled technocrats to tackle the new state’s enormous economic, social, and political problems (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 1-2; 30). There was no shortage of candidates vying for power and without a common enemy to unify it, the FLN was soon consumed by internal rivalries. Ahmed Ben Bella emerged from French prison in 1962 to deftly seize the reins of power and consolidate control in his position as President. An expert at power manipulation and ruling by fiat, Ben Bella showed little aptitude for nation-building, and the state’s problems continued to multiply (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 30).

Ben Bella’s divisive tenure as President was cut short by a coup d’état by the military only three years after the country acquired independence. Led by the former Defense Minister turned President Houari Boumediene, the Army, known as le pouvoir, emerged as the “heir to Algeria’s long independence struggle against France” and the strongest and most privileged institution in the country (Arieff “Algeria: Current Issues” xi). When Boumediene died in 1978, Chadli Bendjedid, his Defense Minister and a former Colonel, was installed by the military as President. Algeria continued
to operate under some form of military rule in concert with the FLN—the only legal political party—from that point forward.

The United States was a distant and largely indifferent power. The Congressional Research Service maintained that Algerians had “fond memories of President Kennedy’s support for their independence” (Arieff Algeria: Current Issues 14). Nonetheless, these sentiments soon gave way to Cold War rivalries and Arab-Israeli geopolitical realities. Even prior to the 1965 coup, the Soviets had made inroads with the key Algerian powerbroker as six hundred Algerian officers, cadets, and technicians were sent to Communist countries for training; the Soviets provided nearly one hundred tanks, armored personnel carriers, and armored cars; and an estimated 400 Soviet advisors and technicians were deployed to Algeria. While appreciative of Soviet assistance, the colonial experience imbued a strong independent streak; therefore, Algiers was unwilling to allow any foreign bases on its soil (Arieff Algeria: Current Issues 2). In contrast, the United States did virtually nothing to develop influence with the Algerian military during this formative period (United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 41). Algiers viewed itself as part of the Third World “exploited” camp and the United States as being an oppressive power in the “industrial” camp (Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 2). Algiers formally broke diplomatic relations with the United States after the 1967 Six Day War (Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 8).

Throughout the 1970s, Algiers pursued its brand of “revolutionary socialism” in its foreign policy, relishing its role as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement—including hosting its summit in 1973—and as a widely-recognized symbol of national liberation (Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 1-3). The colonial experience and successful struggle for independence continued to be a strong part of Algeria’s political identity and national narrative (Arieff Algeria:}
Current Issues 2). With the problems of social and political cohesion that emerged following independence, this identity defined the young country.

Its success against France earned the country revolutionary credentials that it guided its approach to international politics. This included support for other “national liberation and revolutionary” movements sometimes considered terrorists by the West, particularly the Viet Cong, Palestinian militants, anti-colonial movements in Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea, as well as the Black Panthers in the United States (Department of State “Boumediene Visit” 3-21). It viewed these issues through the lens of its national liberation experience. In some cases, like the Palestinian movement, Algiers shared its training and expertise, although its support was not unconditional, as its condemnation of some Palestinian attacks demonstrated (Department of State “Boumediene Visit” -21).

Islamists were among the earliest forces to resist French colonialism in large part because they believed it corrupted Islam (Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis 4). They fought alongside the FLN against the French, but found themselves marginalized in the post-independence Algeria (Harmon 13, United States Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State “Political Dynamics” 1). In a country where 99% of the population is Sunni, Islam has long been part of Algeria’s social fabric and national identity. It is recognized as the official state religion. Post-independence, the government’s approach to Islam was to regulate it through state control, measures like building public mosques and paying imams’ salaries (Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis 5).

Dissatisfied with the government-sanctioned offerings at public mosques, informal private mosques sprouted up in apartments, garages, backrooms, and warehouses. They tended to offer a more radical and reformist message that appealed to the young and alienated who saw Islamist revivals emerging elsewhere. Gradually this orientation seeped into the public mosques and entered the mainstream. A more radical, armed Islamist group opposing the state emerged as early
as 1982 and was quickly quashed by the Army. The government tried unsuccessfully to outflank Islamists by restricting women’s rights and then tried to placate them by introducing language on the Islamic nature of the Algerian state and society in the 1989 Constitutional referendum (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues* 2-3).

### 10.3 The Unraveling

The government’s appeasement efforts were insufficient to stem the tide of dissatisfaction after decades of one-party FLN rule and Army-produced leaders. The ardor of the FLN’s revolutionary credentials had diminished at home, and its revolutionary legacy was increasingly relevant to its stances on the emerging religious conflicts. Most notably, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the “revolutionary”—and Soviet-backed—Algerian Government did not encourage Algerians to participate in the jihad. Nonetheless, by conservative estimates, a few thousand Algerians defied their government and flocked to Pakistan to join the fight (Filiu “The Local” 215; Mekhennet et al). In fact, Algerians were one of the largest contingents to train at the bin Laden-sponsored camp in Afghanistan (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 1-2). The first foreign fighter killed in the conflict was an Algerian, which earned him revered status as a martyr in jihadist circles. Like other nationalities, Algerians had their own Service Bureau-funded guesthouse in Peshawar (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 1). Algerians were part of the incipient al-Qaida leadership council at the secretive Farouk camp in Afghanistan during this period as well (Wright *The Looming Tower* 141). During the period between 1989 and 1992, Algerians continued to both flow out of Algeria to fight in Afghanistan and return home, injecting greater volatility into the situation.

Back in Algeria, for the restive Algerian youth of the 1980s—who had no memory of the war of independence and suffered from chronic unemployment and underemployment—Islamism offered an appealing alternative to the corrupt FLN-dominated system. In 1988, their frustration
overflowed into massive food riots and strikes until the military stepped in to quell the unrest. Soon thereafter, President Bendjedid initiated political and economic liberalization efforts, which enabled—for the first time in the country's history—a political challenger to the FLN to emerge. In 1989, the year Bendjedid put a new Constitution to a referendum and the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was permitted to create a legal political party in Algeria. It was a major breakthrough in political participation in the one-party state.

The FIS was a broad and loose coalition of various Islamist factions and agendas. Collectively, it was better organized and had broader appeal than any other opposition element (Arieff Algeria: Current Issues 3). The FIS ran in the local elections in 1990 and won thirty-two of the forty-eight regional assemblies and fifty-five percent of the 1541 municipal councils, dwarfing the FLN, which won only fourteen regional assemblies and thirty-two percent of municipal councils, despite its institutionalized advantage. To what extent this was a genuine reflection of the population's desire for an Islamic state ruled by sharia as advocated by the FIS or a protest vote against the FLN was impossible to discern (Mark 6). The Islamists had garnered a devoted following at the universities and through their informal, unregulated mosques. The FIS gained further popularity through providing basic services and small acts such as collecting trash during a strike—a task that few could imagine the pampered FLN elite deigning to do.

Then in the first round of parliamentary elections in December 1991, the FIS won 188 of 430 seats while the FLN won only fifteen. The FIS was poised to win a veto-proof majority in the second round in 1992. Before that could happen, the Army, which had watched the FIS’s rise warily, imposed a state of emergency. The Army forced President Bendjedid to resign and brought a FLN war hero, Mohamed Bordia, back from exile in Morocco to be its front man and President. The scheduled elections were cancelled, and the 1991 election results nulled. The FIS was declared
illegal and massive arrests followed. Thousands of Islamists were detained in makeshift facilities in the Sahara desert (Harmon 14; United States Congress Senate *The Battle Looms* 2).

Even prior to the electoral breakdown, the FIS did not represent all Islamists in Algeria and the party housed an array of ideological tendencies. From the outset, hardliners objected to the FIS's decision to participate in politics. Some denounced the democratic process as fundamentally un-Islamic and maintained that an Islamic state must be imposed because God alone should legislate, not the people. Others who opposed the FIS strategy believed that an Islamic state simply could not be achieved through the corrupt Algerian political system. These sentiments were initially marginalized by the FIS's popularity and electoral success. Still, some agitated for an armed confrontation, even when the FIS appeared poised to take over the government through elections. For example, militants attacked a border post in Gummer in November 1991. Recognizing the danger such acts posed to its chances of gaining power, FIS quickly condemned the attack (Hafez 574). When the FIS strategy had clearly failed, the forces that held the coalition together and largely kept extremists in line quickly gave way. They seized the opportunity to confront with the state. Algeria quickly became the premiere jihad against an apostate regime—a theatre where the idea of a Western-touted democracy was exposed as a farce and where Islamists appeared poised to seize the state (Hafez 574).

Algerian Afghans were an influential force in the hardliner camp. The legitimacy of FIS's participation in the elections had been debated extensively in Peshawar and was a source of bitter disagreements. The Algerians in Peshawar eventually divided into two separate guesthouses, largely based on their position on this issue. Those that supported FIS became the minority, a shift that accelerated when the electoral results in Algeria were voided (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 46-8). Hardliners convened meetings, which included Algerians close to bin Laden, in Peshawar to prepare for an armed confrontation at home (Botha 35). Emboldened by the nearly simultaneous
Soviet defeat, they were confident in their Allah-ordained mandate to topple the apostate Algerian Government. When they returned home, they flaunted their mujahidin credentials by adopting Afghan-style dress (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 2).

With the cancellation of the elections and the mass arrests of FIS supporters, the hardliners who had opposed the FIS’s electoral strategy felt vindicated. The FIS—at least what remained of it—initially resisted the use of violence. It preferred to exert political pressure, challenging the legitimacy of the coup and demanding a resumption of the electoral process. In doing so, it ceded the armed campaign to the more extreme elements who did not hesitate to pick up their weapons (Hafez 576).

Various armed factions commenced attacking the state with only loose coordination among them (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 3). They were not accountable to the FIS or acting at its behest; much of its leadership was in prison, in exile or in hiding. Then in October 1992, militant commanders gathered to better coordinate their actions and appeared ready to unite behind the FIS. However, the Army learned of the meeting and launched a surprise raid, killing at least one leader and several other militants. This event sowed divisions within the insurgency as well as suspicions of infiltration that would continue to dog the insurgency in the years to come (Hafez 575).

The insurgent factions eventually coalesced into two main organizations that dominated the insurgency until the late 1990s. The two groups formed and acted as much in opposition to one another as against the state. The GIA soon emerged as the most powerful—and ruthless—force in the insurgency. Formed in 1992, it was a loose federation of militant commanders who divided their fiefdoms into nine zones. Arab Afghans played a prominent role in the GIA—a fact that was regularly highlighted in its propaganda—and they were influenced by the ideas of EIJ and others in Pakistan who argued that FIS’s “Muslim Brotherhood”-esque approach of Islamist participation in
the political process was heretical (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 42-5). But there was also a strong local core that was well acquainted with the local terrain and had more contacts within Algeria than their mujahidin brethren who had been overseas for years (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 69).

The GIA believed that jihad was the only acceptable means to establish an Islamic state in Algeria. It was not, as sometimes portrayed, an armed wing of the FIS and did not advocate a return to the electoral process that had granted the FIS considerable political power. The GIA did not invoke the cancelled elections or will of the people to justify its violence. It considered the elections un-Islamic and FIS’s participation to be a deviation from the correct path. The group’s mission was to forcibly capture the state and impose sharia. According to its rigid ideology, reconciliation was not an option; its enemies were apostates and infidels, and the only acceptable punishment for apostasy was death (Hafez 584).

By the end of 1992, the FIS realized it must counterbalance the GIA by forming its own armed wing. As of early 1993, the FIS remained ambivalent about the need for violence against the Algerian Government, though it made references to the need for a “political jihad” (Hafez 576). By the time its armed wing—the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS)—was functional, the GIA had already established itself as the predominant force in the insurgency. The FIS belatedly realized that its popular mandate from the elections did not confer upon it the leadership mantle in the insurgency. It lost precious ground to the GIA by delaying its entry into combat and never regained its pre-electoral position of primacy. In contrast to the GIA, the AIS maintained that jihad was a means, but not the only means, to achieving the Islamic state that had been denied by the Army’s takeover, and it did not rule out a negotiated, political solution (Hafez 576). The AIS justified its violence as a reaction to the Algerian Government’s decision to subvert the will of the people and framed its violence as a defense against the government’s onslaught. While the AIS sought to stem the GIA’s
influence, it did not seek a confrontation with its rival and organized its forces to avoid directly challenging the GIA (Hafez 580).

Algeria became one of the premiere post-Afghanistan jihadi hotspots. Yet the insurgency remained almost exclusively Algerian with a few exceptions. In early 1993, the LIFG first deployed members to Algeria to link up with the resistance. At that point, these emissaries were not sent specifically through the GIA because the insurgency remained fractured, and the GIA had not yet consolidated its position. This initial effort produced limited ties, but the LIFG remained interested in developing connections (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 84).

Up until 1993, most of the violence occurred directly between security forces and insurgents. As the GIA grew steadily in 1993 and 1994 and faced both better-organized competition and a determined adversary, its definition of the enemy expanded beyond the military and security services to civil servants, intellectuals, journalists, foreigners, and its competitors. The AIS selected targets based on a more narrowly-defined criterion, judging entities “guilt” by the degree of direct support they provided to the regime in repressing Islamists. The FIS/AIS vocally criticized the GIA’s attacks, including its targeting foreigners, and bemoaned the impact such attacks had on the reputation of the Islamists at home and abroad. Undeterred, the GIA did not re-evaluate its direction, and its list of enemies continued to grow (Hafez 584).

By 1994, the GIA was the unequivocal leader of the insurgency. On May 13, 1994, the remaining armed factions, with the exception of AIS and a few holdouts, met and decided to unify under the GIA, including several disenfranchised FIS figures. This did not equate to greater command and control, as the conditions in Algeria did not permit regular consultation or communication. The unification declaration was aimed more at its AIS/FIS rivals than the regime or the population. The GIA intended to silence criticism of its methods by its rival and de-legitimize ongoing efforts to initiate negotiations to resolve the conflict. The declaration contained the
following points, which GIA had previously espoused, but which now had more weight given its position of authority within the Islamist insurgency: “1) To abide by the Quran, the sunna, and the salafist tradition; 2) No dialogue, no cease-fire, no reconciliation and no security and guarantee with the apostate regime; 3) Jihad is an Islamic imperative until judgment day; 4) The GIA is the only legitimate organizational framework for jihad in Algeria; 5) All holy fighters must join the GIA” (qtd. in Hafez 577).

Soon thereafter, the GIA used its newfound authority to impose Islamic laws on the population. This included outlawing mixed sex swimming facilities and tour groups. People were forbidden from supporting the government by paying taxes, adhering to customs regulations, and even attending government schools. It warned schools were subject to attack. Even primary schools were at risk, if the female teachers were not veiled (“Shades of Extremism”).

The GIA retained the connections forged with by its Arab Afghans members, particularly with other groups in the region and with significant presences in Sudan and London. Now that GIA had solidified its position, others were eager to collaborate. Of these ties, the strongest was with the LIFG, which was taking a keen interest in events in Algeria. The LIFG was not yet operational and still in the early stages of setting up covert, sleeper cells throughout Libya. Both groups emerged in part out of the anti-Soviet jihad, Afghanistan-based training facilities, and the accompanying Peshawar experience. One former LIFG member described the close relationship between the two groups as “normal,” in light of the trust that developed during these experiences, their common identities as Arab Afghans, their shared ideology, and the accompanying plethora of cross-organizational personal relationships. In his words “[w]e had contact with dozens of them in Afghanistan.... Most of them had a reputation for their love of jihad and spirit of self-sacrifice; if they were typical of the mujahidin in Algeria, then our impression of the GIA was a good one” (qtd. in Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 54-5).
At first glance, it appears as though the LIFG was operating largely out of ideological solidarity. Yet the LIFG member went on to explain other motives at work:

We could not ignore what was happening there. Algeria was of vital strategic importance to our own plans. We could have used it as a stepping stone from Afghanistan back to Libya. Military strategists talk about ‘leapfrogging’; if you had a military force in Afghanistan, you needed it to ‘leapfrog’ to the Algerian border with Libya. The alternative would mean leaving that force to stand idle in Afghanistan and rust (qtd. in Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 55).

Thus a relationship with the GIA also fulfilled—or more accurately, appeared to have the potential to fulfill—an organizational need for the LIFG as ways to infiltrate into Libya. While there was a sense of identity affinity and solidarity, the LIFG saw organizational utility as well.

The LIFG prepared to send a delegation to Algeria in 1994. The visit was arranged directly with the GIA through the groups’ representatives in Sudan, another instance of the haven in Sudan offering an ideal forum for groups to interact (Tawil "Brothers in Arms” 84-5). The LIFG’s delegation was headed by one of its senior founding leaders, an individual who also served on the group’s shura council, and was well-known for his contribution to the anti-Soviet jihad, including running a base in Jalalabad that was named in his honor (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 85). In other words, he was above reproach in terms of his jihadist credentials. The LIFG emissaries spent six months learning about the situation in Algeria and how the GIA was conducting its campaign. They met with GIA’s leader at the time, an Algerian Afghan named Cherif Gousmi and with one of his lieutenants, Djamal Zitouni, who was introduced as the head of GIA’s death squad (Tawil "Brothers in Arms” 85).

The Libyans came away with a mixed view of the GIA and the situation in Algeria. They were unimpressed with the GIA’s leaders, who they viewed as disorganized and unsophisticated. Coupled with the group’s lack of religious grounding and expertise, the LIFG representatives presciently observed that the GIA had serious structural flaws. But they could not help being impressed with the sheer manpower that the group commanded, and it appeared to them that the GIA could
overthrow the state (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 85). The latter potential outweighed the former reservations, and the LIFG elected to send another delegation to Algeria.

This delegation was different than those that preceded it. Rather than attempting to influence or correct the problematic leadership or theological flaws that had been identified, the LIFG decided to work with the GIA’s strength, its military might. The delegation consisted of mid-level, but combat-hardened, trained, and respected LIFG fighters with experience in Afghanistan. They were sent directly into areas where fighting was underway to bolster the GIA’s guerilla capability (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 86). However, with the exception of an early message that one of them had been injured in a battle with the Algerian Army, there was conspicuous silence from the LIFG fighters. They simply disappeared (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 86).

When GIA leader Gousmi was killed in an ambush in September 1994, the lieutenant of the “death squad” that the LIFG representatives had met months earlier, Djamal Zitouni, ascended to the top spot. His fierce reputation was based on his audacious attacks, including against the French Embassy in Algiers and a Coast Guard facility. He headed the unit responsible for guarding the emir, considered the most capable operatives in the group, despite the turnover in the top spot (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 128). But Zitouni was a hardliner, even by GIA’s standards, and he would live up to his title.

Zitouni was the GIA’s fifth emir in just two years. Algiers relentlessly—and successfully—targeted GIA leadership. Each succession tested the group’s cohesion, fomenting instability and internal strife. The constant change of leadership coupled with the group’s dispersal and inability to regularly communicate also meant that the GIA was unable to build a stable organizational culture, frames or routines. Zitouni was not the unanimous choice and some elements within the GIA attempted unsuccessfully to subvert his appointment. Zitouni, already suspicious by temperament,
grew paranoid of anyone who was not completely loyal to his leadership and ruled the group with an iron fist (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9-10).

Under Zitouni’s leadership, the GIA expanded its war and increased its targeting of fellow Islamists on both its right and its left. It targeted the FIS and AIS for being too accommodating, as well as a group of Takfir wal-Hijrap for undertaking innovations that the GIA deemed “un-Islamic” (Hafez 588). Essentially, any Islamists not part of GIA were considered enemies. GIA stepped up its efforts against FIS in particular because it suspected that the regime’s decision to release the FIS’s two top leaders in September 1994 was an indication of an impending peace deal. The AIS fired back rhetorically at GIA, in an effort to undermine the religious legitimacy of its violence against fellow Muslims, which was one of the very areas the LIFG had identified the GIA as weak.

It is known in our religion that no Islamic group, in any era or land, is permitted to declare itself the Islamic group [and] whoever leaves it is excommunicated and to be punished. This is permitted only to the Great Imam after garnering the allegiance of the Muslims in general. Whoever says otherwise must prove it [by reference to] the Book, the sunna and the righteous forefathers (qtd. in Hafez 579).

While AIS’s concerns resonated with an increasing number of people, this argument fell on GIA’s deaf ears. Undeterred, Zitouni directed his fighters to eliminate the AIS at all costs. The insurgency devolved into a civil war as the Islamist competitors fought one another with as much ferocity as they fought the government. The Algerian population was stuck in the cross fire. Within GIA, there was internecine conflict as Zitouni sought to eliminate any potential rivals and took lethal action at any indication of disloyalty by his followers or the Algerian people. The government, unable or unwilling to defend much of the population, began arming civilian “self-defense forces” to protect themselves from militant attacks (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 8).

Choosing Sides

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*Takfir means “declaring someone to be an unbeliever”, while hijra, in this context means withdrawal from the secular world (Hafez 573).*
The tension within the Islamist insurgency was not limited to Algeria. Algerian Islamists networks abroad were activated by the events at home and aligned themselves with either the GIA or FIS/AIS. The GIA had a distinct advantage in the international jihadist realm because of its Arab Afghan connections. The competition was particularly fierce in London, nicknamed “Londonistan,” for the concentration of Islamists of all stripes congregated there. The GIA gained favor with the London-based Islamist media publication *al-Ansar* where well-known jihadist strategist Abu Musab al-Suri worked (Wright *The Looming Tower*191). The government-controlled press in Saudi Arabia favored GIA—in part to punish the FIS for its pro-Iraq stance during the 1991 Gulf War—and published its statements and interceded with European countries to prevent extraditions to Algeria (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Situation Update* 5-6). Between the government censorship on the media and the Islamists threats, attacks, and assassinations of journalists, the media in Algeria was strangled, and thus sympathetic press was a coveted asset.

The rivals clashed in Sudan, where both took advantage of Khartoum’s open door policy in the early 1990s. Algiers broke diplomatic relations with Khartoum in 1993 in protest (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Situation Update* 5). The GIA had an advantage over the FIS in terms of access to bin Laden’s treasury for two, largely affinity-based, reasons. First, the nascent Al-Qaeda viewed the FIS’s participation in democratic elections to have been a dubious undertaking and condemned its advocacy of a political solution to the conflict, whereas the GIA was fully committed to jihad (Wright *The Looming Tower* 189). Second, al-Qaeda had more affinity and connections with the GIA based on their shared experience in the anti-Soviet jihad. The GIA had been led by Arab Afghans, including Jafar al-Afghani and Cheri Gousmi, which bolstered its reputation with international jihadists (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 7). Some fellow Arab Afghans on the jihad circuit went to Algeria to fight, though foreign fighters were not a major factor in the insurgency. Algerian jihadists continued
to display a degree of xenophobia and nationalism that was not welcoming to foreigners. In addition, Algeria had to compete with other jihadi conflict zones for such resources.

Bin Laden sought to influence events in Algeria the way he did with numerous other conflicts during that period—by providing money, expertise and guidance, both of which he had in abundance (Wright *The Looming Tower* 189). He deployed an Algerian lieutenant to consult with GIA and provided it with an estimated $40,000. The CIA reported that bin Laden continued funding Algerian militants up until early 1996 (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Cooperation” 1-2). An al-Qaida defector from this period described the GIA as an al-Qaida affiliate, meaning it had a standing representative within al-Qaida’s *shura* council in Sudan (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 5). Unlike EIJ, al-Qaida did not have to persuade GIA to adopt a broader anti-Western agenda, though these shared positions were not a product of al-Qaida influence. Events in Algeria appeared so promising to fellow jihadists that bin Laden even explored re-locating there in 1994, according to an Algerian militant involved in the discussions. However, Algerian jihadists were not eager to host the Saudi financier and declined his request (Mekhennet et al.).

The GIA matched its anti-Western rhetoric with actions to an extent that surpassed al-Qaida and its other allies during that period. In 1993, the GIA issued an edict that all foreigners must leave Algeria and soon followed up these threats with actions designed to terrorize those who elected to stay. Two French surveyors were the first foreigners killed at the end of 1993. The GIA attackers slit their throats, a tactic that became so prevalent in the conflict that it was known as the “Algerian smile.” In less than a year, more than fifty foreigners were killed—nearly all Europeans—and many more had heeded the warning to depart the country (“Shades of Extremism”).

Upon closer examination, the GIA’s international orientation had a distinctively Algerian quality to it. Rather than focusing on the United States or Israel, the Algerian jihadists saw their
country's former colonizer, France, as the most important "far enemy" propping up the apostate
regime. As early as 1992, the FIS declared:

Crusader France and some of its leaders of unbelief and atheism are working to encircle the
FIS leaders who are abroad to impose a political blockade on the voices calling for the right
to the Umma and the building of an Islamic state on Algerian soil…. Atheist France is not
content with its support for the just junta; it has even gone so far as to supply it with
sophisticated military materiel such as night combat helicopters and chemical bombs which
exterminate living things without destroying buildings (Gunaratna 162).

An Algerian fighting in Bosnia echoed this sentiment, declaring France as the ultimate enemy, even
as he risked his life to fight in a jihad elsewhere (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 24).

Their ire was not without basis. Paris took a hard line against Islamists of all stripes and
openly supported Algiers. In 1993, when most governments were taking a circumspect approach to
the cancelled elections and evolving conflict, Paris increased its military assistance and other aid to
the Algerian regime. It denied visas to known and suspected Islamists, arrested FIS supporters
resident in France, disrupted France-based support networks, and encouraged other European
countries to be less lenient with Algerian exiles (Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis: Situation Update 5). In
1994, after three French gendarmerie and two consular officials in Algeria were killed, the French
government conducted massive sweeps in Paris, arresting 150 Algerians and detaining dozens
more in interim facilities. “Random” checkpoints were set up in predominantly Algerian
neighborhoods, invoking comparisons to Algerians' treatment in France during the Algerian
independence war. Paris did not make distinctions among the various Islamists and its actions often
hurt the FIS more than the culprit, the GIA ("Déjà vu").

The United States, on the other hand, was a distant secondary concern, at best. Americans
were largely spared in the GIA's killing spree against foreigners, though there were few present in
country. The United States took a tepid and distant stance on events in Algeria—encouraging
negotiated settlements and dialogue, while condemning both sides for terrorist violence and human
rights abuses—and was sometimes at odds with Paris's uncompromising anti-Islamist stance
(United States Confessional Senate “The Battle Looms” 1-2). Some FIS leaders took refuge in the United States, much to the chagrin of both Algiers and Paris. Yet Washington’s role was largely as a bystander (“Shades of Extremism”).

*Exporting Terror*

Under Zitouni’s reign, violence not only escalated within Algeria, the GIA exported its terrorist campaign to its France. It hijacked an Air France plane departing Algiers for Paris on Christmas Day in 1994, intending to crash it into France’s most well-known symbol, the Eiffel Tower. If it had been successful, this would have been the group’s first suicide operation, and it would have joined EIJ as one of the only Sunni groups to conduct such an attack to date. However, the plot was not fully formed or at least was open to improvisation as the would-be suicide hijackers offered to exchange the passengers for EIG’s theologian, the Blind Sheikh, who had been recently arrested in the United States. The GIA later boasted that “in calling for the release of Dr. Omar Abdel Rahman... we showed the main principles of Islam adopted by GIA in aiding Muslims everywhere and in carrying the message of Jihad to the whole world,” a statement very much in line with al-Qaida’s developing ideology (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 7). The hijackers demanded a stop in Marseilles in order to refuel—for reasons that are not entirely clear given that their target was nearby Paris—during which French commandos raided the plane and killed the four attackers.

As was typical in the propaganda war that obscured events in Algeria during that time, both sides claimed to have infiltrated their enemy. The GIA alluded to the role of inside assistance in facilitating its access to the plane; the attackers gained entry to the plane by driving up to it on the tarmac in Algiers and impersonating security officials. For its part, there were murmurings that the Algerian Government learned of the plot through an informant, who then planted the idea of stopping in Marseilles for fuel, thereby giving the French an opportunity to conduct the raid. While this claim may appear outlandish, an internal GIA inquiry into why the operation failed did question
why the attackers made the stop “under the reason of taking on more fuel, although the plane had enough fuel” (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 7).

As with most such accusations, the veracity of these specific allegations is impossible to verify. Yet they reflect the overall environment in Algeria where infiltration was believed to be pervasive on both sides, which added to the sense of paranoia, suspicions, and, ultimately, the brutality of the conflict. *The Economist* put it plainly when it assessed that while the Algerian security forces commanded 200,000 men, it trusted only 40,000 of them (“A Hand Grenade in Mid-flight”). This sentiment was not entirely misplaced; the militant groups had a number of former military officers in high-profile and senior positions. There was also a widespread perception that the Algerian services had infiltrated the militant groups and even encouraged their excesses as a way to discredit them with the population (Harmon 12-15).

After the disrupted hijacking, Zitouni publicly called for jihad against France. Jihad was justified, he declared, based on Paris’s support for the illegitimate Algerian regime. Its violent campaign in France was concentrated in the period from July to November 1995. Its first attack was the controversial assassination of a founding FIS leader, an 85 year old sheikh (Filiu “The Local” 220). The GIA then conducted three bombings of metro stations in Paris (Filiu “The Local” 220). It was ahead of al-Qaida in terms of targeting its far enemy on its own soil. The group appeared to be an ideal al-Qaida partner and went beyond what al-Qaida’s other allies were in terms of expanding their agenda beyond national-level government.

### 10.4 The GIA’s Identity and Organizational Characteristics

From an early point, the GIA and al-Qaida had a solid basis for identity affinity. However, aspects of GIA’s identity were beginning to shift in ways that were disadvantageous to the relationship. In addition, its growing reputation for being infiltrated by the Algerian services
detracted from its ability to develop trust with allies and fostered internal paranoia that created a dysfunctional organizational culture. The constant leadership turnover also created a constant state of flux in terms of the group's organizational dynamics.

The GIA’s Ideology and Narrative

The GIA and al-Qaida shared a number of identity features, including a Salafist jihadist ideological orientation. Their narratives overlapped significantly. Both agreed that jihad was the only way to achieve their aims. Though the GIA was focused on Algeria, it also espoused—and acted on—far-reaching, anti-West sentiments, including advocating for the need to battle the far enemy that propped up the near enemy. It conceptualized the far enemy differently than al-Qaida, but the underlying rationale was similar. While bin Laden was leery of getting bogged down in near enemy battles—as was occurring concurrently in Egypt—the prospect for a jihadist takeover in Algeria appeared much more promising.

However, the GIA’s ideological disposition was far more rigid than even other al-Qaida and other Sunni jihadist groups. Some of the affinity requirements were the same, such as GIA’s insistence that jihad was the only means for change. Zawahiri was concurrently making a similar argument in his vitriol against the Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Qaida’s affinity parameters also only included fellow Sunni jihadist organizations as well. But GIA added another layer of rigidity that soon prevented it from having any allies as affinity and trust became impossible.

The GIA’s Ethnic Identity

The GIA had a strong Algerian nationalist identity. This had both conscious and unconscious manifestations. It created a tendency towards xenophobia, even to the exclusion of fellow Islamists. Beyond its narrow nationalist identity, the group shared a broader Arab identity with al-Qaida, though this was not particularly salient for GIA. On the other hand, the Arab identity was an alternative to Algeria’s French heritage and the corresponding influences, such as language.
The GIA's Targets and Tactics

The GIA shared enemies with al-Qaida and the subset of groups that grew out of the Soviet mujahidin pool. This was closely related to the basis of their ideological affinity. They all agreed in principle that the United States, Israel, and Russia were enemies as were other apostate regimes in the Middle East, though most did not take actions on those sentiments beyond their parochial goals. Other Sunni jihadi groups supported the GIA's cause ideologically and sometimes with resources, but they did not include Algerian or French targets in their activities. Therefore, specific shared enemies were not particularly salient for most dyads involving the GIA, though there was a common overarching sense of the enemies responsible for oppressing Muslims.

The GIA was years ahead of al-Qaida in its embrace of mass casualty attacks against civilians in the West, striking targets such as passenger planes and mass transit facilities. The GIA had an expansive—and growing—definition of the enemy, which made its allies increasingly uneasy because of its takfiri tendencies. It included the Algerian Government and anyone who supported it. The GIA's definition was broad, and it constantly warned the Algerian people of acts that could be considered supporting the Algerian Government. The GIA divided the world dichotomously: those supporting the group or against it. As discussed, this included targeting anyone, including fellow Islamist militants, who were not a part of the GIA. This stark black and white view of the world created increasing discomfort among its peers and supporters, particularly within al-Qaida as bin Laden was intent on promoting unity among Sunni jihadi.

The GIA's Organizational Characteristics and Relationships

The GIA was a highly insular organization and grew more so over time. It was fiercely protective of its independence from outsiders. Yet because of the environment in Algeria, it was also decentralized with local commanders operating with a degree of autonomy. A shura council serving as the overall governing body of the organization, but the emir position held a great deal of
unchecked authority. It did not have a social service or political component. It was sizeable, more like EIG, in that respect, without the same kind of support base within the population.

The GIA initially had relationships with al-Qaida as well as the other groups with these identity characteristics: Salafist jihadi ideologies, narratives condemning apostate regimes and their infidel supporters in the West, an Arab identity, and roots in the anti-Soviet jihad. Algerians fighting in Bosnia and elsewhere, co-located in Sudan, and involved in support networks in Europe reinforced the ties between al-Qaida and the GIA. But they too were growing disconnected from events in Algiers and the group.

Few of GIA’s relationships reached the threshold of an alliance, let alone resulted in any degree of inter-dependence. The groups that had attempted to engage the GIA in cooperation, like bin Laden sending funds and LIFG deploying personnel, did not find that GIA was responsive or interested in reciprocating. Despite providing significant funds, GIA did not welcome bin Laden to come to Algeria. Likewise, the LIFG had sent valued personnel who prompting appeared to have gone missing. Though many indicators suggested that GIA should have been an ideal ally to al-Qaida and others, it was proving to be a liability.

10.4 The Lost Opportunity

Rather than bringing the GIA closer to al-Qaida, the GIA’s expansion into France in 1994 was symptomatic of a broader escalation of violence that was convalescing out of control and becoming unconnected to any religious or political rationale. Fiercely independent, the GIA remained uninterested in guidance from fellow jihadist organizations, which contributed to outsiders’ inability to halt its downward spiral. Zitouni’s concerns about internal loyalty and infiltrations led to frequent purges of any suspected collaborators. This was also a convenient pretext to discredit rivals or challengers. For example, concerns that the FIS was attempting to infiltrate the GIA led to
the killing and expulsion of many commanders with previous FIS affiliations, including two prominent former FIS leaders (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9; Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 119). GIA commanders begin to defect—inevitably setting off another cycle of purges—claiming that the group was deviating from its path and killing innocents, but also attempting to avoid becoming the next target of Zitouni’s latest witch hunt. At the beginning of 1996, the FIS and AIS publicly accused the GIA of killing 140 of its supporters; the GIA responded by reiterating its call for all-out war against AIS.

Zitouni’s relentless targeting of FIS/AIS or any Islamist element that would not subordinate itself to the GIA caused increasingly discomfort abroad (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 119). Islamist networks abroad, including Europe and Sudan, were uninterested in supporting what had become an intra-Islamist conflict. Support for GIA discernibly waned. In addition, the silence from the delegation of LIFG fighters deployed to assist the GIA had grown ominously deafening, and their leaders were determined to find out what had happened to them (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 87).

The GIA’s posture towards the Algerian population simultaneously became intransigent and hostile. In 1995, Algiers finally held another election, the first since the cancelled elections. It was by no means free and fair, but the level of public participation in the election of a military leader was sufficient to infuriate the GIA and violence spiked again. The group issued a declaration ordering women to leave husbands who were part of the government. By late 1995, the GIA was responsible for the death of over 200 school teachers and more than 100 political leaders, including clerics, who it deemed heretics (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 5). In addition, clashes between AIS and GIA killed over sixty people that year as well. Zitouni’s counter-productive actions persuaded some that he was an Algerian Government asset.

Allied organizations and influential jihadists attempted to intercede, to no avail. The GIA was isolated and was unwilling to heed outside counsel. Zitouni rebuffed attempts to moderate his
behavior responded to these overtures by issuing a decree that no foreigners could join the GIA. He turned against long-time supporters, including cancelling a visit of Abu Musab al-Suri, the prominent London-based jihadist thinker who had faithfully promoted the GIA in *al-Ansar*. Al-Suri found it progressively more difficult to justify the GIA’s behavior. Like the others who expressed concerns, al-Suri was not opposed to GIA’s attacks in France, but he was dismayed by its actions against fellow Islamists and the Algerian population (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 26).

Meanwhile, the LIFG persisted in its efforts to learn the fate of its men in Algeria, and enlisted al-Qaida’s assistance. A Libyan al-Qaida member and recognized religious authority among jihadists, Atiyah al-Rahman, joined two LIFG leaders for a trip to Algeria to confront the GIA about the missing fighters. They received no answers, and found that the previous delegation’s fears about the inadequacy of the GIA’s leadership and theological understanding had been realized. The GIA’s shaky religious foundation had led the group astray, the delegation reported back to their leaders in invisible ink, a clear sign to the recipients that the GIA was not to be trusted (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 87). Undoubtedly, this experience shaped Atiyah’s views of Algeria and informed his cautioning of Zarqawi more than ten years later against following in the GIA’s footsteps, as discussed in Chapter 8.

Tensions with the GIA flared elsewhere, including in Sudan where arguments erupted directly between the GIA’s representatives and bin Laden (Filiu “The Local” 219). The GIA’s personnel in Khartoum had recently changed to appease Zitouni’s ever-present concerns about loyalty, and the new representatives shared his suspicions about outside influence. Bin Laden was exploring the possibility of opening training facilities in Algeria, perhaps as a way help correct the downward spiral that was increasingly evident to all. Bin Laden felt that the support he had provided the GIA should be sufficient for it to honor his request. However, the expiration date on
his assistance had passed, and the GIA rejected bin Laden’s proposal, bristling at offers with “strings attached” (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 95-6).

The GIA was also intent on ensuring that challengers and rivals did not benefit from allies. Zitouni dispatched envoys to Sudan to issue a warning to all resident militant groups not to support any other Algerian factions or try to contribute to the Algerian cause through any other entity (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 96-97). When a GIA delegation sought additional funds from bin Laden, it offered bin Laden of its advice: stop coddling Islamists that did not rely solely on jihad (Wright 190). Furthermore, they warned him that they would to kill any outsiders who attempted to circumvent the GIA in Algeria (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 96-7). Bin Laden angrily withdrew his support and refused to provide any additional funds (Wright The Looming Tower 190).

Back in Algeria, the GIA continued to issue more threats and levy more demands against the population. It warned all men of military age not to leave home for extended periods; the group would presume that they left to fulfill their compulsory military duty and they would thus be considered a legitimate target. It threatened oil and gas workers because they assisted an economy that propped up an illegitimate government. In May 1996, the group kidnapped and beheaded seven French monks, despite a local commander’s previous assurances to the religious men that they could stay unmolested (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9). The outside world recoiled in horror as the conflict appeared to know no depths.

By now, the LIFG was convinced that its fighters had been slain by GIA. It began a secret campaign to undermine Zitouni by destroying the GIA’s support base outside of Algeria, particularly in London (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 111). It argued to any who would listen that the GIA had deviated Islamic law. Their causes was bolstered by the fact that the LIFG fighters who disappeared in Algeria were well-known and respected, so any attempt by GIA to impugn them was not credible (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 124). The LIFG had some success swaying influential figures, including
Abu Musab al-Suri and Abu Qatada, who had both been important advocates and sources of theological authority for GIA.

Before the denouncement of the GIA went public, the LIFG had to ensure the safety of the joint al-Qaida and LIFG delegation that was still in Algeria investigating the disappearance of the fifteen LIFG fighters. They had tried to depart Algeria only to find that the GIA would not return their passports and refused to let them leave. The three were held by the GIA’s emir for territory east of Algiers, known as zone two, Hassan Hattab, but somehow managed to escape. For a period, their status was unclear, and even GIA leaders were briefly unsure if they had been accidentally killed in a skirmish with another rival faction. But they were alive, and once they were out of harm’s way, the LIFG was determined to isolate the GIA (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 122-3).

In June 1996, the anti-GIA coalition went public. The LIFG announced it was ceasing support and assistance because GIA had “annihilated the Afghan trend” and committed “[b]reaches and violations of Sharia law” (Boudali 8; Filiu “The Local” 219; Kohlmann “Two Decades” 11). Even then, a sense of affinity remained as the LIFG went on to say “we will... [resume] supporting the Armed Islamic Group if it replaces its current leadership and changes its policy, because we know that there are good and righteous people among its ranks” (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 11). In other words, the LIFG was intent on overthrowing Zitouni, but willing to work with GIA again if he was removed.

The EIJ, Abu Musab al-Suri, and Abu Qatada likewise condemned the GIA’s “dangerous deviations” (Filiu “The Local” 219). A leading former member of the GIA, Omar Chikhi, later claimed that in response, remaining members of an al-Qaida delegation who were in country trying to advise GIA were then killed by the group as an infuriated Zitouni ordered a killing spree against defectors or anyone who questioned him (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9).
Ultimately, Zitouni made too many enemies, and the following month defectors killed him in an ambush (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9). This presented an opportunity for the GIA to rehabilitate itself both at home and mend fences with jihadists abroad. However, Zitouni had done his work all too well, alienating and killing anyone who opposed him. In the power vacuum left in his wake, only the most ruthless could rise. The GIA entered its most brutal period of violence excesses to date, and in the process, completely discredited the Algerian jihad (Kohmann “Two Decades” 9).

Antar Zouabri—the most junior member of the GIA’s shura under Zitouni—seized the leadership reins, bypassing the group’s consultative process. He had little in the way of credentials, other than his lineage as the brother of a founding member (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 9-10). He was not an Afghan-era mujahidin or an accomplished military commander, and he certainly was not a religious scholar. But he was a skilled survivor, and his bloody and destructive reign as emir of the GIA—a group that had at least seven leaders in four years—would be the group’s longest, lasting nearly six years (Botha 37).

Among the scores that Zouabri was determined to settle was the criticism levied by the LIFG. Zouabri retaliated against LIFG for its public criticism of the GIA by punishing a Libyan fighter still in Algeria. He was accused of being a spy, brutally tortured, and then killed by the GIA, sending an unambiguous signal that there would be no reconciliation between the two groups under his leadership (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 132). In his first public interview, Zouabri acknowledged the friction between LIFG and GIA and attributed the problem to the LIFG’s failure to act as true Salafists (Tawil “Brothers in Arms 133).

Zouabri continued Zitouni’s policy of imposing edicts on the Algerian people and doling out harsh penalties for infractions. The GIA banned French-language newspapers, television, cigarettes, music festivals, and beauty salons. It mandated that people pray, pay zakat, and that all women be
fully covered. It further forbade people from using government systems for justice, courts, and police, claiming that it was the only entity permitted to provide such services (Hafez 587).

Unable or unwilling to meet the GIA’s stringent standards, the besieged Algerian population became the group’s primary victim. While the GIA had already been criticized for targeting civilians, its violence became wholly indiscriminate and senseless under Zouabri. In November 1996, 85% of voters approved a ban on political parties based on religion or ethnicity and supported the retention of strong—some might credibly argue excessive—presidential powers. The government’s claim of an 80% of voter turnout was implausible, but its ability to deliver another election with a democratic veneer to the Army was undeniably skillful (“Just What the President Ordered”).

The GIA threatened anyone who participated in the elections, and it apparently believed the government’s claims about voter turnout. That same month, the GIA implemented collective punishment measures, conducting large-scale massacres of entire villages (“Algeria’s Agony”). According to one credible estimate, there were 67 such massacres between November 1996 and July 1999 (Hafez 585-6).

These massacres began as the government publicly proclaimed that all but the “remnants of terrorism” had been eliminated. The events that followed are a source of tremendous controversy. The GIA’s violent downward spiral was clear; it did not deny responsibility for the massacres. The tactics used were ghastly and included throat slitting, burning houses with the occupants inside, hacking bodies to death, and even killing babies (“Algeria’s Awful Slaughter”). There were undoubtedly human rights abuses committed by security forces and extra-judicial measures employed by the now well-armed “community self-defense forces,” called the Patriots. The massacres perpetuated a retaliatory cycle of violence (“Algeria’s Ghastly Secret.”). As a result of the absence of independent media and outside observers, there are no independent or authoritative accounts of what transpired during this unspeakably brutal era, particularly in 1997, when forty-
seven massacres of villages took place (Hafez 585-6). At the end of the day, all parties involved in the conflict were subject to intense, though completely ineffectual, international opprobrium.

The majority of the massacres occurred south of Algiers in a GIA stronghold area that became known as the “triangle of death.” This area also had a large concentration of government troops, who, at a minimum, consistently failed to protect or intercede in the killings, even when the massacres were occurring in close proximity to their barracks (“Algeria’s Ghastly Secret”). Amnesty International documented incidents when fleeing civilians were sent back into the killing field by nearby military forces (“Algeria’s Awful Slaughter”). These inexplicable lapses have been invoked as evidence that the Algerian military was, at a minimum, complicit, and or more extreme, that it was also a perpetrator.

By all accounts, the government failed to protect this population and the accusations against the military were an indicator of how thoroughly discredited both sides had come. Admittedly, punishing villages supportive of the GIA would be a tactic that fit in to the strategy of hardline elements in the Algerian Army, known as the *eradicateurs*, who opposed any form of negotiations or reconciliation with Islamists. Given the widespread perception that the GIA was heavily infiltrated by government security forces, it is difficult to explain how so many massacres took place over a span of years, including 1,000 civilians killed in a two-week period at the beginning of 1998, without any government interference (“Algeria’s Awful Slaughter”). Immune to international pressure after years of isolation and resentful of foreign interference in a “domestic” matter, Algiers bristled at any suggestions that the situation merited outside inquiry or investigation (“Algeria’s Awful Slaughter”).

The idea that the GIA would massacre entire villages of its supporters simply defied all logic and added credence to claims that it was not the only perpetrator. However, the GIA was certainly one of the primary culprits. Given its intense dissatisfaction with the support it received from the
Algerian populace, it was consistent with the group’s behavior and trajectory that it would dole out harsh punishments to a population it deemed insufficiently Islamic. GIA ordered:

> every individual in this Muslim community must, as a duty, wage battle with the tyrant, and he is not permitted to turn to them or rely on them... For the whole (Muslim) community is on call, and the whole community is called upon to join the ranks of the mujahidin (qtd. Hafez 587).

Furthermore, a religious advisor for the group made a statement in June 1997 arguing that the murder of women and children consorting with “enemies of Islam” was lawful and that the innocent among them would be admitted to Paradise. He further claimed that those who had their throats slit were “supporters of the tyrant” (qtd in Botha 37). In August, the GIA issued a public statement that “condemned the entire Muslim population of Algeria as kuffar, apostates, and hypocrites” for its lack of support for GIA’s struggle against the government. It also acknowledged committing atrocities as a consequence of the Algerian people’s departure from their faith. These statements coincided with the period of the worst massacres (Botha 34; Filiu “Could Al-Qaeda” 4).

The GIA’s actions during this period irrevocably tainted the entire Islamist insurgency in Algeria. In the fall of 1997, the AIS declared a unilateral ceasefire (Hafez 590). It was an admission of defeat, a recognition that the armed insurgency had been counterproductive and had failed to produce an Islamic state. It signaled that the group would rather surrender to the enemy and be targeted by the GIA than continue to have its name associated with the insurgency waging war against its own people. In other words, the armed campaign was a complete failure.

Even GIA’s critics in jihadist circles initially struggled to grasp that the group was perpetrating massacres of Muslim civilians. Its supporters clung to the belief that these were the apostate government’s doing, even in the face of mounting evidence to the contrary, including the group’s own admissions. Abu Hamza al-Masri, who had his share of problems with GIA’s conduct prior to this point, commented, “[n]o one at the time believed that this could be the work of any Islamic group, even the anti-Muslims themselves, they have all agreed that this is the work of the
Algerian government, trying to put people off from Islam and Islamic ideas” (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades” 10). The tone of the GIA’s August declaration was so angry and vulgar some believed—or perhaps, hoped—it was an Algerian Government propaganda ploy. But the GIA confirmed it issued the statement and all remaining reservoirs of support evaporated (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 10-1).

From 1996 to 1998, the Algerian jihadist networks abroad gravitated further away from their home country’s conflict and became more embedded in transnational networks. Many carried a residual label of being GIA simply by being Algerian, but they had lost their connection with the GIA in Algeria and no longer belonged to the organization. The GIA’s isolation was complete. While the massacres continued until 1999, the GIA faced mass defections internally and was about to be eclipsed.

*The GIA’s Alliance Behavior*

While the rupture in relationships between the GIA and al-Qaida and fellow jihadist organizations is sometimes attributed to the GIA’s massacres, the break pre-dated this stage of the violence. Prior to Zouabri’s ascension to GIA’s top position, the GIA’s relations with al-Qaida, LIFG, and EIJ had already shattered along with much of its support base in Europe. The identity and organizational culture changes during Zitouni’s reign were the primary cause of the breaks in these relationships. His internal purges and relentless targeting of alleged infiltrators and defectors, to include partner groups, created an organizational culture fundamentally incompatible with alliances. The GIA’s ideological affinity requirements grew so narrow and rigid that alliances were no longer possible. His identity violations, particularly his insistence on targeting rival Islamists, even fellow jihadists, compounded the fissures, especially for bin Laden’s project required unity. Zitouni’s counterproductive leadership style solidified perceptions that the GIA was infiltrated by the Algerian services and thus was not trustworthy. Atiyah, the senior Libyan al-Qaida leader later
recalled the situation in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, while warning him to avoid of the same pitfalls in Iraq:

[ask me whatever you like about Algeria between 1994 and 1995, when [the movement] was at the height of its power and capabilities, and was on the verge of taking over the government. The government was on the verge of a downfall at any moment. I lived through that myself, and I saw firsthand; no one told me about it. However, they destroyed themselves with their own hands, with their lack of reason, delusions, their ignoring of people, their alienation of them through oppression, deviance, and severity, coupled with a lack of kindness, sympathy, and friendliness. Their enemy did not defeat them, but rather they defeated themselves, were consumed and fell. God reigns as He commands, as the Almighty, and He controls the matter from beginning to end (“Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa’ida High Command” 10).

Zouabri’s conduct and the group’s subsequent massacres of Algerian civilians widened the schism and reinforced the perception that the group was either so heavily infiltrated that it was essentially a tool of the Algerian regime or had deviated so far from the correct path that it was a danger to the movement.

While the cessation of these relationships contributed to the GIA’s isolation, it did not have a noticeable impact the group’s capability. This is primarily because the GIA did not depend on outside organizations for its major needs. It received resources from other groups, particularly money, weapons, fighters, and unheeded advice. However, the GIA did not reciprocate or incorporate this assistance into its organizational frames and routines. The resources it acquired from other organizations did not translate into an ability to influence the GIA for two main reasons. First, allies were not offering assets that addressed GIA’s organizational learning or adaptation needs or filled gaps recognized by the group. While the funding from bin Laden was useful, the GIA had its own support networks in Europe and other means of acquiring money, so it was not dependent on his treasury. Likewise, the GIA had a large cadre of fighters, including Algerian Afghans and former military officers, so LIFG’s deployment of capable fighters was helpful, but not essential to the GIA. The absence of complementary organizational needs stunted these relationships from developing into sustaining, inter-dependent alliances.
Second, the GIA was not adept at identifying its organizational needs due to its dysfunctional culture. Its inability to establish a stable culture was in part due to the constant losses it endured, especially of leadership figures. Its culture’s intense xenophobia exacerbated this problem. Thus it was both unable and unwilling to use alliances to fulfill organizational needs. GIA’s reliance on self-reform became a major weakness as the group fell prey to two of the most detrimental tendencies terrorist organizations can experience: 1) its violence became an end unto itself, disconnected from its goals; and 2) an extreme sense of in-group identity created group think and a belief that anyone not a part of the group was an enemy. It was a destructive combination, and there were no allied organizations in a position to intervene.

The GIA’s relationships were initiated based primarily on identity affinity and, some degree, ideological solidarity. Therefore, changes in identity undermined alliance perpetuation. The LIFG explicitly accused the GIA of having “annihilated the Afghan trend,” i.e. abdicating its Arab Afghan/mujahidin roots, when it announced the cessation of the relationship. The reliance on identity affinity as a basis for a relationship helps to explain the vulnerability of these relationships. The GIA’s loci of affinity with al-Qaida and other Sunni jihadist groups were located in key nodes, which were insufficient to connect the groups in the face of identity changes.

The GIA continued to share adversaries with al-Qaida and other jihadist organizations, even in the face of others identity changes. The cessation of the relationships did not correspond with a change to their common enemies. The GIA’s definition of the enemies was continually expanding in ways that al-Qaida and others were uncomfortable with, but the common enemies remained. Thus a need to balance against a common enemy did not wane, and a change in the common enemy cannot explain the breaks in these relationships.

Similarly, immersed in the fight in Algeria, the GIA did not share a greatest threat with other organizations at the point of alliance initiation or cessation. Threat was not a central factor in
groups’ attraction to GIA as a partner and it did not have a discernible impact on GIA’s decisions. To the contrary, GIA’s sense of threat was unduly focused on fellow Islamists, a conceptualization of threat with which other groups did not share or agree.

The GIA never recovered from its downward spiral. Zouabri’s tenure lasted until 2002 when he was finally killed. The group was, by that time, a relic. It continued to terrorize the population—albeit on a much smaller scale—but had devolved into a law and order problem, not a threat to the state. The jihad in Algeria, once the most promising possibility for a jihadist takeover of a state, was discredited internationally by the GIA’s actions. Zouabri’s position at the helm until 2002 guaranteed that the GIA remained isolated. Upon his death, the GIA did not seek new alliances or repair any of the alliances severed in 1996. It simply continued its drift into irrelevancy.

10.5 Enter the GSPC

By 1998, with the AIS’s ceasefire and GIA’s descent in savagery and the accompanying defections, the violence in Algeria lost any sense of coherence or purpose (Botha 34). The movement appeared on the verge of defeat. Then a group of GIA fighters—led by Hassan Hattab, the commander of a major zone east of Algiers—split from GIA. This was a dangerous move, considering the GIA’s propensity to relentlessly target defectors. It was at least the fourth splinter that GIA had produced, but this time was different (Botha 37-8). There were scores of disenfranchised GIA militants looking to continue the fight, but no longer willing to be a part of GIA. Hattab had a desirable combination of characteristics for leadership. A former paratrooper in the Algerian Army, he had the requisite combat credentials. He became a local commander under Gousmi and then the head of the military zones east of Algiers, zone two, under Zitouni. While this credential could have been a mark against him because he was located in the east, he was far enough removed from Zitouni that he remained relatively untainted by Zitouni’s rampage. Hattab
had an openly antagonistic relationship with Zouabri—who reportedly tried to have him eliminated—which was probably part of the impetus for his decision to breakaway. This was not acknowledged by Hattab; instead the split was framed in ideological terms (Filiu “The Local” 220).

Bin Laden’s role in the formation of the GSPC is frequently cited and almost certainly over-emphasized. Bin Laden released his World Islamic Front Call in February of 1998, and the GSPC was not a signatory. The GSPC was in the process of breaking from GIA, yet it did not opt to align itself with bin Laden’s declaration. Nor is there any indication that bin Laden asked Hattab to sign, although he was searching for groups to endorse his agenda. Bin Laden did encourage defections from the GIA and contacted Hattab as well as several other GIA commanders and urged them to rehabilitate the disgraced jihad in Algeria (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 12; Botha 9). Bin Laden may have offered financial or other support to a new group if it could demonstrate better jihadist credentials, though any group with GIA origins was a risk until proven otherwise. Hattab later denied that the GSPC received assistance from al-Qaida during his tenure, though these assertions were made while he was in negotiations with the Algerian Government and thus may have been designed to influence that process (Filiu “The Local” 220). However, it is true that during Hattab’s tenure, the limited its attack to targeting the Algerian security forces, though the group engaged in broader anti-West, particularly anti-French, anti-U.S, and anti-Israeli rhetoric (Filiu “The Local” 220).

It is unclear why bin Laden contacted Hattab in particular as the two men did not appear to know one another personally. It seems unlikely that al-Qaida would have been particularly keen on promoting Hattab to the head of a new group because he was known for holding the LIFG and al-Qaida delegation hostage during a period of high tension between the GIA and outside jihadist groups (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 122-3). Moreover, the GIA commanders did not need nudging
from the Saudi financier in Afghanistan to know that the GIA was imploding, which posed a threat not only to their lives, but also imperiled the cause they had dedicated their lives to.

The GSPC gathered disenfranchised GIA commanders, taking entire GIA zones with it. Like GIA, it organized based on a nine zone structure, loosely based on the Army’s territorial divisions (Botha 46). The GSPC made its public debut on April 1999, portraying itself as a return to the GIA’s path prior to going astray, perhaps a perplexing choice given how thoroughly discredited the GIA was by that point. The GSPC claimed it was “a continuation of the Armed Islamic Group, following its ideology, before it deviated and went astray. Thus, [the GSPC] represents the genuine path that jihad has followed since its inception in Algeria” (qtd. in Kohlmann “The Local” 13). Thus the GSPC appeared mainly concerned with situating itself within the Algerian context and showed little concern for the agenda bin Laden was propagating from Afghanistan. The group focused on disassociating itself from the massacres and GIA’s excesses.

The gamble worked. GIA and AIS/FIS defectors flocked to the new organization and the GSPC quadrupled in size over the next two years to an estimated 3,000 fighters (Kohlmann “GSPC in Algeria” 13). It inherited former military members and veteran militants (Boudali 3). Former GIA networks abroad aligned with the GSPC as well, though the bonds between those in Algeria and those in Europe and Afghanistan had loosened over the preceding years of turmoil (Hunt 8).

By the time the GSPC formed, Algeria was a cautionary tale for jihadists everywhere, a portrait of failure, deviation, and misguided violence. All sides in the conflict had been isolated—the GIA most of all—but also the Algerian regime, which had gone from being a symbol of national liberation to a government known for sabotaging democracy, perpetrating massive human rights abuses, and allying with its former colonizer. While the GSPC was a welcomed change from the GIA, the insurgency had been so badly damaged that no groups sought to engage or ally with it. Prospective allies opted to take a wait and see approach after their experience with the GIA. After
all, the GSPC absorbed so much of the GIA that it was difficult to give the group a clean bill of health. Even if the GSPC’s violence was calibrated to avoid the GIA’s excesses, the allegations of infiltration could not be ignored.

*The GSPC Reduced to its Hardcore*

In 1999, former Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika ran uncontested in early elections and assumed the Presidency, with the Army’s backing. He soon demonstrated that he would not be another Army lackey and proposed a limited amnesty program, called the Civil Concord, to be decided by referendum. The plan, approved by the voters, gave amnesty to militants who had not committed murder, rape, or bombings in public places (“The Return of Uneasy Tranquility”). This created an opening to formalize the AIS’s 1997 ceasefire and bring its fighters back into society without reconciling politically with the FIS, much to its dismay. Between 1,000-1,500 AIS fighters took advantage of the amnesty. Estimates range from 5,000-8,000 total “repentees” who accepted and were eligible for the amnesty (International Crisis Group *The Civil Concord* 7). In the haze of war that hung over the preceding seven years, it was difficult to verify whether specific individuals had participated in prohibited acts, and the amnesty was criticized for its lack of accountability—both for those requesting amnesty and for the thousands of those who had “disappeared” after being detained by the security services—and for its failure to offer any rehabilitation services (“The Return of Uneasy Tranquility”).

The GSPC and GIA rejected the amnesty and vowed to continue fighting. Nonetheless, several thousand fighters from the two organizations availed themselves of the opportunity, which winnowed their remaining ranks to members either unable or unwilling to lay down their arms (International Crisis Group *The Civil Concord* 16-7). The GIA was relegated to the western part of the country, while the GSPC’s stronghold was in the east, particularly in the Kabylie region. The majority of the group’s attacks occurred in Kabylie, beginning with its first attack in Tizi Ouzou in
1998. Its violence was primarily geared towards security forces, though civilians were the victims of actions intended to extract money and resources, such as fake checkpoints and kidnappings (Gyves 14). The rugged terrain in Kabylie was desirable for insurgents. It was part of the GSPC’s zone two, which had been under Hattab’s command when he was part of GIA, which is probably another reason it became a hub of GSPC activity. Kabylie also had a heavy concentration of ethnic Berbers—a population that has long felt underrepresented and mistreated by Algiers and chafed under military rule after 1992.

Many Berbers objected to the 1996 Constitutional referendum banning parties based on religion or ethnic group, as Berber-based political parties were in the opposition. Undoubtedly, these parties were the main target of the ethnicity clause. The Berber population was further antagonized by the 1998 law recognizing Arabic as the only official language in Algeria, a move they viewed as diluting the Berber culture and “Arabizing” Algeria (“Sad Birthday”). The Islamists did not have a strong following among the Berbers. The insurgent violence also impacted the Berbers and prominent members of its community were kidnapped and killed by both Islamists and the government (“Identity Crisis”).

Like the FIS and other Islamic-oriented parties, the Berber political parties were frustrated by the Army’s maneuvers to block political participation and resented the Army’s ability to act with impunity. In 2000, riots swept the Kabylie area when a Berber youth was killed after being taken into custody by the gendarmerie. Berbers demanded a withdrawal of gendarmerie forces from Kabylie (“The Berbers Rise”; Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 5). Security forced killed 126 people in the ensuing violence (Migdalovitz “Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 4-5). This unrest further strained security forces, and the GSPC capitalized on that unrest to entrench itself deeper in the area.

*The GSPC Gains a Zone in the Sahara*

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In 2000, the GSPC acquired another GIA defector who would shape its alliance future. The GIA commander for zone nine—an area that encompassed southern Algeria and reached into the Sahara desert of neighboring Sahel countries to the south—switched allegiances and joined Hattab’s group (Filiu “Could Al-Qaeda” 4). Mokhtar Belmokhtar was one of the few remaining Arab Afghans. He became the subject of significant lore and myth. For example, Belmokhtar claimed to have lost an eye fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan; however, most reports put him in Afghanistan from 1991 to 1993, the period after the Soviet withdrawal (“Interview of Nouakchott News with Khalid Abu Al-Abbas Amir of the Al-Mulathimun brigade from the Qaedat Al-Jihad in the Islamic Maghreb”).

The Sahel zone was a lucrative assignment, especially under Belmokhtar skilled command. With few custom posts or checkpoints on these porous borders, all of the commerce was illicit to some degree; the sparsely governed terrain gave rise to profitable smuggling routes across Africa and into Europe (International Crisis Group *Islamist Terrorism* 19). Operating in that harsh environment required a degree of local consent or acquiescence, achieved through a combination of firepower and money. Goods of all sorts, including people, were moved through these historic trading and smuggling routes. Cigarettes, especially Marlboros, were one of the more commonly smuggled and most profitable goods. Therefore, Belmokhtar’s nickname, “Mr. Marlboro,” was indicative of his success in this venture (Filiu “Could Al-Qaeda” 4). Locals were sometimes not even aware of his GSPC affiliation, instead viewing him as a powerful smuggler in the region (International Crisis Group *Islamist Terrorism* 19).

The Sahel was also a desirable command because it was beyond the reach of the Algerian government. Posing no direct threat to them, the GSPC was left unmolested by the Sahelian governments, which had no interest in involving themselves in the unseemly affairs of their northern neighbor. Moreover, the GSPC’s primary squatting areas in northern Mali and, to a lesser
extent, Niger were in areas where the governments’ presence was a source of antagonism for the local ethnic Tuaregs. There had been several Tuareg uprisings in both countries, and the result was a minimal military presence and degree of autonomy for the ethnic minority in those areas (International Crisis Group *Islamist Terrorism* 19). While the GSPC married some local women, which created ties with local tribes, very few Tuaregs actually joined the group. Once again, the GSPC was able to benefit from the disenfranchisement of a local ethnic group, which led to a reduced government presence and inadvertently gave the GSPC more freedom to operate.

### 11.6 The GSPC’s Identity and Organizational Characteristics

#### The GSPC’s Ideology and Narrative

The GSPC was clearly not an entirely new organization when it formed in 1998. It did not build its ideology and narrative from scratch. Along with several hundred fighters, it borrowed selectively from the GIA’s identity. It too was a Salafist jihadist organization that sought the creation of an Islamic state in Algeria. Besides lip service to the broader jihadist movement, its actions and narrative were more narrowly focused on Algeria. One clear indication of this parochial dynamic was its decision to present itself as a continuation of the GIA before the GIA imploded and deviated, rather than aligning with bin Laden’s World Islamic Call.

There was some variation from the GIA in the GSPC’s identity features. The GSPC’s name included the word *dawa*, or “preaching” as translated into English. Thus the group appeared to embrace the idea that it should engage in proselytization with the Algerian people, in addition to jihad. This was a departure from the GIA’s position, which was committed exclusively to jihad, abjured *dawa* as part of its mission, and instead condemned the Algerian people for their lack of faith.
By 1998-1999, the GSPC’s narrow Algeria narrative had relatively little overlap with al-Qaida’s far enemy narrative. In general, al-Qaida was no longer advocating for jihads against the near enemy. It was trying to rally groups around its platform against the “Crusader and Zionist alliance.” Algeria was not considered a viable or perhaps even legitimate theatre of jihad anymore. Conversely, the United States and Israel played a small, symbolic role in the GSPC’s narrative and France continued to be considered the far enemy of the group (Filiu “The Local” 220). The vestiges once-strong narrative affinity between the GIA and al-Qaida were sparse. Their narratives did not diverge or conflict; there was simply little affinity remaining.

The GSPC’s Ethnic Identity

Like the GIA, the GSPC was Algerian-centric in its ethnic identity. Its Algerian nationalist entity was far stronger than its Arab ethnic identity. Yet the group did have a secondary Arab ethnicity, which, like its predecessor, was also a way for the group to reject French influence. Therefore, it had some basis for ethnic affinity with al-Qaida, as al-Qaida membership continued to be a predominantly, though not entirely, Arab group and it had an Arab ethnic identity.

The GSPC’s Tactics and Targets

The main way that the GSPC differentiated itself from the GIA was in its tactics and targets. It condemned the GIA’s indiscriminate use of violence against the Algerian population and vowed not to engage in such attacks. From 1999 to 2006, 231 GSPC attacks were against security service targets, and 173 attacks were against civilians (Gyves et al. 38). However, there was a qualitative difference in the motive of these attacks. The operations involving civilians were for resource-gathering purposes, while the attacks against the government were intended to cause injury and death (39).

The GSPC’s Organizational Dynamics and Relationships
Despite its inclusion of *dawa* in its name, the group remained an entirely jihadist organization. It did not have a separate *dawa* wing nor was it meaningfully engaged in such efforts. It did not have a political party or relationship with FIS. It concentrated on its combat capability. It inherited many of the GIA's fighters and thus had experience that surpassed its organizational age. Its military zone division of responsibility afforded significant autonomy to division commanders. Divisions were then sub-divided in *khatibats* (Botha 46).

Hattab was the group's only leader to date. He was advised by a Council of Notables and a *shura* council. The group had an information council, which grew in prominence and importance over time (Botha 42). As a result of Hattab's sole leadership, the group's organizational frames and routines were limited to those that Hattab would accept. He was an advocate of a narrow strategy against the Algeria Government, primarily the military and security services, only in Algeria. Thus this was embedded into the group's narrative as well as its organizational culture during his tenure.

The Algerian jihadists abroad endorsed GSPC as a way to dissociate themselves from the tarnished GIA. Most were GSPC in name only. It was a symbolic association, though some probably sent resources back to Algeria. Very few were involved in operational activity against the Algerian Government, which was the GSPC's top priority (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 27; Hunt “Counter-terrorism” 2). Plots in Europe attributed to the GSPC were probably not being tasked or overseen by the GSPC leadership in Algeria (Hunt “Counter-terrorism” 8; Boudali 4). The GSPC has been described as two autonomous entities in order to capture the differing dynamics in Algeria as opposed to Europe (Boudali 4). Yet even that description overstates the cohesion of the Algerian overseas network. They were not a separate coherent organization or part of the group at home, but more of a series of networks and cells with varying levels of association with the GSPC in Algeria, one another, and other organizations, like al-Qaida and AQI.
10.7 Taking Sides: The Post-9/11 Environment

By the time al-Qaida conducted the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Islamist insurgency in Algeria was a shadow of what it once had been. The GIA was reduced to a band of roaming, outcast militants in the western part of the country. The GSPC concentrated its efforts on striking security forces. The death toll continued to mount with an estimated 200 people killed in related violence per month, but the number declined each year, and was down from 200-300 per month in 1999 and 2000 (United Kingdom Immigration and National Directorate 33). What the numbers did not capture was the qualitative change in the violence. It was relegated to the outskirts of the country, which the population had fled during the 1990s, and much of the violence was restricted to the military and the insurgents. Overall, the insurgency no longer posed an existential threat to the state.

With all eyes focused on threat from Islamist terrorism follow the 9/11 attacks, the Algerian Government was rehabilitated, even heralded, by the international community. After having been relegated to the dredges of the international community since 1992, in 2001, the Algerian Government’s handling of the Islamist threat suddenly did not appear as extreme. The U.S. Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the State Department went so far as to claim that ”Washington has much to learn from Algeria on ways to fight terrorism” (Salima and Rivoire). Washington quickly took steps to recognize the Algerian Government’s long-standing CT concerns and build ties. In a tranche of U.S. designations of terrorist organizations that followed the attacks in late 2001, the GSPC was added to the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO). The battle lines of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) were being drawn, and the GSPC, which had received minimal attention from the United States prior to this point, was officially on the wrong side.

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q The GIA was designated when the original list of thirty FTOs was created in 1997 (Federal Register).
The GSPC’s response to the 9/11 attacks was tepid. Hattab did not see it as a reason to change his group’s strategy or posture. He tried to carve out a position of neither condoning or condemning the attacks, instead declaring that there was not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that al-Qaida was responsible and that the U.S. should not rush to blame Muslims (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 183).

Algerians featured prominently in the international terrorism networks both before and after 9/11, especially in Europe. The U.S. State Department estimated that nearly 3,000 Algerians had trained in Afghanistan in the years prior to 2001 (Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 3). In 2001, the U.K. arrested seven men, including a high-level al-Qaeda operative, on suspicion of being involved in the “GSPC’s English cell” (Gyves 2). Spanish police then dismantled a cell that had sent high-tech equipment and intelligence to Algeria. According to President Jose Maria Aznar Lopez, the cell had “financial connections to the terrorist organization led by bin Laden” (Gyves 2). These amorphous links were viewed as representative of a larger body of relationships and evidence that the GSPC was an al-Qaida ally. There were clearly connections between Algerians and al-Qaida and al-Qaida associated individuals. But, as discussed, Algerians abroad were often GSPC in name only, not acting on the group’s instructions or even in contact with its leadership. After being outside of Algeria for a number of years, their connections were tenuous. Thus it was inaccurate to extrapolate from these instances to conclude that an organizational-level alliance existed between al-Qaida and the GSPC.

Nonetheless, after 9/11, the GSPC suffered the consequences of being an al-Qaida ally; it bore the costs of such a relationship without the corresponding benefits. The group was subject to growing international censure and threats from governments other than Algiers and Paris for the first time. In addition to being designated by the United States as an FTO, the GSPC was deemed an
“entity associated with al-Qaida” by the United Nations 1267 Committee in October 2001 and added to that sanctions list as well (United Nations).

In addition to these sanctions, the GSPC faced a more direct threat from the United States. In 2002, the U.S. Government unveiled the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), citing concerns about the region’s potential to develop into a terrorist safe haven. The PSI was an approximately seven million dollar program and targeted the GSPC’s breadbasket, the Sahelian countries of Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Chad (Smith). The European Command (EUCOM), which had responsibility for much of Africa, likened the PSI to a “preventative measure” (Smith). By 2004, the U.S. military had “helped train and equip one rapid-reaction company, about 150 soldiers, in each of the four Saharan states to enhance border capabilities against arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and the movement of trans-national terrorists” (United States Africa Command). Algeria was not included in the PSI package, though this was not a snub of the Algerian regime. Algiers—always sensitive to foreign interference—regularly reminded U.S. interlocutors that it combatted terrorism for a decade without assistance and balked at the idea that it needed such aid now. However, it frequently complained about its neighbors’ lack of action against the GSPC. Thus the PSI targeted the GSPC, navigated Algerian sensitivities, and targeted the problem outside of Algeria, which was exactly the balance that Algiers sought.

Yet the GSPC was stagnant and battling to survive. It was not making inroads against the Algerian Government, which now had international support for its counter-terrorism efforts. The group was an anachronism in the changed environment after 9/11, and there was a lack of internal consensus about how to respond. The GSPC was comprised entirely of Algerians, and the armed campaign against the Algerian Government simply was not attracting new adherents and had no base of support among the war-weary public. The GSPC struggled to replace its losses from the 1999-2000 Civil Concord and the regular attrition it endured in clashes with the security forces.
Ten years after the cancelled elections, the Islamists were no longer a viable alternative to the Army-dominated government. The GSPC was marginalized politically and geographically, as the military had pushed the group into sparsely-inhabited rural areas and out of the urban centers. Over the years, the government established an extensive network of informants and spies that made expansion (Hunt 1). Infiltration remained a constant concern for the group. In exchange for allowing the amnesty deal, which Bouteflika had to battle to implement in the face of Army resistance, the Army was given additional leeway to renew its military offensive against what remained of the insurgency (Mekhennet et al.).

Given the GSPC’s state, some elements in the group welcomed an exploratory effort by al-Qaeda to create a relationship with the GSPC. From their perspective, what did the group have to lose? The GSPC was already being treated as an al-Qaeda affiliate; it might as well get the benefits. In 2002, al-Qaeda leadership deployed a Yemeni lieutenant, Emad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan to North Africa. Alwan was an experienced al-Qaeda operative. His resume included involvement in the 2000 USS Cole attack, and he had personal connections to both bin Laden and Zawahiri (Smith). His assignment was to meet Hassan Hattab to convince the GSPC’s leader to internationalize the group’s efforts (Botha 64). Before Alwan could meet with the GSPC’s emir, he was killed in a clash with Algerian forces in Batna, a city east of Algiers. While his presence in Algeria reflected some interest in cooperation on both sides, his death almost certainly reinforced existing concerns about the GSPC being infiltrated by Algerian security services.

Some have claimed that the GSPC and al-Qaeda connections pre-date al-Qaeda’s dispatch of Alwan and that other critical nodes existed. Given the number of Algerians who trained in Afghanistan, this is certainly plausible. For example, Belmokhtar claimed in a media interview that the GSPC’s contacts with al-Qaeda dated back to 2000. He referenced Alwan’s effort and also claimed that a Mauritanian al-Qaeda operative later detained in Pakistan had served as a liaison...
between the two groups’ leadership ("Interview of Nouakhott News with Khalid Abu Al-Abbas Amir of the Al-Mulathimun brigade from the Qaedat Al-Jihad in the Islamic Maghreb"). However, other information, discussed below, suggests that even if other contacts indeed existed, they were not a reliable source of exchange between the two groups or a sufficient basis for an alliance.

*The War in Iraq—A Turning Point*

By 2003, the GSPC’s Algeria-centric strategy, pursued since 1998, was increasingly contested within the organization. The group was sharply divided into those who advocated a continued focus on the Algerian Government and those who believed the group should align itself with the international jihadist milieu. One event that decisively shifted the balance in favor of the internationalists was the U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 (Filiu “The Local” 221). By 2003, the conflict with the Algerian Government had lost resonance among Algerians and much of the activity attributed to the Islamist insurgency was indistinguishable from banditry. An estimated 100-150 people were killed each month by related violence that year—lower than in any year since the beginning of the insurgency—but a low-intensity conflict persisted (United Kingdom Immigration and National Directorate).

The U.S. war in Iraq activated a reservoir of previously-latent support for jihad in Algeria and the region. Conflicts framed as defensive jihads to oust infidel occupiers from Muslim lands mobilized a following among Algerians. They had flocked to Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and now to Iraq as well. The Algerian public was staunchly opposed to the Iraq war, which created a pool of active and passive supporters (Filiu “The Local” 221-2). The war also highlighted continuing differences between Washington and Algiers. In addition to their divergent views on groups such as Hamas and Hizballah, Bouteflika’s government—despite its recent promotion to a U.S. counterterrorism partner—did not support the U.S. decision to invade Iraq (Migdalovitz *Algeria in
Crisis: Current Issues 2). Nonetheless, Algiers was vigilant against any jihadist mobilization, having learned a painful lesson about the destabilizing impact when such fighters return.

Depleted and unable to attract new fighters with its message or agenda, the GSPC sought to harness the manpower and sentiment activated by the opposition to the Iraq war (Harmon 15). In doing so, it attempted to strike a balance between supporting those who wanted to become foreign fighters in Iraq, while not draining Algeria of the personnel needed to sustain the fight there. Even veteran GSPC fighters wanted to go to Iraq and prospective fighters—radicalized after events in the 1990s—were more interested in traveling to Iraq than fighting in Algeria (Mekhennet et al.). To capitalize on the situation, the group secured a place in the pipeline flowing out of Algeria to Iraq. The GSPC advertised its willingness to provide services using the assets it already possessed, namely “training” in areas it had freedom of movement, like Kabylie and the Sahel as well as facilitation and smuggling routes. Soon aspiring North African volunteers seeking a way to Iraq availed themselves of the GSPC’s services (Filiu “The Local” 222).

The group carved out of this niche, though it was not actually ideally positioned to prepare volunteers for the conditions in Iraq. Conveniently for the GSPC, its “hands on training” included encounters and operations against the Algerian Army in rural settings, rather than the urban environment trainees would face in Iraq. Moreover, the GSPC did not conduct suicide operations, which was the main function of newly-minted foreign fighters in Iraq. Thus it was not well-suited to prepare recruits to conduct “martyrdom operations.” Nonetheless, through this activity, the GSPC encouraged some trainees to return to the group and others to delay their travel to Iraq, effectively siphoning off some recruits to stay in Algeria (Harmon 15).

The GSPC received an unexpected publicity boost when its commander for zone nine, the Sahel and southern Algeria, kidnapped several dozen European tourists. The timing closely coincided with the commencement of the war in Iraq, setting off a ripple effect. As discussed earlier,
this zone was a major source of revenue for the group. Given how lucrative the assignment was, it is not surprising that there was internal contestation for the spot (Hunt 12). Belmokhtar, aka “Mr. Marlboro,” was forcibly pushed out of the area by an ambitious former Army paratrooper turned militant, known by his nom de guerre Abdelrezak el-Para.

El-Para soon saw another means to acquire money, in addition to smuggling cigarettes. In February and March 2003, his unit kidnapped thirty-two European tourists trekking in the Sahara, who ill-advisedly opted to travel without a local guide (Harmon 17; International Crisis Group *Islamist Terrorism* 18). As discussed, GSPC zone commanders were afforded a degree of autonomy to run their areas as they saw fit. Given the terrain and Algerian Government’s vigilance, regular communications and meetings with the leadership were not feasible or advisable; therefore, el-Para’s actions were probably not coordinated in advance with the GSPC leadership. It appeared to be an opportunistic action, though some interpreted the kidnapping as a challenge to Hattab’s Algerian-centric policies (Filiu “The Local” 220). While the kidnappings clearly demonstrated a level of willingness to conduct actions involving Westerners, kidnappings were already a well-established part of the group’s fund raising repertoire (Gyves 7; “Algerian Terrorist Group said Resorting to Kidnappings to Finance Activities”). Furthermore, el-Para only made exorbitant ransom demands with no political dimension, suggesting that rather than being an embrace of al-Qaida, this was an expansion of the group’s resource acquisition strategy (“Sahara Hostage Tells of Ordeal”).

It paid off handsomely. One of the tourists died of a heatstroke, but the remaining hostages were exchanged for six million dollars (Smith). But the attention that el-Para garnered from this incident had its downsides as well. Western Governments, particularly EUCOM, were watching closely for the “next Afghanistan” and el-Para’s brazen actions in the “ungoverned spaces” of the Sahel set off alarm bells. Overnight, el-Para was likened to bin Laden, and the Sahel was deemed the
next major front in the GWOT (Mellah and Rivoire). Whether he intended it or not, el-Para's lucrative kidnapping—particularly given that it occurred right as the Iraq War began—bolstered the GSPC's internationalist faction.

Zarqawi's meteoric rise in Iraq and the fervor the Iraq cause invoked in Algeria favored the internationalist camp as well (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 19). The flow of Algerian fighters and the role of Algerians in facilitating foreign fighters gradually fostered connections between the GSPC and Zarqawi's group in Iraq. North Africans, particularly Algerians, became one of the largest contingents of foreign fighters in Iraq (Migdalovitz Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 2). Estimates of the number of the Algerian present in Iraq are problematic, but most agree that they were a sizeable portion of Zarqawi’s men. Saudi sources claimed in 2006 that over one thousand Algerians were fighting with Zarqawi’s group in Iraq; however, some question whether this estimate was inflated to downplay the role of Saudi nationals (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 17). Similarly, U.S. military sources estimated in mid-2005 that twenty percent of suicide bombers in Iraq were Algerians (Hunt 14). Algerians were also the perpetrators of high-profile attacks. For example, in March 2004, Zarqawi deployed an Algerian suicide bomber to strike the Mount Lebanon Hotel in Baghdad, killing seven people and wounding thirty-five more (Burns). The bomber’s martyrdom video was featured in an AQI propaganda film that claimed that the hotel was a CIA base (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 17).

The internationalists within GSPC made a move to remove their biggest obstruction—deposing the GSPC’s longstanding leader, Hassan Hattab. In the violent history of Algerian terrorist groups, this was the first and perhaps only instance when the existing leader’s life was spared in a power transition. The decision not to kill the GSPC founder was a reflection of the tenuousness of the group’s internal unity and the degree to which Hattab’s name was synonymous with the organization (Filiu “The Local” 221). Nabil Sahraoui took over the organization in late 2003 and
immediately set out to reorient the GSPC. With this action, the group’s organizational age reset, and there was re-evaluation of the organizational frames and routines that had been set by Hattab. A process of re-defining the group's identity ensued as the GSPC sought to re-invent itself to adapt to the new conditions.

Nabil Sahraoui was not a recent convert to jihadism, but he did not have strong international credentials. He was part of the old guard of Algerian Islamists, starting out as a FIS supporter in the late 1980s and then gradually rising to become a zone commander for the GIA during the 1990s before defecting to the GSPC. Like Hattab, his leadership credentials were acquired through combat experience, rather than theological or religious education. Upon taking the helm, Sahraoui immediately adopted a public, international posture. In October 2003, Sahraoui publicly heralded bin Laden and urged Muslims to unite under the banner of al-Qaida (Hunt 1). He urged Muslims “to raise the flag of jihad for Allah, be it in Palestine, in Afghanistan under the banner of Mullah Omar... and under the banner of the al-Qaida organization in the emirate of Sheik Osama bin Laden” (qtd. in Botha 64). It was the first in a series of such statements. Another soon followed, which contained more pointedly anti-U.S. declarations than before:

Here, we have evil America declaring a crusade and preparing the troops of the infidels to attack Islam everywhere. President Bush and many high officials clearly and loudly declared that this is a religious war under the banner of the cross. The goal of this war, which they called a ‘war on terrorism’ and ‘war against evil’ and other names, is to keep Islam and the Muslims from establishing the Country of Islam that would rule people with the book of Allah and His prophet (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades” 14).

Sahraoui laid out his vision for the GSPC in a series of public statements, warning that the contours of the GSPC’s war within Algeria were about to change. The language was reminiscent of the GIA’s declarations. For example, in a 2004 statement the GSPC warned that it declared war “on everything that is foreign and atheistic within Algeria’s borders, whether against individuals, interests or installations” qtd. in Botha 64).
In the upheaval, el-Para maintained his fiefdom in the Sahel, where he garnered even more international attention than his new leader. In March 2004, his unit’s movement was detected in the midst of a EUCOM-hosted meeting of African defense ministers. The head of EUCOM, General Charles Wald, recalled, “[r]ight there in my office they negotiate a mission for the Chadians to go after these guys” (Mekhennet et al). Wald’s intervention worked. El-Para’s men were tracked and battled with forces from Niger and Chad. They fled east and were eventually trapped by a Chadian rebel group, the Movement for Democracy and Justice (International Crisis Group Islamist Terrorism 1).

The GSPC was left scrambling to figure out a way to secure the release of its most well-known commander. Its solution was not intuitive, though perhaps it was not surprising looking at the problem from an Algerian perspective. The GSPC decided it needed to find a way to exert pressure on Paris in order to get the French Government to prevail upon the Chadian rebels to release el-Para. But “struggling on rations of beans and rice,” the group was not in a position to coerce Paris into such action, which strongly suggests that it lacked its own attack infrastructure in France (Mekhennet et al).

While the GSPC grappled with how to free el-Para, Algiers continued to kinetically target the group and politically marginalize it. Le pouvoir maintained its grip on power when Bouteflika was re-elected with 84 percent of the vote in April 2004, though he grew more independent from the generals who had dictated policy since the cancelled elections, if not since independence (“Reconciliation, Up to a Point”). Thanks to the Army’s efforts, the architect of the GSPC’s internationalization effort did not survive to see his vision implemented. Algerian security forces killed Sahraoui in June 2004, less than a year after Hattab was ousted (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 14-5). The internal dynamics were still sufficiently unsettled that it was unclear who would succeed Sahraoui. Algiers’s efforts to sow dissension succeeded in straining the group’s internal cohesion.
For example, a GSPC commander in Skikda killed ten of his own men because he suspected they were preparing to surrender (Botha).

Abdelmalek Droukdal was not heir apparent when Sahraoui was killed. A mathematics and technology student, he was involved in training and explosives fabrication for most of his time in the GSPC ("An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal"). He joined the movement in 1991, but was not an Algerian Afghan mujahidin. There were other senior commanders with better military qualifications and shura members with more religious authority who vied for the position (Botha 76-7).

However, Droukdal withstood the opposition and set out to pursue the international course initiated by Sahraoui. He consolidated his authority and secured his position by replacing several zone commanders with loyalists. He continued to increase the GSPC’s public profile and international alignment. Droukdal still faced the problem of el-Para’s captivity in Chad, but he saw a potential solution in the group’s contacts in Iraq. In the fall of 2004, Droukdal sent a secret message to Zarqawi asking for his help in coercing the French Government, specifically by kidnapping French citizens in Iraq to use as leverage. Zarqawi readily agreed to assist (Mekhennet et al). The relationship between the two groups was blossoming beyond the prevision of Algerian fighters to Iraq.

The First al-Qaida Franchise

Zarqawi was simultaneously pursuing another major alliance. In October 2004, Zarqawi and al-Qaida announced their union, which had been in the works for nearly a year. Zarqawi pledged allegiance to bin Laden and changed the name of his organization to al-Qaida in the Mesopotamia, typically referred to as al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI). Al-Qaida's first franchise was born.

In the meantime, before Zarqawi was able to fulfill his promise to assist in securing el-Para's release, the Chadian rebels rendered el-Para to Algerian authorities. But the GSPC’s outreach and
Zarqawi’s receptivity opened the door for further cooperation. Initially this was largely rhetorical support and symbolic gestures, which were still the mainstay of the GSPC’s internationalization efforts. It was no coincidence that Droukdal, aka Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, adopted the same kunya as Zarqawi—Abu Musab (Filiu “The Local” 221). In the GSPC’s subsequent international public posturing, it praised the efforts of fellow jihadists in various theatres, including Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 19-20). Its media representative hailed the “fraternity” of jihadist organizations.

Public acknowledgements between AQI and the GSPC became more direct. In January 2005, Zarqawi extolled Droukdal and the GSPC specifically in one of his audio statements (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 19). The GSPC responded later that month in a statement addressed to Zarqawi.

\begin{quote}
Congratulations and greetings from the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat to al-Qaida’s Jihad Committee and its beloved Commander.
In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful
All praise be to Allah alone…. this is a message in the name of the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat under the command of the fighting brother Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud to the dear fighting Shaykh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. I carry to him blessings of jihad from the commander and brothers of the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat in Algeria, blessings of jihad and love for Allah.
We wish to tell the righteous Shaykh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi... how he has pleased our hearts by what he has inflicted upon the enemy crusaders and their apostate agents by frustrating and killing them. May Allah protect Zarqawi and all of the mujahidin. Also we apologize for not returning your greeting directly by audio but our situation in Algeria is different from what is faced in Iraq, Chechnya, or Saudi Arabia because the mujahidin are entrenched in remote places that are difficult for the tyrants to reach, from which they venture forth on jihad operations. We ask Allah to protect all of the mujahidin—and in regards to our media work, we ask Allah to help us facilitate the publication of an audio or video presentation.
May Allah protect you and support you against your enemies, O’ Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and may he protect your brethren, and our righteous Shaykh... and the father of the mujahidin, the generous Shaykh Usama bin Laden. May Allah protect Shaykh Commander Mullah Omar and may Allah guide him and support him to victory. And our commander, Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, will speak on this subject in the future, if Allah wills it. O’ Lions of Mesopotamia... May Allah, Lord of the Worlds, grant you and us victory. All praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds (“Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): Congratulations and Greetings from the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat to Al-Qaida’s Jihad Committee and its beloved Commander”).
\end{quote}
From that point forward, in its declarations hailing various leaders and causes, the GSPC frequently reserved special praise for Zarqawi. For example, in March 2005, the GSPC released a video in which Droukdal vowed to "destroy America." In it, he sent greetings to:

the leaders of jihad, who are the true leaders after their own leaders became apostates. They are the source of light in our dark exile and the hope for the wounded nation of Islam. To the fighting Shaykh Abu Abdullah Usama Bin Laden, Mullah Mohammed Omar, Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, to the beloved hero and the leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to the patient brothers and brave lions in Chechnya—Abu Hafs al-Urdani and Abu Omar al-Saif, to the brave fighters in Palestine and to the mujahidin everywhere—may Allah protect you all ("GSPC Commander Hails Al-Qaida in New Video" emphasis added).

Yet the GSPC had not undertaken any actions to reflect its frequently declared international orientation. Besides training and facilitating the flow of fighters to Iraq—a task that the GSPC did not always fulfill wholeheartedly or at least undertook with an ulterior motive—the group remained Algeria-bound. Despite its affection for Zarqawi, it expressed its concerns about the war in Iraq eclipsing ongoing battles against apostate regimes in an unsolicited statement to the "brothers" in the Arabian Peninsula in early 2005.

Anyone who bears witness will recognize the abilities of the brothers in the Arabian Peninsula, their equipment, financial support, and abundant fighters. Yet not, we watch them instead sending martyrs to Shaykh Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, so why aren't these brothers targeting the centers of the apostates and other supporters of the infidels (qtd. in “Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): An Invitation to All the Fighting Brothers on the Frontiers to Keep the Faith in their Struggle”).

Lest it appear that the group was insufficiently supportive of Zarqawi, the GSPC heralded his controversial sectarian strategy, noting that the "brothers in Mesopotamia certainly know that targeting the mayors, representatives of local municipalities, and the Shiite dogs sometimes has a greater effect than attacking the Americans." But the GSPC struggled to keep the cause at home alive, despite the sentiments activated by the Iraq War.

The GSPC's primary hurdle remained its capability. At the same time that the GSPC was making its international propaganda push, it was issuing public pleas for money, professing a "great need for help" and asking "where are you O-Muslims?" ("Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist
Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): The GSPC: An Invitation to Spend in the Cause of Allah.”) It revealed its lack of following among Algerian youth when it condemned them—in a tone reminiscent of the GIA—as people “having no pride in their religion, people who attend the University but have no idea what is happening around them, and young people who have no energy, power, or will... Despite all that has happened, you are yet standing still, silent without reacting at all” (“Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): GSPC: Strengthening the Will of the Nation’s Youth”).

Moreover, while the security situation in Algeria had improved, due to the legacy of the 1990s, there were few foreign targets within the country. Those that did exist were hardened facilities in the capital. By the group's own admission in its message to Zarqawi, it was holed up in remote areas and unable to even produce a video message. It was still configured as an insurgent force equipped to conduct raids and engage in ambushes of security forces, not to undertake attacks in the capital.

El-Para, the GSPC commander who had demonstrated a willingness and ability to expand the targeting parameters, albeit for monetary rather than ideological reasons, was serving a sentence of life imprisonment. With el-Para’s exit from the scene, Belmokhtar, aka Mr. Marlboro, had re-deployed to zone nine to keep the Sahelian resources flowing. Due to the GSPC's activity in the Sahel, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania had become a “frontline state” in the GWOT. Since seizing power by coup in 1984, former Mauritanian President Maaouya Ould Taya assiduously guarded his position and power. In the GWOT, Taya saw a mechanism to neutralize the Islamist threat, which was in part terrorist-linked and in part non-violent political opposition to his rule. Taya’s decision to recognize Israel in 1999 and to support the GWOT had enflamed Islamists. A visit to Mauritania by the Israeli Foreign Minister in May 2005 set off violence protests in Nouakchott (Ulph). Taya’s regime responded with sweeping arrests, which it claimed were linked with the
GSPC. Observers were skeptical that Taya was hyping the terrorist threat as a cover for his efforts to quash the opposition (International Crisis Group *Islamist Terrorism*).

Then in June 2005, a remote military outpost in Lemghiti, Mauritania came under surprise attack by the GSPC Sahel unit immediately after morning prayers. The attack took place in the far northern hinterlands of the country, near the three-way border with Mali and Algeria. During the fifteen-minute gun battle that ensued, five GSPC fighters and seven Mauritanian soldiers were killed. The GSPC bragged about the weapons, materiel, and vehicles it acquired during the raid in one of its public statements claiming the attacks.

What prompted the GSPC’s attack? It was unlike Mr. Marlboro to provoke military forces operating in proximity to his lucrative smuggling rings. There were several potential reasons for this attack. One possibility was that Taya’s arrests had indeed included some GSPC members or associates, which prompted the group to conduct a retaliatory attack (Hunt 13). Others linked the attack to the Israeli Foreign Minister’s visit and the pending arrival, just days after the attack, of 1,000 U.S. military personnel for the largest American military exercise in Africa since World War II. The “Flintlock” exercise, which involved forces from seven countries in the region, was a counterterrorism training operation designed to simulate a military response to a “hypothetical” event when a terrorist group was being pursued from Mauritania, through to Mali, Niger, and finally to Chad (Fellows)

The group made several statements, citing various motives for the attack. The initial statement the day after the attack cited it as “revenge for our brothers who were arrested by the apostate Mauritanian regime over the recent period, and as a support for the oppressed Muslims there.” It condemned Taya as Mauritania’s Hamid Karzai and accused him of being “an agent of the Jews.” In an interview six years after the attack, when Belmokhtar was questioned about why his unit had undertaken this attack, he revised the rationale to align with a more global jihadist
rationale. In retrospect, he claimed that the barrack was used for joint Mauritanian-American military maneuvers, and that the Israeli Embassy in Nouakchott was a hub for Mossad ("Interview of Nouakchott News with Khalid Abu Al-Abbas Amir of the Al-Mulathimun brigade from the Qaeda Al-Jihad in the Islamic Maghreb"). At the time, the group acknowledged that the attack was the first of its kind and warned that this was an indicator that the group's activities would no longer be confined to Algeria (Ulph). In a statement a month after the attack, when the GSPC leadership back in Algeria was “able to obtain further details about the attack”—an indication that Belmokhtar was acting at least semi-autonomously—the group touted the attack as evidence that the Algerian government's claims about its depleted state were false.

"This holy battle, including its aims and objectives is the best evidence of false and outdated image that has been spread by the lying media about the courageous mujahidin. This image is the complete opposite of the lost truth. These kinds of battles, ongoing assaults, and chosen targets are used to demolish the wall of darkness and to erase a number of myths, beginning with the myth of 'reconciliation and general amnesty' and ending with the myth of 'desperate remnants' or 'a small group that is about to be eliminated' ("Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): A Full Report on the Battle of Badr in Mauritania").

However, the attack was not nearly as persuasive as the GSPC portrayed it, in terms of demonstrating that the group was not a spent force and was capable of major operations. An ambush of a remote military garrison—in an area that was not a conflict zone and during which the group lost almost as many men as the adversary—was not suggestive of a group with international reach and capability. Military units in the harsh terrain of the Sahara were forced by necessity to establish a modus vivendi with the often better-armed smugglers, rebels, and militias that transverse the area. This attack was successful primarily because it was unexpected. It did demonstrate a previously-unseen willingness to conduct an operation outside of Algeria, albeit right across the border, and to transition the Sahel from a safe haven and bread basket to a theatre of operations.
The attack served as another opportunity for the GSPC and AQI to continue their public affirmation of one another. Among the congratulatory messages the GSPC received was a statement from Zarqawi heralding the attack, suggesting that he kept apprised of the group's actions and statements (Botha 67). Another effort was underway behind the scenes. For his part, Zarqawi was pleased with the benefits he had accrued from taking on the al-Qaida brand. He had essentially used the name to pursue his own agenda with little concern for al-Qaida senior leadership's positions. At that time, it appeared he had even surpassed bin Laden in his following and public profile, even to some within al-Qaida (Jones 145). In light of his experience, Zarqawi suggested that his Algerian brethren consider allying with al-Qaida as well.

The GSPC was receptive to the idea. An alliance with al-Qaida offered the GSPC an opportunity to improve its position in the area that was the most problematic, its reputation. The jihad in Algeria never recovered from the descent into chaos during the 1990s. Its participants remained tarnished in the eyes of their international jihadist counterparts and the Algerian people, which were its two key constituencies. With the change of leadership, the GSPC had already undertaken the decision to take a more international posture in its rhetoric and nominally in its operations as well. But this had done little to change the GSPC’s situation. The international shift had not sufficiently bolstered the group’s appeal within Algeria and the traditionally xenophobic organization had a very small following amongst non-Algerians. An endorsement by al-Qaida held the potential to improve the group’s reputation and position. It was already treated as an al-Qaida ally by the international community, thus one of the major drawbacks of the relationships—provoking additional enemies and counterterrorism pressure—was mitigated.

With the exception of Zarqawi—who was not one to be deterred by a group’s reputation for savagery—the GSPC remained on the margins of the international jihadist movement, despite its public posturing. Al-Qaida remained wary of the group. Zawahiri—who had been the head of EIJ
when it broke relations with the GIA in 1995—expressed his ambivalence in a letter to Zarqawi, saying, regarding “[t]he subject of the Algerian brothers, at our end, there are fears from the previous experiences, so if you’re able to get in touch with them and notify us of the details from them, we would be very grateful to you” (al-Zawahiri 11). It is puzzling why Zawahiri would rely on Zarqawi to help vet the GSPC, given the extensive concerns that Zawahiri expressed about Zarqawi’s conduct in Iraq and the fact that one of al-Qaida’s outstanding concerns about the GSPC was almost certainly the GIA’s similar excessive violence. Most likely, al-Qaida simply did not have open or available channels of communication to the GSPC leadership. Droukdal later confirmed Zarqawi’s role in the alliance formation, saying “we don’t deny the pivotal role of the martyr of the nation Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, may God bless him, in the joining operation since its first phases. We ask God to reward him with the best reward for what he has done for Islam, jihad, and for the nation” (“An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal”; emphasis added). The initial exploration and negotiations for a merger between al-Qaida and the GSPC commenced, with Zarqawi acting as a liaison, in the summer of 2005.

Shortly thereafter, in mid-July, Zarqawi fulfilled his earlier promise to conduct an action in support of the GSPC in Iraq when his group kidnapped two Algerian diplomats in Iraq. Algeria’s most senior representative and a colleague were ambushed in a well-executed and planned operation outside of a restaurant near the Algerian Embassy during broad daylight in western Baghdad (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 20; “Algerian diplomats seized in Iraq”). Earlier that month, AQI had kidnapped and assassinated the Egyptian Ambassador-designate. Pakistani and Bahraini diplomats’ vehicles had also been targeted by AQI as part of the effort to punish countries—particularly Muslim-majority states—that it viewed as legitimizing the U.S occupation by having a diplomatic presence.
The GSPC’s response to AQI’s kidnapping of the Algerian diplomats was nothing short of elated. Given the earlier actions, it was not clear whether the Algerians targeting was exclusively motivated by AQI’s ties with the GSPC. The AQI’s statements about the kidnappings did not explicitly reference the GSPC, but condemned the Algerian regime as “another tyrant among tyrants… supportive of the Jews, Christians, and every other country that wounds the people of al-Tawheed and the prisoners” (qtd. “A statement regarding the deaths of the Algerian diplomats in Iraq” 1-2). It admonished Algiers that it had been warned that any country with a diplomatic presence in Iraq would be considered a legitimate target.

The GSPC rushed to put out a statement the same day, which featured a picture of bin Laden superimposed on a map of Algeria, congratulating Zarqawi and condemning the Algerian Government for its support of “the apostate Iraq government and its alliance with crusaders in Iraq” (“A statement regarding the deaths of the Algerian diplomats in Iraq” 1-2). Within days, AQI announced its “sharia court verdict.” The diplomats were “sentenced” to be executed for working for an “idol-atrous government” (“A statement regarding the deaths of the Algerian diplomats in Iraq.”). The GSPC responded the next day, affirming the decision and offering additional evidence to support the verdict, including accusing one of the diplomats of being involved in a massacre in Algeria (“A statement regarding the deaths of the Algerian diplomats in Iraq.” 1-2). AQI then assassinated the diplomats. Their deaths provoke an outcry in Algeria and a backlash against the GSPC for its encouragement, even among some prospective recruits. But AQI’s coercion also worked and Bouteflika withdrew the remaining Algerian staff out of Iraq later that week (“Algerian Envoys Killed by Captors”).

*Trying to Find Peace Without Reconciliation*

Simultaneously, the GSPC faced a renewed challenge at home when Bouteflika initiated a referendum on another amnesty effort, the Charter for Peace and Reconciliation, in 2005. Once
again, he faced resistance from several quarters, especially after the diplomats were murdered in Iraq at the GSPC’s encouragement. Like the 1999-2000 Civil Concord, while the Charter excluded those involved in mass murder, rape, or bombings in public places, and it lacked accountability and transparency for the victims of the terrorist groups. In a move clearly designed to appease hardline elements in the military, this accord included amnesty for security forces as well. This effectively closed the door on the tens of thousands of people who had “disappeared” in their custody with no accounting for the victims’ families (“Reconciliation, Up to a Point”). The GSPC rejected the amnesty initiative and the referendum, dismissing the possibility of reconciliation “after the world war between Muslims and Christians has begun” and going so far as to tell the Algerian public in a GIS-esque fashion that “[i]f you participate in this referendum, you have declared war on Islam, you are following Satan, and you have abandoned Allah” (“Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): GSPC: No Peace Without Islam”). The statement ended with what had become its standard homage to al-Qaeda: “greetings to our Shakyh Usama bin Laden and... our beloved brother Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.”

While the Charter was not designed to achieve genuine reconciliation, the GSPC suffered a blow when its former leader and founder, Hassan Hattab, and dozens of his men surrendered to Algerian authorities. Until that point, Hattab’s status was shrouded in confusion. Rumors persisted that he had been killed when Saharoui took over. In an interview with Asharq Al-Awsat, Hattab put these rumors to rest and condemned actions taken by his successors, highlighting in particular the killing of a young imam who tried to facilitate talks with the government. He claimed that most GSPC fighters were prepared to accept the reconciliation deal, provided that the government would meet three conditions. None of these conditions—that the government refrain from calling the GSPC terrorists, the release of a FIS leader, and the resumption of FIS as a political party—were met, but Hattab ultimately turned himself in anyway (Ghemrasa). It was, in some respects, similar
to the EIG’s response to its defeat. One segment of the group conceded the loss. Another faction
upped the ante and broadened the conflict. The GSPC immediately disavowed Hattab, and publicly
proclaimed his actions to be “a betrayal of Allah, his messenger, the path of jihad, and the blood of
the martyrs... we will continue our jihad. It will be either victory or martyrdom” (“Communiqué
from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): A Statement Disavowing Hassan
Hattab and his Disgraceful Acts”).

During the six-month amnesty period, the Algerian Interior Ministry estimated that
between 250 and 300 militants surrendered (“Reconciliation, Up to a Point”). The overall number
was not particularly impressive, though the pool of potential repentees was much smaller than in
1999. The State Department estimated that the GSPC had several hundred fighters total in 2003;
therefore, the loss of that many members was far from trivial (United States Department of State
2003 Patterns ). Perhaps even more important than the actual number of repentees was the fear
and distrust the amnesty program sowed within the GSPC. Members eyed one another suspiciously,
looking for signs of surrender or doubt—concerns constantly fanned by the Algerian Government’s
ever-present information operations. The “repentees” were paraded out to publicly confirm what
Algiers claimed: the GSPC was living in desolate conditions without enough weapons, money or
new recruits, and was struggling to survive (Mekhennet et al.).

The amnesty had unintentional consequences that inadvertently improved the GSPC’s
prospects for an alliance with al-Qaida. In the period between the first amnesty in 1999 and the
second amnesty in 2005, the GSPC had undergone a change of leadership, direction, and identity.
The timing of the 2005 amnesty was such that it offered an exit option for those who disagreed with
the group’s internationalist posture and/or its new leader. Despite the Charter’s restrictions,
surrender was an option for all but the most notorious. Thus what remained of the GSPC were those
members who were most committed to the armed struggle, who were willing to pursue the
international course, and whose hands were so bloody that amnesty was not an option. The GSPC was down to the hardest core of its hard core of remaining members. It was much smaller than it had been when it was formed, and its organizational dynamics, culture, and frames had changed significantly. As the group lost seasoned fighters through various forms of attrition, they were replaced by young, inexperienced recruits who were drawn more by the group's global jihadist rhetoric than the cause in Algeria.

Some 2,000 individuals, including the GIA founder, were released from prison as part of the Charter. There were concerns that many would choose to join the GSPC and thereby reinvigorate the group (Hunt 15). The GSPC publicly appealed for the released prisoners to return to the fight (“Communiqué from the Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat (GSPC): A Call to All the Prisoners Who Have Been Released from Prison”). Some did join the GSPC; however, the effect was mitigated by the GSPC's fear that returning members were Algerian Government assets.

A Brave New World

By 2005, Algiers was a key U.S. partner on counterterrorism and regional security. Its cooperation with the United States had reached unprecedented levels. The Algerian Government participated in the follow-on program to the PSI, the Trans-Sahara Counter-terrorism Initiative (TSCTI). However, the Algerian Government preferred bilateral arrangements with Washington that recognized its status on counterterrorism issues (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 2010* 8). That year, Washington and Algiers -began a Joint Military Dialogue to serve as a forum for more training, exchanges, and exercises (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 2010* 8). Economic links between the two counties also grew. Following the liberalization of the hydrocarbon sector in 2005, U.S. companies invested in the industry and American workers, the first influx since the mass exodus of foreigners in 1993 (Migdalovitz *Algeria in Crisis: Current Issues 2010* 13). Algiers harbored residual resentment about its pariah status during the 1990s and
remained prickly about outside interference in issues it deemed to be purely domestic. Overall, the Algerian Government was not only back in the international fold, it was treated as a regional leader on counterterrorism.

This change in the environment did not escape the GSPC’s notice. When asked what motivated the GSPC to engage with al-Qaida, Droukdal responded that:

[w]e found ourselves on the blacklist of the U.S. administration, tagged with terrorism. Then we found America building military bases in the south of our country, and conducting military exercises, and plundering our oil and planning to get our gas” (“An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal”).

The GSPC now faced a common enemy with al-Qaida to a degree previously unseen. But it was even more than that. The GSPC perceived the United States to be a tangible threat, one that the GSPC shared with AQI and with al-Qaida Core.

Moreover, the GSPC perceived this threat as coming when it was vulnerable. It remained isolated from the population in the mountains east of Algiers and the deserts of the Sahara, which limited its ability to access potential followers. Conversely, these strongholds were a valuable safe haven. It thus expanded its activities in the Sahel, particularly northern Mali, to conduct small-scale, mobile training, mostly recruits from other countries in the region. It got some additional breathing room in the Kabylie region when another Berber uprising in 2005 ended with an agreement that Algiers would reduce the security presence in the area, a move which inadvertently helped the GSPC as well (Botha 40-1).

The GSPC relied heavily on its propaganda to attract recruits because most of its actions were in the hinterlands. It framed its existing agenda and grievances in global jihadist terms that had appeal both in Algeria and beyond. It declared France as the enemy and called on Muslims to strike at its centers of corruption. It portrayed Africa as a looming front in the jihad as the United States sought to reduce its dependence on the Middle East and turned to Africa to get oil and gas. Calling Muslims from Egypt to Mauritania, Algeria to Nigeria and the other Muslims in Africa to rally
in an “alliance under the flag of jihad,” the GSPC warned that the American presence was a threat to them all (Kohlmann NEA Foundation).

But with the exception of the 2005 attack on the military garrison in Mauritania and the 2003 kidnapping for ransom, the GSPC was unable to execute acts commensurate with this sentiment. Its operations remained focused on its battle against the Algerian military. In December 2005, the group bombed two naval vessels at a port east of Algiers. The second bomb was timed to strike the first responders who arrived to help the wounded (Kohlmann “Two Decades”). The GSPC triumphantly bragged about its ability to penetrate the secure area. But the attack also reflected the parochial agenda that continued to dominate its actions.

Complicated by distance and security conditions, the negotiations between al-Qaida and the GSPC were proceeding slowly. The GSPC regularly heralded al-Qaida and recognized bin Laden’s leadership; yet al-Qaida did not offer reciprocal endorsements. Then the prospects for an alliance were damaged when the primary advocate, initiator, and liaison, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, was killed in June 2006. His tenure had been a double-edged sword for al-Qaida. Without him, al-Qaida would have been absent from the premiere jihad of the time. But his brutal and indiscriminate violence, particularly against the Shia, had alienated many Muslims and was reminiscent of the discredited Algerian conflict. The backlash came to a head in 2006 when the Sunni tribes began working with the United States against AQI. In October 2006, AQI transitioned to the “Islamic State in Iraq.” Al-Qaida no longer had a named franchise in Iraq, though its association with ISI was well-known. The benefits and drawbacks to sharing its name with another organization were never clearer.

Nonetheless, the GSPC sought to emulate its hero, Zarqawi, and to turn Algeria into another Iraq. This was perhaps most apparent when the group produced a propaganda video featuring a beheading that August. Though beheadings were not a new tactic in Algeria, this appeared to be an emulation of the belated AQI leader. Such an action seemed unlikely to endear the GSPC to al-Qaida.
The tactic was discouraged even by Zawahiri, who urged Zarqawi to cease these counterproductive spectacles. He explained to Zarqawi in an intercepted letter:

Among the things which the feelings of the Muslim populace who love and support you will never find palatable—also—are the scenes of slaughtering the hostages. You shouldn't be deceived by the praise of some of the zealous young men and their description of you as the shaykh of the slaughterers, etc. They do not express the general view of the admirer and the supporter of the resistance in Iraq, and of you in particular by the favor and blessing of God. And your response, while true, might be: Why shouldn't we sow terror in the hearts of the Crusaders and their helpers? And isn't the destruction of the villages and the cities on the heads of their inhabitants more cruel than slaughtering? And aren't the cluster bombs and the seven ton bombs and the depleted uranium bombs crueler than slaughtering? And isn't killing by torture crueler than slaughtering? And isn't violating the honor of men and women more painful and more destructive than slaughtering?

All of these questions and more might be asked, and you are justified. However this does not change the reality at all, which is that the general opinion of our supporter does not comprehend that, and that this general opinion falls under a campaign by the malicious, perfidious, and fallacious campaign by the deceptive and fabricated media. And we would spare the people from the effect of questions about the usefulness of our actions in the hearts and minds of the general opinion that is essentially sympathetic to us.

And I say to you with sure feeling and I say: That the author of these lines has tasted the bitterness of American brutality, and that my favorite wife's chest was crushed by a concrete ceiling and she went on calling for aid to lift the stone block off her chest until she breathed her last, may God have mercy on her and accept her among the martyrs. As for my young daughter, she was afflicted by a cerebral hemorrhage, and she continued for a whole day suffering in pain until she expired. And to this day I do not know the location of the graves of my wife, my son, my daughter, and the rest of the three other families who were martyred in the incident and who were pulverized by the concrete ceiling, may God have mercy on them and the Muslim martyrs. Were they brought out of the rubble, or are they still buried beneath it to this day?

However, despite all of this, I say to you: that we are in a battle, and that more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. And that we are in a media battle in a race for the hearts and minds of our Umma. And that however far our capabilities reach, they will never be equal to one thousandth of the capabilities of the kingdom of Satan that is waging war on us. And we can kill the captives by bullet. That would achieve that which is sought after without exposing ourselves to the questions and answering to doubts. We don't need this (al-Zawahiri).

The GSPC's use of this tactic thus ran the risk of stoking al-Qaida's existing concerns about the Algerians' predisposition for excessive violence that alienated the public. In addition, from al-Qaida's position, it was difficult to be fully reassured that the GSPC was not infiltrated, as was
commonly believed. Al-Qaida’s two biggest concerns with the GSPC were difficult to fully resolve with the distance and security constraints. After over a year of discussions, given these unresolved issues, coupled with the loss of Zarqawi, the prospects for an alliance were uncertain.

*Franchises: A Mixed Blessing*

Al-Qaida’s initial foray into franchises had been mixed; AQI had been damaged both by Zarqawi’s conduct and then his death. He had proven impossible to control. Al-Qaida sought to gain more influence over AQI—part of the Mujahidin Shura Council and soon to be part of the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI)—as it regrouped following Zarqawi’s death. Another franchise with a group over which al-Qaida had limited control posed similar risks. But there were more powerful countervailing forces at work. With the impending five-year anniversary of the 9/11 attacks and the loss of Zarqawi, al-Qaida needed to demonstrate its continuing viability and cachet. Its name had been associated with many attacks, individuals, and groups over which it had no control. It wanted to broaden its brand to show its leadership over the movement carefully while protecting it from misuses, a combination that proved difficult.

In August—prior to the 9/11 anniversary—Zawahiri announced that EIG had merged with al-Qaida, and together they would form “one line, facing its enemies” (“Al-Zawahiri: Egyptian militant group joins al Qaeda”). As discussed in Chapters 8-9, the announcement was met with denials by several EIG leaders. It was a symbolic gesture that solidified the de facto status of the EIG members who had rejected the ceasefire initiative almost ten years ago and opted to remain with al-Qaida. Yet it fell well short of solidifying al-Qaida’s stature as a leader of the Sunni jihadist movement, and it was not an expansion of al-Qaida’s reach.

Franchises were a way for al-Qaida to both cement existing relationships and announce new ones. Numerous partners that were co-located with al-Qaida or long-time allies were either not taking or not being offered the al-Qaida name. The GSPC, with all of its problems, was a desirable
partner in terms of expansion. An alliance with the GSPC offered al-Qaida an opportunity to extend its influence into the Maghreb—envisioned as part of the future caliphate—where there was an under-utilized following, as evidenced by the flow of North Africans into Iraq. The GSPC had expressed a willingness to adhere to al-Qaida’s agenda, though it had not meaningfully demonstrated an ability to do so. It had repeatedly recognized al-Qaida as the vanguard of the movement, a key criterion for al-Qaida to recognize an affiliate. Allying with the GSPC provided al-Qaida with representation in the Maghreb, which none of its other Maghreb partners living in exile could credibly do. Unable to expand on its own, al-Qaida adapted to use its alliances to serve this function.

In addition to expanding al-Qaida’s reach, the GSPC had tangible assets to offer al-Qaida that were in short supply. While its strongholds were not ideal for influencing the Algerian public, safe havens were in exceedingly short supply. The GSPC was willing to use its sanctuaries, especially in the Sahel, for small-scale training. It was more accessible than al-Qaida in Pakistan, especially for new recruits who required basic preparation before deploying to the conflict zones (Mekhennet et al.; Hunt 10).

An alliance with al-Qaida offered the GSPC a way to compensate for its most glaring deficiency, its reputation. The GSPC was saddled with the tainted Algerian legacy and a reputation for being infiltrated. It was irrelevant in its homeland, even among those who were motivated by jihadist causes. What al-Qaida offered in an alliance was not a cure all for these problems, but it offered a way for the GSPC to reinvent itself and become relevant in the changed environment. The GSPC wanted to come out of isolation and into the global jihadist fold in the hopes that it would bring in new members and invigorate those that it still had. In the face of defeat in Algeria, some had surrendered. Those that were left were preparing to broaden and escalate their fight in a gamble that doing so would keep the organization alive. It probably hoped that al-Qaida would also
share its traditional resources, particularly money and expertise, though these assets were in much shorter supply in the current environment.

In the end, the groups had sufficient promise to fill one another’s organizational needs and ample identity affinity. On the 9/11 anniversary, Zawahiri announced that the GSPC had joined al-Qaida.

The GSPC has joined Qaida al-Jihad, under the blessing and mercy of Allah. We pray to Allah that this event would be a thorn in the neck of the American and French crusaders and their allies, and an arrow in the heart of the French traitors and apostates. We ask Allah to help our brothers of the GSPC to hit the foundations of the Crusader alliance, primarily their old leader the infidel United States, praise be on Allah (qtd. in Hunt 10).

The GSPC responded on September 14, affirming its commitment and union with al-Qaida.

We are glad to inform our Islamic nation and our Muslim brothers around the world about the great news which the mujahidin have been waiting for... the news of the merging of the Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat in Algeria with Al-Qaida, and swearing bayat [an oath of allegiance] to the Mujahid Shaykh Abu Abdullah Usama Bin Laden, may Allah protect him... The destruction of war, the difficulty of the present situation, and the unified coalition of our enemies against us make it necessary for us to confront this coalition with our own coalition, their alliance with our alliance, face their unified forces against our unified forces... The United States of America will only be defeated by a United States of Islam... After a long period of careful observation, it became clear to us that our brothers in Al-Qaida organization under the lead of Mujahid Shaykh Usama Bin Laden—may Allah protect him—are the best ones in this era to unify the scattered Muslims against their enemies and to lead them in their present war... We have discovered that which makes the crusaders most angry, sad, and regretful is our union with our brothers from the Al-Qaida organization... We have decided to swear bayat to Shaykh Usama Bin Laden and to continue our jihad in Algeria as soldiers under his command, for him to use us in the cause of Allah when and where he sees fit... The Salafist Group for Prayer and Combat considers itself to be one brick in constructing the future Islamic State (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades” 21).

However, the negotiations were not complete. Al-Qaida opted to make the announcement while some matters remained unsettled. It wanted to be able to make an announcement on the 9/11 anniversary that would demonstrate its continuing strength and leadership, particularly given AQI's precipitous fall in Iraq. But the allying groups had not yet agreed on the scope of the GSPC's responsibility. Al-Qaida had other North African allies to consider; however, all had suffered major blows in the years since 9/11 and none were primarily resident in the region anymore. The LIFG,
the Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM), and the Tunisian Islamic Combatant Group (TICG) were all operating in exile, even prior to 9/11. They were not a position to take on the responsibility of rallying the jihadist forces in the region. While all of these groups—or at least factions of them—were closer to al-Qaida than the GSPC, their organizational structures were in tatters after a series of arrests and deaths of key figures since 9/11.

This was a conundrum for al-Qaida as it sought to erase the existing nation-state names and replace them with titles of regions in the future caliphate. Anointing the GSPC as the al-Qaida organization for the region was a potential source of friction with these other North Africa groups. The GIA's legacy loomed large for the LIFG, as the group recalled bitterly the murder of LIFG members at the hands of the GIA. Nonetheless, al-Qaida opted to give the GSPC responsibility for the Maghreb with the title, al-Qaida of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The GSPC characterized the name change to “as an indication of the group's vibrancy, the strength of its coalition and the sincerity of the link between the mujahidin in Algeria, and other brothers from the Al-Qaida organization.... We were cautious about this matter from the first day of the merger.” While the announcement of the merger came from Zawahiri, the GSPC indicated in its statement that it had to wait for bin Laden's approval for the name change, which was the reason for the delay (Kohlmann “Two Decades”).

The groups' announcements attribute their alliance to a common cause against shared adversaries and the corresponding need to balance the “Jewish-Crusader” alliance with their own. They also accommodated one another's positions. Al-Qaida invoked the GSPC’s traditional concern with France in the announcement. The French were already among al-Qaida’s enemies, but Paris was a distant second strategic concern, if that, after the United States and the United Kingdom. Its inclusion in Zawahiri’s statement was an acknowledgement of the validity of the GSPC’s position against France. Yet he did not emphasize the GSPC’s primary enemy, the Algerian Government, in
the statement. For its part, the GSPC focused much of its statement on the United States, though it did not disavow its traditional cause. It pledged to “continue our jihad in Algeria as soldiers” under bin Laden’s command. Both had made adjustments, at least rhetorically, to create more complementary narratives.

10.8 AQIM: A New and Improved GSPC?

What did this alliance mean? The two groups were not highly inter-dependent in terms of their resources, personnel, and command and control. AQIM was not dependent on al-Qaida, although AQIM was in most respects the weaker group and probably hoped that resources would flow from al-Qaida. A senior counterterrorism official at the State Department at the time of the merger speculated that al-Qaida may have provided AQIM with an initial influx of money to support its impending offensive (Byman Breaking the Bonds 16).

The GSPC was publicly subordinate to al-Qaida, but this did not translate into al-Qaida control over AQIM. With the distance separating the two groups and the hurdles to communication, this was not a practical option. In agreeing to the alliance, AQIM had signed onto al-Qaida’s agenda. How that agenda would be implemented in the region had to be largely left to the discretion of AQIM. The group sought bin Laden’s input into its vision and got his blessing to target France in early 2007. Bin Laden told AQIM:

That infidel country [France] has colonized the Muslim countries for a long time, and here it is today backing with all its might the group of infidels that is ruling the land of Algeria with iron and fire. The Islamic duty obligates us to fight that country even on its own ground, particularly as it is pursuing the mujahidin on its territories and in neighboring countries and subjecting them to harm and hatching conspiracies against them. It is unquestionably an ally for the Americans and Jews. Stemming from the responsibility of brotherhood in religion and the duty to extend support and cooperation, we urge our Muslim brothers everywhere to express their support and solidarity with you, to assist and back you with what they can and whatever is available to them, and to pray for you and impart their advice and guidance. From our side, and while taking precautions, we have given orders to contact you in order to agree on the targets most painful to the enemy in the east and west of its country (qtd. in Botha 62).
Sharing a name, their reputations were now intertwined. The alliance was not the product of a close relationship and years of collaboration; it was an effort to build one.

The merger and name change were an opportunity for the GSPC, now AQIM, to reset its organizational age. The change of leadership, loss of members from the amnesty that had ended in August 2006, particularly Hattab's surrender, and the merger announcement created an opening to revisit its organizational frames and routines. This included revisiting its tactics and targets as well as taking a much more prominent public profile with its propaganda.

Since 2004, the new leadership had pushed to adapt the GSPC’s identity to create more affinity with al-Qaida. Since the change of leadership, the GSPC’s narrative had evolved to be less Algeria-centric. It incorporated more of al-Qaida’s global narrative into its own, although certain aspects of it remained distinctly Algerian, like its focus on France (Botha 62). The group still had an Arab ethnic identity, though it had to negotiate this identity with some care as some of its potential growth came from sub-Saharan African countries to the south—some of which did not have an Arab identity—such as Niger or Nigeria. For all practical purposes, the group remained Algerian in terms of its composition, particularly senior positions and leadership, and its identity.

AQIM soon modified its tactics and targeting to reflect its new position. It conducted several improvised explosive device attacks against convoys of foreign nationals working in the energy sector (“Al-Qa’ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).” It touted its compliance with the global agenda following these small-scale attacks and exaggerated their scope. Even before the name change was announced, the GSPC ambushed a bus carrying foreign contractors. The group announced that it “targeted crusaders working for the American company Brown & Root.... This operation took place on Sunday afternoon... with the detonation of a bomb on a bus carrying no less than 20 crusaders” (Kohlmann “GSPC Claims Credit”). The Algerian Interior Ministry reported that the attack killed an Algerian driver and wounded one American, four Britons, two Lebanese, a
Canadian, and an additional Algerian. The group’s statement emphasized the operation as an attack on American interests, a clear effort to comply with al-Qaida’s vision. Citing the number of “crusaders” in the bus was probably an effort to deflect criticism for an attack that succeeded only in killing an Algerian. In March 2007, it struck a Russian company, killing one Russian and three Algerian gendarmeries (“Incident Summary for GTDID 200703030002”). It portrayed this attack as a “gift” for the Chechens (Kohlmann “Two Decades” 22). These attacks were not particularly sophisticated, but demonstrated a desire to accommodate al-Qaida by taking on a more international agenda within the scope of its capabilities.

The GSPC and even its GIA roots were still readily visible in the AQIM’s actions and rhetoric. In February, it bombed a series of police stations in the zone east of Algiers, the region that had borne the brunt of the GSPC’s violence to date. Droukdal urged police and other security officials to join AQIM or be targeted, in language reminiscent of the GIA. In early March, the group went on a blitz, striking almost twenty military and police targets, including checkpoints, military posts, vehicles, police stations, and a Canadian company being guarded by Algerian security services. The group’s Algeria agenda was clearly alive and well—even rejuvenated—just as the group had hoped.

The GSPC’s ability to penetrate the capital had been extremely circumscribed for years. Then on April 11, 2007, AQIM conducted simultaneous suicide attacks against the Prime Minister’s residence and a police station in Algiers. Twenty-four people were killed in the blasts, all Algerians (“Incident Summary for GTDID 200704110001”). The targets were in line with the GSPC’s agenda, and the selection was Algeria-centric. Yet there were two important changes. First, the GSPC had long eschewed bombings in public places as part of its pledge to avoid the indiscriminate targeting of civilians engaged in by its predecessor. This attack demonstrated a willingness to loosen those restraints to a degree previously unseen under the GSPC.
Even more significantly, the attack was conducted using suicide bombers. This tactic was virtually unknown in Algeria up until that point. AQIM’s incorporation of suicide bombings was a reflection of two factors: its alliance and the decay of the group’s traditional insurgent capabilities. Suicide attackers were a visible demonstration of its embrace of al-Qaida. Such attacks also garnered more publicity than the group’s other operations. Equally as important, AQIM’s decision to use suicide bombers was a result of the group’s changed capability composition. Over time, it had lost combat-hardened fighters who could not be readily replaced. The recruits it attracted were motivated, but inexperienced. The suicide bombers it deployed were from “easily exploitable groups,” such as youth, the elderly, and terminally ill (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 7). The reset of the group’s organizational age with the merger opened up opportunities to consider new tactics, including suicide attacks, which, by 2007, were used in most Sunni jihad conflicts.

Yet there was still enough GSPC remaining within AQIM that the use of suicide attacks and bombings in public places was controversial within the group. One commander who left the organization in protest reported that religious authorities within the group had not sanctioned the use of suicide bombers and that such attacks posed unacceptable risks to civilians. Members of AQIM’s shura council objected to the use of the tactic in a theatre that was not being occupied by “infidel forces” (Botha 80). Always savvy to such opportunities, the Algeria Government offered amnesty from prosecution for members who left for this reason (Mekhennet et al.). Droukdal was unfazed by the dissent and issued a video embracing the AQIM’s use of suicide attacks and calling for volunteers.

We have decided from now on to execute suicide attacks as our strategic weapon in our confrontation with the enemies. Therefore, in order to carry out this decision, we have sent our orders to the various leaders across different regions, the commanders of our soldiers and the leaders of the brigades and fighting units, to open the door for those who wish to volunteer to become martyrs. Also, we are trying to motivate Muslims and encourage them to sacrifice themselves in the cause of Allah. We have also asked them to supply any necessary supplies required by the martyrs, and also to help us in choosing precise targets which will help us to achieve our jihadi goals (Kohlmann “Two Decades”).
The group then used suicide attacks to penetrate hardened targets, striking two military barracks with suicide bombers. This appeared initially to be an effort to respond to the concerns about civilian causalities while using the tactic to increase the lethality of operations against the military. Then AQIM deployed a suicide bomber to assassinate President Bouteflika. The attacker prematurely detonated in the crowd awaiting the President’s arrival, killing more than a dozen bystanders ("Incident Summary for GTDID 200709060002"). In its desire to strike such targets, AQIM was clearly willing to risk civilian causalities in a way that the GSPC had not been.

In late September, Zawahiri urged AQIM and followers to oust the French and Spain from the Maghreb in order to regain parts of Spain, Portugal, and France ("Al-Qaeda ‘Issues France Threat.’") for the caliphate. It appeared as though there was a division of labor, and AQIM was not responsible for these parts of the future caliphate.

Restoring Al-Andalus is a trust on the shoulders of the nation in general and on your shoulders in particular, and you will not be able to do that without first cleansing the Muslim Maghreb of the children of France and Spain, who have come back again after your fathers and grandfathers sacrificed their blood cheaply in the path of God to expel them. So be faithful to your religion…. and to the blood of your fathers, and stand with your sons the mujahidin against the Crusaders and their children qtd. in Botha 63).

The next day, AQIM deployed a suicide bomber to target a convoy of workers from a French company that was involved in a dam construction project. AQIM issued an Internet statement against France, declaring it "public enemy number one" (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 302). The allies appeared to be in synch a year after the merger was announced.

Droukdal’s connection to al-Qaida via Zarqawi was more than a coincidence; he modeled his strategy in Algeria after the Jordanian. After Zarqawi’s death, the war in Iraq still had resonance in Algeria and elsewhere in the Maghreb. Documents recovered in Syria in September 2007 revealed that of more than 700 foreign fighters that went to Iraq after August 2006, 305 had come from Saudi Arabia, 137 from Libya, 64 from Algeria, 50 from Morocco, 38 from Tunisia, 14 from Jordan,
six from Turkey and two from Egypt (Botha 161). North Africans remained an important source of foreign fighters and one that AQIM still sought to capitalize on, either by attracting returnees or by using the call to fight in Iraq as a hook to recruit people who were retained in Algeria instead (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 105-6). The group denied being a major recipient of returnees saying that “there is a limited and very small number of the mujahedin brothers who fought in Iraq than came back and joined us,” which was likely true given the tendency to use foreign fighters as suicide attackers in Iraq (“An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal”).

Droukdal was not content to export manpower. He wanted to turn Algeria into an Iraq-like combat zone. To that end, on December 11, two suicide bombers detonated truck bombs at the United Nations building and the Algerian Constitutional Courthouse in Algiers, killing over forty people and wounding over a hundred, most of them Algerians (“Incident Summary for GTDID 200712110010”; Department of State 2006 Country Reports 302). The group declared the U.N. building—where seventeen U.N. workers were killed—“a nest of apostasy” (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades”). The attack was a tribute of sorts to Zarqawi’s attack on the U.N. in Baghdad in 2003. AQIM equated its ability to penetrate the security in the protected neighborhood in Algiers with AQI’s breaching of the Green Zone in Baghdad (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 103). The group touted a death toll of over a hundred people and issued tributes to the attackers. A number of those killed were university students riding a bus passing by the courthouse when the blast occurred. This realization may account for AQIM’s subsequent statement in which it insisted that Muslims “avoid bases for the crusaders, apostates, and the military” (qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades”). AQIM had clearly departed from the GSPC’s pledge to avoid civilian causalities, despite its insistence to the contrary. In many respects, it was a return to the early GIA, as the group demanded the expulsion of foreigners, warned civilians to stay away from the government, and railed against the French far enemy.
The AQIM was proving to be a combination of the GIA, the GSPC, and something distinctively its own. On December 26th, AQIM killed four Mauritanian soldiers in an encounter, describing the attacks as coming at a time when “the Israel flag was seen raised in the beloved, but tarnished city of Nouakchott” qtd. in Kohlmann “Two Decades”). The statement heralding this attack then listed ten other attacks conducted in recent days, all against the Algeria security services. Attacks with any international angle continued to be featured prominently, even if they were few relative to its more traditional attacks.

2007 was a pivotal year for AQIM. The name change was the culmination of an adaptation that the group’s leadership set into motion following Hattab’s deposition. It enacted this adaptation with a high tempo of attacks; a scale of it operations that varied widely; and the tactics which were a mix of old and new. It carried out eight suicide attacks that resulted in large numbers of government and civilian casualties and dozens of attacks against the security services. Its attacks took on a profile not seen in Algeria in a decade—penetrating the capital not once, but twice—and even striking outside of Algeria. It appeared as though the GSPC’s reinvention through its alliance with al-Qaida, while costly and an act of desperation, had worked.

The Algerian Government did not stand idly by during these developments. It exerted constant pressure, but was clearly caught off guard by some of its longtime adversary’s adaptations. The Algerian security services killed and arrested more than 1,100 terrorists in 2007, compared to 650 in 2006. The GSPC’s central zone emir was killed in September and his deputy arrested the same month. However, the State Department chided its CT partner in its annual report on terrorism saying that “[t]he Algerian military and security forces were often criticized as slow to adapt to AQIM’s changing tactics as well as slow to accept that they faced a better organized international threat in the form of AQIM rather than a purely internal threat” (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 113).
AQIM membership diversified to include other nationalities—not an entirely new development, but an increasingly noticeable one. Droukdal acknowledged as much in an interview when he told the New York Times that “[t]he large proportion of our mujahedin comes from Algeria. And there is a considerable number of Mauritanians, Libyans, Moroccans, Tunisians, Mali’s [sic] and Nigerians brothers” (“An Interview with Abdelmalek Droukdal”). The vast majority of AQIM’s non-Algerian members came from the Sahel, rather than the Maghreb as its name would suggest. More than just acquiring members from outside of Algeria, it was creating relationships with newly-formed jihadist elements from neighboring countries. It trained them in northern Mali or eastern Algeria and then they returned home to implement their own plans (Department of State 2006 Country Reports 105-6). In early 2010, AQIM issued a statement to the Nigerian group Boko Haram, offering to train its members, sympathizing with the plight of Muslims in Nigeria, and lamenting the lack of attention their plight receives even from fellow Muslims (NEA Foundation). In so doing, AQIM was building its own network of relationships that had the potential to develop into alliances. In other words, AQIM was becoming its own regional alliance hub.

Despite its diversifying membership, AQIM was not accepted as al-Qaida’s representative for the region by all of its peers. A faction of the deeply divided and embattled LIFG announced its own alliance with al-Qaida in November 2007. This move was contested within LIFG with the group largely divided along the same lines as the Egyptians groups; members co-located with al-Qaida in South Asia pushed for the alliance, while LIFG members in Europe and elsewhere denied the move and declared their continuing focus on Qadhafi’s regime. The fellow North African group’s unwillingness to be submerged under the AQIM moniker reflected the difference in the relationship dynamics between al-Qaida’s North African partners. Each had its own alliance arrangement with al-Qaida. AQIM did seek to develop some of its own contacts and connections outside the region;
one AQIM hostage reported hearing contact between his captors and jihadists in Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan (Mekkennet et al.).

AQIM could not sustain both the operations profile and tempo it established in 2007, though it maintained a fairly high operational tempo the following year (Department of State 2007 Country Reports). Its actions in 2008 were largely consistent with the targets and tactics it established in 2007. It reduced the number of civilian causalities its attacks caused by primarily striking security services, though it continued to target foreign workers and use suicide attackers. Most of AQIM’s operations in 2008 were in zone two, east of Algiers, the GSPC’s traditional operations theatre (Filiu “Could Al-Qaeda Turn” 6).

AQIM then expanded its attacks into Mauritania. This was bolstered by the influx of Mauritanian recruits, perhaps the largest—though a distant second—contingent after Algerians. The AQIM had repeatedly referenced the “nefarious” Israeli presence in Mauritania; in 2008, it struck it directly, though not particularly effectively. It attacked the Israeli Embassy in Nouakchott and a nearby nightclub, wounding one French person in the action. Then in September, AQIM murdered and beheaded eleven Mauritanian soldiers (Department of State 2007 Country Reports 13). In June 2009, it gunned down an American humanitarian worker in the Mauritanian capital, the first time the group had killed an American (Filiu “Could Al-Qaeda Turn” 9). Seemingly unable to penetrate Algiers again after the two devastating attacks in 2007, AQIM adapted and turned to a more vulnerable capital to its southwest.

It also returned to the opportunistic kidnappings of foreigners undertaken so successfully by el-Para in 2003. In February, AQIM took two Austrian civilians hostage and released them eight months later after a ransom was paid. Over the course of the next few years, its kidnapping capability was bolstered by its willingness to pay others for Western hostages. Zawahiri did not
express his reservations about beheadings to Droukdal as AQIM continued to use the tactic, including on a British tourist the group kidnapped (M. Weaver).

The most apparent area of collaboration between al-Qaida and AQIM continued to be against the French. In August 2009, Zawahiri issued an anti-French statement and AQIM attacked the French Embassy in Nouakchott days later. Then after AQIM kidnapped—or acquired—French hostages in 2010, it issued a statement publicly deferring the terms of their release to bin Laden. Bin Laden demanded a French withdrawal from Afghanistan, which the French refused to do.

Consultations and cooperation continued behind the scenes as well, although the security environment made communication difficult and irregular. For example, in March 2011, AQIM wrote to al-Qaida leadership. In the letter it provided a generally positive report of the state of the group’s efforts and sought al-Qaida advice on areas where it was experiencing problems. AQIM explained to al-Qaida leaders that:

[o]verall, the brothers [AQIM fighters] have been impacted [most] by ambushes in the north of the country using infrared sensors (which were provided to the Algerian tyrant by the Americans). As for the desert, the brothers are concerned about the Russian Cobra helicopters (MI-34) with laser-guided missiles; they are impacting on the four-wheel-drive vehicles, which are indispensable in the Sahara Desert. Underlying that is the problem of badly needed money for good-quality weapons to counter these menacing helicopters; the mujahidin don’t have single one of them, nor a single missile. Brother, it would be very good if the brothers there could let us know their expertise in that regard, that is, ways to counter the 6-km infrared sensors and MI-34 helicopters (“SOCOM-2012-0000011”).

Al-Qaida attempted to provide such guidance and other advice, particularly based on its experience in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example, in late 2010, bin Laden wrote Atiyah, saying,

I want the brothers in Islamic Maghreb to know that planting trees helps al-Mujahidin and gives them cover. Planting trees is not expensive and it should be done immediately after rain. They should ask people to keep animals and livestock away from them. Trees would give al-Mujahidin the freedom to move around especially if the enemy sends spying aircrafts to the area (“SOCOM-2012-0000015”).

Perhaps most notably, al-Qaida sought AQIM’s—as well as AQAP’s—assistance and support for an operative, “Shaykh Yunis” who was responsible for planning external operations in the West, al-
Qaida’s top priority. Yunis’s Mauritanian nationality may have been part of the reason why al-Qaida believed AQIM would be able and willing to help him, but nonetheless, this request suggests al-Qaida sought to use its allies to fulfill one of its continuing organizational shortfalls in terms of external operations. Bin Laden tasked Atiyah with writing a letter to Droukdal and AQAP’s leader asking that they “put forward their best in cooperating with Shaykh Yunis in whatever he asks of them” (“SOCOM-2012-0000019”). The days of al-Qaida providing AQIM with financial assistance were short-lived as bin Laden now told Atiyah to prepare AQIM for a forthcoming al-Qaida request for a 200,000 Euros to support Yunis’s work (“SOCOM-2012-0000019”).

Any hopes that bin Laden’s death in 2011 offered an opening to drive a wedge between the two groups were quickly dashed. AQIM quickly swore allegiance to Zawahiri shortly after bin Laden’s death. Though AQIM was highly deferential to bin Laden over the years, Zawahiri had been involved in much of the interaction with AQIM, including the public announcement of the alliance and subsequent statements that AQIM responded to with action. The head of AQIM’s Council of Notables issued an audio statement in July to Zawahiri pledging:

> [a]s long as you lead us on the path of truth and jihad for the Cause of Allah, then we pledge to you to be obedient, and we consider ourselves one of the arrows of Islam and jihad and you, the slave of Allah, as the archer. So, throw us wherever you wish, because you will only see from us what will cool your eyes and make you joyous (“AQIM Official Gives Allegiance to Zawahiri, Comments on Bin Laden’s Death”).

The absence of a statement directly from Droukdal led some to speculate that the allegiance is incomplete (Filiu “Al-Qaeda” 3-4). However, a statement from the head of the shura—coupled with Droukdal’s insistence on the merger, though he had no ties to bin Laden—instead suggests that the affiliation has been institutionalized into the organization. Indeed, both groups have shifted to accommodate their allies’ wishes, while remaining independent in their organizational structures and resources. They have adopted a division of labor towards their broader shared goals. For AQIM, the alliance offered the opportunity it needed to reinvent itself into an organizational
better suited for its environment. For al-Qa‘ida, the acquisition of the GSPC extended its name into the Maghreb and Sahel and demonstrated its leading role in the movement.

10.9 Conclusions and Findings of al-Qa‘ida’s Relationships with GIA & GSPC/AQIM

The GSPC/AQIM and the GIA’s relationships with al-Qa‘ida followed inverse patterns. The GIA began with a relationship with al-Qa‘ida at the time of its formation and benefited from existing trust, identity affinity, ideological solidarity, and common enemies. These indicators seemingly would predict a robust relationship. Instead, within five years, ties were completely severed and the GIA was publicly abdicated by its peers. As a result of the GIA’s conduct, the GSPC was isolated from other jihadist groups at its inception and for five years thereafter. It took significant organizational changes as well as dramatic shifts in the threat environment for the GSPC to join the “community” of Sunni militant groups and ally with al-Qa‘ida.

Despite the seemingly robust ideological basis for an alliance, even at its height, alliances involving the GIA were limited. The GIA’s organizational dynamics, particularly its unstable culture and its lack of recognized organizational needs, acted as a barrier. Overtures from al-Qa‘ida, the LIFG, and others were sometimes accepted, but did not create an inter-dependent cycle of cooperation. Rather than a creating a sense of affinity and complementary exchange of assets over time, the GIA began rebuffing attempts by its allies to cooperate and denying requests for cooperation.

From an organizational needs perspective, the cooperation being offered to GIA was “icing on the cake,” i.e. not addressing any acute or ongoing learning or adaptation needs. The GIA enjoyed the influxes of money from al-Qa‘ida, but did not grow reliant on them. The LIFG’s additional expertise supplemented its manpower, but the size and capability of its forces, especially in the early 1990s, was already its greatest strength. On the other hand, the GIA had coveted assets that
al-Qaeda and the LIFG both sought, in particular strategically-located territory where training facilities, haven, and routes to Libya could be established. But these were continuous needs, and thus there was a mismatch of needs and assets between both dyads.

Ideological solidarity may have continued to be sufficient for the GIA to reciprocate nonetheless, if countervailing forces were not at work, namely its organizational culture. From an organizational adaptation perspective, the GIA’s paranoid organizational culture was not entirely unwarranted. In the dirty war raging in Algeria, suspicion and caution were necessary skills in order to survive. Yet these fears consumed the group, especially its leader, until no alliances were possible. The GIA’s increasingly erratic behavior, coupled with the pervasive rumors of infiltration, eroded its allies’ trust. Then its senseless violence against fellow jihadists, Islamists, and the Muslim populace eradicated any remaining sense of solidarity. Thus the only remaining basis for an alliance was their common enemies. Even that was tainted by the GIA’s focus on these other “enemies,” and finally, the sense of a shared struggle was severed.

Thus when the GSPC came into being in 1998, it had to overcome the GIA’s legacy in the eyes of multiple audiences. It focused first and foremost on attempting to repair the damage the GIA had caused through its treatment of the Algeria public. It focused on a nationalist goal and more narrowly focused its violence on security services. Thus, mending ties with fellow jihadist organizations was not a priority in light of the steep hill it had to climb to re-legitimize both itself and its cause at home. At that time, international ties would do little to endear the GSPC to its people. Moreover, by now, much of the jihadist milieu had re-located to Afghanistan and the GSPC’s lack of co-location or proximity to al-Qaeda and others made re-kindling relations a difficult, costly, and potential dangerous venture. Conversely, al-Qaeda was focused on relations with groups located in Afghanistan
After 9/11, the pressure and threat on increasingly obsolete GSPC mounted. However, under the leadership of Hattab, the GSPC was still reticent to ally with al-Qaida. Like the EIG before it and the LIFG in subsequent years, the GSPC’s founding leader was looking for ways to end to conflict, rather than escalate it. Under President Bouteflika, there was an opening—the first since the beginning of the war—for this to occur. However, unlike in the EIG and LIFG case, Hattab was unable to retain the authority and loyalty of the critical mass of the group in the both organizational decline and major changes in the environment. When internationalist elements made their move to seize control and re-direct the group, they were successful.

This organizational change—and the accompanying re-set of organizational age and thus also organizational culture, routines, and frames—coincided with yet another change in the environment, the war in Iraq. The Iraq War was a critical juncture for the GSPC’s ability to cultivate an alliance with al-Qaida. First, it provided a forum for the GSPC to interact with AQI and built personal relationships, a reputation, and ultimately, trust. While surely aware of the overall situation, Zarqawi was not privy to intimate details of the implosion in Algeria in the 1990s and, to the extent that he was, his current interactions with Algerian volunteers outweighed this historical burden. Second, the resonance of the jihad in Iraq offered the GSPC a way to replenish its steadily eroding ranks with a new generation of recruits who were motivated by this case and by extension, a more internationalist bent. Zarqawi depended on influxes on foreign volunteers to supplement the ranks of his organization and to serve as the human bombs for his attacks. Thus they had complementary organizational needs.

AQI had shades of the GIA, and the GSPC also revived aspect of the GIA during this transition. There was sufficient identity affinity to support the growing relationship in terms of ideology, ethnic identity, a developing experienced-based identity, and an enemy and victim narrative that had similar features and increasingly converged. Thus a cycle of cooperation and
accommodation developed. Moreover, when the GSPC encountered problems, turning to AQI for assistance or advice became a feature in its problem-solving frames, such as when el-Para was held hostage by Chadian rebels. Zarqawi encouraged the GSPC’s internationalism, for example publicly praising its attack on the Mauritanian military base.

The GSPC’s relationship with AQI opened the doors to an alliance with al-Qaida. While Zarqawi was an important figure in the movement, an endorsement from al-Qaida that the group’s campaign in North Africa was part of the international jihad offered a way to both shed its remaining baggage from the 1990s and a way to appeal to the generation of recruits that were shaped more by 2001 than 1991. With such an endorsement, other resources, such as funds, could follow. An alliance with al-Qaida was a way to validate the group’s embrace of the international jihad.

The GSPC’s embrace of al-Qaida thus corresponded both with a change of threat perceptions and acute organizational needs. While the GSPC had long been opposed to the United States in principle, the U.S.’s greater engagement in the region and against the GSPC as well as its military action in Iraq brought the GSPC’s threat perception more closely in line with al-Qaida. Moreover, organization changes—inextricably linked to organizational adaptation needs—were critical to re-setting its organizational receptivity to an alliance.
CHAPTER 11:
AL-QAIDA: LASHKAR-E-TAYYIBA AND PAKISTANI DEOBANDI GROUPS

“The Holy Koran has set the itinerary for the holy war. It asks Muslims to start their holy war with those infidels that live nearby. Therefore, our first target should be India, according to the Holy Koran”—Hafiz Saeed, leader of Lashkar-e-Tayyiba

11.1 Introduction

Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) is one of the most dangerous terrorist organizations active today. Its operational capability and transnational networks alone are ample reason for concern. These are compounded by its entrenched influence in the perpetually unstable and nuclear-armed Pakistan, its long-standing relationship with the Pakistani Army, its unrelenting antipathy towards India, and its pan-Islamist ambitions. The group is thus a wild card in the already-volatile security environment in the region. Like many of its militant counterparts, LT began as an outgrowth of the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. Over the next two decades, LT grew into Islamabad’s most powerful and reliable proxy against India, despite operating in an intensely competitive militant environment and lacking a sizable constituency that shares its particular religious orientation.

Unlike al-Qaida, LT has emerged unscathed in the years since 9/11, owing to the protection it receives through its relationship with the Pakistani Government, specifically the Army and its intelligence apparatus, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). Despite ample ideological similarities and an extended period of geographic proximity, these two formidable terrorist organizations have not allied, while al-Qaida has forged partnerships with less ideologically compatible Pakistani militant groups adhering to Deobandism as opposed to Salafism. The Pakistani militant landscape has a multitude of players, personalities, groups, and their fluidity. As a result, LT is often incorrectly lumped in with Deobandi Pakistani militant groups and characterized as an “al-Qaida ally.” However, important distinctions exist between LT and its Deobandi counterparts and their respective relationships with al-Qaida. While concerns mount about LT’s
potential desire and ability to follow in al-Qaida’s global jihadist path, this has not produced a close partnership between the two organizations (Cohen 11). As one LT expert aptly characterized the dynamic, LT has operated as “part of the same jihadi galaxy as these other groups, but it moved in a separate orbit” (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 30).

LT spent the decade after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in Pakistan with its guns firmly trained on India. In the meantime, al-Qaida nestled into Sudan and Afghanistan and focused its sights on the United States. The two groups cooperated selectively, sometimes engaged in mutually beneficial activities, and personal relationships developed between some of their members. While both LT and al-Qaida originated from the same anti-Soviet jihadi station, their stories read like two trains running on largely parallel tracks, sometimes intersecting, but then ultimately resuming their respective paths without making adjustments to accommodate one another. For its part, LT did not have a pressing organizational need for a partnership with an alliance hub. It had access to the resources it needed either through self-reform or through its extensive relationship with the Pakistani Army. Nor did LT stand to gain from adopting al-Qaida’s brand after 9/11, especially after 2008 when its own name gained international notoriety, though it is worth noting that no South Asian group has allied with al-Qaida in that manner. While LT assisted al-Qaida when it was under extreme duress shortly after 9/11, ultimately, LT’s decision to retain its close relationship with Islamabad contributed to the trust deficit between the two organizations that made an alliance untenable.

Like LT, the Pakistani Deobandi groups grew out of the anti-Soviet jihad and the Pakistani Government’s policy of encouraging the Islamization of society during this period. While many engaged in anti-India activity with Islamabad’s encouragement, collectively, they were not as singularly focused on India as LT. Unlike LT, the Pakistani Deobandi groups rejoiced in their co-religionist’s rise in Afghanistan and became deeply invested in the Afghan Taliban’s rule, including
its campaign against the Northern Alliance. The Taliban provided a forum for them to build ties with al-Qaida as well, given their frequent interactions, co-location, and shared investment in the Taliban. As a result of their relationship with the Taliban, Pakistani Deobandi groups and al-Qaida felt the consequences of its fall—and Islamabad’s decision to abdicate the Taliban in wake of 9/11—more acutely than LT. Pakistani Deobandi organizations suffered from far more splinters and factionalism than LT, and the result was an array of different Deobandi groups with competitive relationships with one another. After 9/11, their alliances with al-Qaida devolved from organizational-level relationships to more fluid and amorphous individual, cell-level, and network-based relationships.

This chapter is a case study of the variation in al-Qaida’s relationships with LT and its Pakistani Deobandi counterparts. It examines the ebbs and flows in LT’s interactions with al-Qaida, a relationship that rarely reached the threshold of an alliance over the course of twenty years, despite decades of geographic proximity and an ideology that had much in common as they were both Salafist groups. In contrast, the non-Salafist, Pakistani Deobandi groups worked far more closely with al-Qaida in Afghanistan both prior to and after 9/11. These relationships evolved and adapted through the turmoil, despite religious differences, and their missions converged in Afghanistan and eventually, Pakistan as well. This chapter is comprised of ten sections that examine this complex landscape over the course of three decades. The first outlines the Deobandi groups and LT’s emergence, which coincided with al-Qaida’s formation both in time and place. The second examines their respective trajectories in the years following the Soviets’ ouster from Afghanistan. The third section describes the period during the 1990s when al-Qaida was largely absent from South Asia. The fourth section compares Deobandi groups’ and LT’s identities, including their ideology, their ethnic and nationalist identities, and their narratives, particularly how these factors were interwoven with their relationships with Islamabad and al-Qaida. The fifth section assesses
how competition between the two most powerful Pakistani groups produced an escalation of violence against India. The sixth section explores the post-9/11 aftermath impact on Pakistani groups’ relationships with the state and, by extension, also with al-Qaida. The seventh section discusses the evolution of alliances in the changed environment in Pakistan. The eighth section captures the turning point in 2007 that sealed LT and the Deobandi groups’ divergent alliance paths with al-Qaida. The ninth section presents an example of how the lack of alliance between LT and al-Qaida functioned in the case of an American operative. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the reasons for the different alliance dynamics in these dyads.

11.2 Cut from the Same Cloth

Like al-Qaida, embryonic versions of LT and its Pakistani Deobandi counterparts grew out of the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s. Unlike the Arab Afghans who journeyed to Pakistan from the Middle East in late 1980s to participate in the conflict, Pakistani volunteers were readily positioned on the doorstep of Afghanistan. Moreover, their involvement was not surreptitious or discouraged. In contrast to the situations in Egypt or Algeria, where Islam posed a challenge to the existing governments, in Pakistan, the military regime of General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq promoted the Islamization of Pakistani society, including support for the jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (Coll 84).

By now, it is widely known that the CIA and Saudi Arabia’s intelligence service used Pakistan’s ISI to funnel support to the Afghan resistance to the Soviets during the 1980s (Coll 62-3). ISI’s involvement in the conflict was by no means solely a product of American encouragement. Islamabad’s efforts to covertly support Islamist elements in Afghanistan predated the United States’ involvement by at least a decade and were underway even prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979 (Jones and Fair 10). Islamabad chaffed at being sandwiched between its perennial enemy, India,
and a hostile Communist regime in Kabul. Zia feared Kabul would stoke Pashtun nationalist sentiments that existed on both sides of the Durand Line, which could threaten Pakistan's always-fragile ethnic balance. The covert proxy war was waged by both sides. For their part, the Soviet-trained Afghan security services, Soviet KGB, and India’s intelligence services supported anti-Islamabad forces and stoked violence in Pakistan (Coll 62).

Zia’s military regime seized power from the democratically-elected government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in a coup in 1977. The anti-Soviet jihad dovetailed perfectly with Zia’s goal of creating an Islamic state in Pakistan, which, after all, split from India in order to provide a homeland for Muslims (Coll 61). Investigative journalist Steven Cohen explained how, under General Zia, “Islam was at the center of his vision of a rejuvenated nation, the army at the center of his vision of a rejuvenated Pakistani state” (84). Zia spread the seeds of both Pakistan’s current militancy problem and the Army’s use of militants as proxies as tools of foreign policy. His ability to pursue this agenda was bolstered exponentially when the United States’ interest in thwarting the Soviets in Afghanistan overcame its aversion to Zia’s subversion of democracy. Soon American and Saudi aid poured into Afghan mujahidin through Zia’s Government.

Zia encouraged Pakistanis to view opposing the Soviets as a religious obligation (Tellis 2). The first Pakistani group to form and join the anti-Soviet resistance was Harakat ul-Jihad Islami (HUJI) (Abou Zahab and Roy 27). HUJI was the antecedent to a plethora of Deobandi groups that would later emerge. HUJI’s exact roots are the subject of debate, but the small Deobandi group with a number of ethnically Pashtun members soon linked up with prominent Islamist Afghan Pashtun mujahidin commanders Yunis Khalis and Jalaluddin Haqqani to participate in the fighting in Afghanistan (Abou Zahab and Roy 27; Howenstein 23). It propagated a pan-Islamist agenda, though its activities were limited to Afghanistan (Abou Zahab and Roy 27).
Among those heeding Zia's call was a Punjabi student named Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. He traveled to Paktia Province in eastern Afghanistan and joined the resistance in 1982. Lakhvi was unusual in that he was a devotee of the Salafist-oriented Ahl-e-Hadith movement in Pakistan. Ahl-e-Hadithism is an orthodox school of Sunni Islam in South Asia that is committed to following the original tenets and practices of Islam, and therefore recognizes the Quran and hadith as the only religious authorities. Ahl-e-Hadiths avidly oppose any interpretation not based solely on those two sources, and do not accept any other theology and philosophy developed during Islam’s history (Tankel Storming the Stage 26, Abou Zahab and Roy 21).

This theological tradition has a fairly small, but elite, following in Pakistan. Though its roots date back to colonial India, the Ahl-e-Hadith tradition is most simply understood as a South Asian variant of Salafism or Wahhabism—although this characterization is sometimes used derisively—in part because of the influence Saudi Arabia has exerted as early as 1920 and even more so since the 1980s (Abou Zahab 2). Ahl-e-Hadiths observe to the teachings and edicts of the Saudi authorities or “ulema” and its adherents in Pakistan have benefited from Saudi donors’ largess (Cohen 181). Credible estimates of the religious composition in Pakistan are limited, but the U.S. State Department’s Religious Freedom Report in 2006 estimated that Ahl-e-Hadith followers were, at most, five percent of the population in Pakistan (“International Religious Freedom Report 2006: Pakistan”).

The majority of Pakistani volunteers in Afghanistan were, like HUJI, followers of the Deobandism, a separate Sunni school of thought. They were both the largest and earliest participants in the anti-Soviet effort, fighting alongside their co-religionists—with whom many also shared ethnic ties as fellow Pashtuns—in Afghanistan (Abou Zahab and Roy 3-28). Deobandis were vastly over-represented in the jihad relative to their following in Pakistan, where Deobandis were—and continue to be—a distant second compared to the Sufi-derived Barelvi adherents, who
tended not to fight in Afghanistan because they generally do not regard such forms of jihad as an urgent religious obligation (Cohen 181; Abou Zahab and Roy 21). Part of the Hanafi school and also a product of colonial India, Deobandis seek to purify Islam by eliminating “un-Islamic” influences and returning to a more “pure” form of Islam. The level of adherence to the teachings of the founding Deobandi madrasa in India, Darul Uloom Deoband, tends to diminish with distance, which leads to a wide array of local variations in the faith (Howenstein 22).

In addition to HUJI, the contemporary Pakistani Deobandi militant groups’ roots are traceable to the Deobandi political party Jamiat-e Ulama-e Islam (JUI), which was created in northwest Pakistan in 1945 (Abou Zahab 2). The Deobandis’ extensive madrasas and mosque system in Pakistan served as a prime recruiting ground for the anti-Soviet jihad as well as a breeding ground for the future Afghan Taliban. Zia’s regime supported the proliferation of madaris, or religious schools, in order to engrain Sunni Islam into the national identity, thereby stymying a resurgence of Shi’ism (Jaffrelot 90-1). In addition to being the dominant faith of Pakistani anti-Soviet jihadists, the majority of the Pakistani militant groups that subsequently formed overwhelmingly adhered to the Deobandi tradition (Cohen 181). The proliferation of various Deobandi groups was more a reflection of dominance of cults of personality and ethnic differences than genuine ideological differences among Deobandis (Abou Zahab and Roy 28).

In addition to the Islamist fervor directed towards Afghanistan, sectarian tensions in Pakistan intensified during this period. Zia’s regime cultivated this sentiment as well in order to diminish Iranian influence in the region. In the mid-1980s, a virulently anti-Shia Deobandi political party, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), grew out of JUI to counter Shia influence in Pakistan (Jaffrelot 88). SSP sought the imposition of Sunni sharia law in Pakistan, thereby stunting the ability of Shia minority in Pakistan to practice their religion or be recognized as Muslims. Shias make up about
fifteen to twenty-five percent of Pakistan’s population (Jaffrelot 86). Pakistan quickly became a proxy battlefield in the broader contest between Sunnis and Shias in the Muslim world.

Emboldened by the 1979 revolution in Iran and support from Tehran, Shias in Pakistan resisted the Zia regime’s attempts to foist Sunni traditions on them. In addition to its displeasure over the treatment of Shia in Pakistan, the revolutionary regime in Tehran readily recalled Zia’s support for the Shah’s regime up until its final days and recoiled in horror from Islamabad’s decision to ally with “the Great Satan,” the United States, in the war in Afghanistan against the Soviets (Jaffrelot 87). Fears that Tehran’s influence and meddling in neighboring Pakistan were a harbinger of Tehran’s plans to export its revolutionary brand of Shi’ism abroad also precipitated Riyadh and Baghdad’s efforts to funnel support to SSP and other Sunni hardliners. These two strains of militant Deobandi activity—external jihad in Afghanistan and internal sectarianism—were not separate endeavors; rather they were two sides of the same coin.

Despite their common origins, shared adversaries, and similar Sunni orientations, Ahl-e-Hadith and Deobandi adherents were often at odds with one another, disagreeing about which practices represented forbidden innovations and which were the “correct” and pure interpretations of Islam. For example, Ahl-e-Hadith followers denounced Deobandis’ practice of reciting the first chapter of the Quran at shrines as a false idolatry and sometimes destroyed Deobandi gravesites (Abou Zahab 2). Prior to this era, while both were religiously conservative, neither Deobandism nor the Ahl-e-Hadith tradition had a history of violent radicalism (Abou Zahab 2). Once unleashed, these forces proved to be an enduring feature, though a minority one, for both faiths.

Despite his conviction that Deobandis were ill-informed, Ahl-e-Hadith adherent Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi initially fought alongside Deobandi mujahidin in Afghanistan. Then in 1984, Lakhvi created a small Ahl-e-Hadith group to wage “true” jihad against the Soviets, in accordance with its interpretation of Islam (Tankel Storming the Stage 3). Lakhvi’s group concentrated its efforts in
Konar Province—where there were pockets of Afghan Salafists—which offered a more comfortable religious environment for Lakhvi and his men (“Lashkar-e-Toiba”).

Meanwhile, two professors at the University of Engineering and Technology in Lahore who were also graduates of Islamic University in Medina, Hafiz Saeed and Zafar Iqbal, formed an Ahl-e-Hadith organization dedicated to missionary work and proselytization. They then united their efforts with Lakhvi’s group in the late 1980s. Together, they formed Markaz al-Dawa al-Irshad (MDI), or “the Center for Preaching and Guidance.” The concept of *dawa*—meaning preaching and proselytization—was embedded in its original name and was a key mission for the group. The new entity had support from the Zia regime and by extension, the entity charged with managing the anti-Soviet jihad, the ISI, from the outset (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 3). Saeed was selected to be the group’s overall leader. As both a Saudi-educated Islamic scholar and an engineer, he was considered the most qualified to lead this dual-mission organization (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 3). Lakhvi continued to manage the wing within the group dedicated to jihadist operations—a division of labor between the two that has persisted.

The group maintained an equal commitment to both jihad and missionary work, which set it apart from its Deobandi counterparts who were dedicated only to jihad operating in the increasingly crowded militant field in Pakistan (Abou Zahab 3). MDI initially concentrated on organizing and supporting Pakistanis who wanted to participate in the anti-Soviet resistance. In this respect, it was akin to bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam’s Maktab al-Khidamat, the Services Bureau for Arab volunteers created around the same time (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 3). In fact, Azzam was also one of MDI’s original seventeen founders and the two entities shared personnel and resources during this period (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 20). Even in the early days, MDI did not limit its ambitions to servicing the Afghan jihad. It planned to channel the energy surrounding
the anti-Soviet jihad to build a “true” Islamic society in Pakistan, in accordance with its Ahl-e-Hadith tradition.

Unlike al-Qaida, Azzam’s conceptualization of jihad as a duty to protect Muslims from non-Muslim aggressors had a lasting impact on MDI. Like Azzam, MDI did not endorse revolutionary jihadist efforts to topple “apostate” Muslim regimes (Abou Zahab 4). At this early point, MDI’s ideology had much in common with the wealthy Saudi benefactor of Maktab al-Khidamat, as both viewed Riyadh as a religious authority. While jihad was a duty in Afghanistan, MDI sought to build an Islamic society in Pakistan through proselytization and conversion, not by overthrowing the Zia regime or perpetrating violence against the regime or fellow Pakistanis. The group preached that fighting jihad was only legitimate in order to liberate Muslim lands from “infidel” occupation. Under those conditions, which included effort against the Soviets in Afghanistan, jihad was an individual duty, a position that soon estranged the group from the rest of the Ahl-e-Hadith establishment in Pakistan, which viewed this form of jihad as a collective duty (Abou Zahab 3).

11.3 After Victory, Now What?

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 created a sense of euphoria and invincibility among the participants. More volunteers poured into Pakistan as a waypoint to partake in the victory by combating the surprisingly resilient Communist regime in Kabul led by Mohammad Najibullah Ahmadzai. During this period, training increased in eastern Afghanistan, as volunteers not only sought a share of the Allah-ordained victory, but also to acquire combat skills to use elsewhere (Coll 227). Najibullah’s regime finally fell in 1992, and the fragile threads holding the Afghan mujahidin together gave way.

The situation in Pakistan changed significantly in the meantime, as did the dynamics within the militant groups. Perhaps most importantly, Zia did not live to see the fruits of his efforts. His
death in 1988 in a plane crash ushered in a period of civilian rule in Pakistan. To the horror of the Islamists who were empowered for a decade under Zia, Zulfi kar Ali Bhutto’s daughter, Benazir Bhutto was elected Prime Minister. Not only was she a woman—and persistent rumors abounded that she was Shia—she hailed from the secular Pakistan People’s Party. Bin Laden was among those who supported efforts to unseat Bhutto, and her ascension to power was an early test of the loyalty of Army-backed Pakistani militant groups (Bergen and Cruickshank 8).

Bhutto recognized that these lingering foreign jihadists were a threat and began to apply pressure for them to depart (Bergen and Cruickshank 16; Tankel Storming the Stage 53; Cragin 1059). Some stayed behind, and the others landed primarily in three places: 1) Sudan, which was a burgeoning haven for Islamists; 2) back in their home countries, where some agitated for “revolutionary jihad” against their host regimes which they declared to be apostate; or 3) in other conflict zone fighting emerging “defensive jihad” in places where Muslim were being oppressed or occupied by non-Muslims, and trying to re-create the results achieved in Afghanistan.

The manpower and ideology mobilized in Afghanistan were thus unleashed. As discussed in Chapters 8-10, Islamists engaged in direct confrontations with regimes in Egypt, Algeria, and elsewhere. Bin Laden left Pakistan, and returned to Saudi Arabia before the Najibullah regime fell. He then permanently departed Saudi Arabia in 1992 after Riyadh declined his offer to dispatch mujahidin to protect the Kingdom from Saddam Hussein’s aggression, and instead permitted U.S. forces to enter Islam’s holy land. Foreign mujahidin—who were never a unified and cohesive group, even during the height of the anti-Soviet war—pursued jihad in numerous places and had varying priorities, and the Pakistani groups were no exception.

HUJI was the most organized Pakistani Deobandi militant group involved in the anti-Soviet jihad, but it proved unable to retain unity. The Deobandi groups were not joined by a single common cause. Overall, they tended to pursue three goals: consolidation of power for their co-
religionist allies in Afghanistan, anti-Shia sectarian violence, and Pakistani annexation of Indian-
Administered Kashmir. Many dabbled in two or all three of these activities to varying degrees. In
contrast, LT remained the dominant Ahl-e-Hadith organization, and after withdrawing from
Afghanistan, it focused its jihadist efforts on Indian-Administered Kashmir and its dawa efforts in
Pakistan. These decisions would prove consequential for each group’s future relationship with al-
Qaida.

Afghanistan: From Glory to Ruin

In the aftermath of the anti-Soviet jihad, HUJI experienced the first of what would be a series
of splinters and realignments. A prominent Pashtun figure in HUJI, Fazlur Rehman Khalil, formed its
own group, called Harakat ul-Ansar (HUA) which later changed its name to Harakat-ul-Mujahidin
(HUM). Another faction called Jamiat ul Mujahidin soon formed, only to fold back into HUM when its
leader was killed (Rana 245). Meanwhile, SSP continued to engage in both politics and sectarian
violence within Pakistan. Relations among these three main Deobandi groups—HUJI, HUM, and
SSP—and their members were fluid even in these early days, vacillating between cooperation and
competition. Both HUJI and HUM remained involved in fighting in Afghanistan alongside their co-
religionist counterparts, such as Gulbuddin Hekmaytar, Jalaluddin Haqqani, and Yunis Khalis,
against enemies like Ahmed Shah Masood (Coll 292; Rana 244-5). They also built a training and
support infrastructure—with the assistance of ISI—that was increasingly used not only for combat
in Afghanistan, but also to train fighters for deployment to India-Administered Kashmir. By locating
the training in Afghanistan, ISI could claim plausible deniability for the activity, although this
veneer was thin (Coll 292).

LT distinguished itself from its Deobandi counterparts for its refusal to participate in the
intra-Afghan civil war or the sectarian violence in Pakistan. LT withdrew its forces from
Afghanistan shortly after Moscow’s retreat. For LT, an internal Muslim versus Muslim conflict was
no longer a legitimate jihad (Abu Zahab and Roy 35). It had training facilities in Pakistan, and, to a lesser extent, in Afghanistan. It was largely absent from Afghanistan for much of the 1990s, except for some limited training efforts or collaboration with fellow Salafists or Afghan members of the group primarily in Konar.

A few Arab Afghans who pledged allegiance to al-Qaida stayed behind in Afghanistan, but al-Qaida’s presence gradually dwindled to a shadow of what it once was. Some residual training facilities and safe houses created during the war remained in areas controlled by their Afghan mujahidin allies and Peshawar (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Sketch” 15). In the period leading up to the Najibullah regime’s fall—during which time bin Laden was back in Saudi Arabia and the group in Afghanistan was being run by his Egyptian lieutenants—al-Qaida intensified its training efforts in Afghanistan. In particular, it provided training and trained alongside Central Asian groups, fighters from the Caucasus who were still battling the Soviets, and the Deobandi Pakistani groups preparing for jihad in Indian-Administered Kashmir (Coll 292). This training offered some opportunities for continuing interaction between members of al-Qaida and the Pakistani Deobandi groups while the organizations were still young and developing their cultures, routines, and frames.

But the Arabs grew increasingly dismayed by the civil war in Afghanistan. In addition, al-Qaida was ultimately an Arab-centric group, and it saw the broader jihad from that vantage point. So when there was an opportunity to relocate to Sudan, al-Qaida shifted many of its resources there. An Egyptian member who stayed behind in Afghanistan after much of the group had departed pointed out to his leaders in Sudan that they “abandoned the Asian position under the slogan... work in the heartland region—the Arab region.” He bemoaned their decision to “wash their hands of the Central Asian region... as a complete contradiction of the founding charter of al-Qaida and of its very watchword, which is universal jihad” (Bergan and Cruickshank 17). By 1994,
with no resolution to the civil war in sight, the group adopted a minimalist presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Bergan and Cruickshank 17).

Unlike their fellow Arab and African Sunni jihadist groups, the Pakistani groups did not relocate to Sudan. They had no such need for safe haven or the other assets offered by Khartoum. They had ample haven, training facilities, and jihadist causes at home. As a result, al-Qaida was not interacting regularly with Pakistani militant groups during this time, except at the rank and file levels or through the perpetuation of personal relationships. Some of the money that bin Laden doled out during the Sudan years almost certainly found its way into Pakistani militants’ pockets, and he was a figure generally respected for his contribution to the Afghan jihad. But this did not give al-Qaida meaningful influence over Pakistani militant groups.

**Within Pakistan: The Specter of Iran and Explosion of Sectarian Violence**

Meanwhile, Tehran and Islamabad continued to engage in a regional competition for influence in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan. Each backed their preferred Shia and Sunni proxies respectively in Afghanistan. The Soviet withdrawal and devolution into civil war left the two jockeying for position to shape the future of Afghanistan. But this competition rarely escalated into outright tensions between the two states there (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad 1-6).

However, in Pakistan, non-state actors pursued their sectarian agendas with less restraint. By the early 1990s, the virulently anti-Shia Deobandi political party SSP had grown into a formidable force. It boasted 300,000 members, and its strength was concentrated in the political epicenter of Pakistan, Punjab Province, as well as the country’s economic capital, Karachi (Abou Zahab and Roy 24). It was not merely a militant army, it had political capital. When it entered the rough and tumble world of Pakistani politics in 1992, it won seats in both the National Assembly and Punjab’s Provincial Assembly (Abou Zahab and Roy 24). SSP’s entrance into politics did not
reflect a commitment to politics at the expense of action. It remained both an initiator and target in
the ongoing sectarian violence that increasingly threatened Pakistan's domestic security. SSP's
founding leader Haq Nawaz Jhangvi's assassination in February 1990 set off a spiral of violence that
included the killing of Iran's Consul General in Lahore that December and the murder of Jhangvi's
successor in 1991 (Abou Zahab and Roy 23-4). But SSP also demonstrated a pragmatic streak by
allying with Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party during her second tenure as Prime Minister, which
earned the group a ministerial position in the Punjab Provincial Government (Abou Zahab and Roy
24).

The Deobandi Pakistani groups that grew out of the anti-Soviet jihad were not the only ones
struggling with unity problems. SSP has produced at least half a dozen violent offshoots (Rana 203).
One notable faction of SSP grew dissatisfied with the group's emphasis on politics, and in 1994, it
broke away to pursue unrestrained violence against the “kafir.” This terrorist outfit called itself
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), or the Army of Jhangvi, after SSP's founding leader and the place of the
group's creation in Punjab, Jhang (Abou Zahab and Roy 24-5). It was a highly decentralized and
compartmentalized group from the outset, operating in small, loosely-connected cells and
specializing in assassinations. Its relationship to SSP was murky, and some have characterized LJ as
the unofficial armed, terrorist wing of SSP or at least operating in conjunction with it (Rana 204).

Initially, some suspected Pakistani security service complicity in LJ's creation because it
occurred shortly after a suspicious “escape” from prison by LJ’s founder, Riaz Basra. This thinking is
typical of the highly-conspiratorial Pakistani society, but, on the other hand, ISI was well known for
sowing divisions amongst the militant groups in order to keep them more readily controllable. Soon
it became clear that it was not a relationship with ISI that made LJ such a threat, it was the group's
ability to intimidate, terrorize, and kill anyone who attempted to constrain it. While Iranians and
Pakistani Shia bore the brunt of their wrath, policemen, judges, politicians, and lawyers who dared to defy it were also subject to its violence (Abou Zahab and Roy 26).

In addition to its nebulous relationship with SSP, LJ had an array of ties and relationships with fellow Deobandi militant groups, sometimes acting in cooperation with them to conduct sectarian attacks within Pakistan and in Afghanistan as well. It became suspiciously common for Islamabad to blame LJ for all acts of terrorism in Pakistan, leading observers to plausibly speculate that this was an attempt to deflect attention from the involvement of other Deobandi groups, such as HUJI and HUM, that were known proxies for the Army in Afghanistan and India. The impact of sectarian violence on law and order in Pakistan had far reaching effects on the polity and even indirectly perpetuated the Army's regular interventions in politics under the guise of “maintaining security.” In addition, Deobandi militants’ involvement in sectarian violence in Pakistan created a dangerous precedent. It established a norm and organizational frame within those groups that condoned violence in the name of jihad in Pakistan against other Muslims. As will be discussed below, though Zia encouraged, or at least allowed this development, Islamabad would prove unable to put this genie back in the bottle when sectarian violence spiraled out of control in the 1990s and after 9/11 when the legitimacy of President Musharraf’s decision to abandon the Taliban and ally with the United States was called into question by these same groups.

Unlike its Deobandi counterparts, LT's activity in Pakistan was limited to proselytization, conversion, education, charity, and preparation for jihad outside of Pakistan. While the Ahl-e-Hadith adherents and LT in particular also regard Shia as deviants and thus not true Muslims, it did not participate in the sectarian violence in Pakistan, even when such activity was tacitly encouraged, or at least permitted, by the state. It merits repeating that for LT, jihad was an obligation conducted entirely outside of Pakistan—as Pakistan is a homeland for Muslims—and solely in situations where infidels occupied Muslim land. It established this principle early and built it into its
organizational routines, frames, culture, and by extension, its behavior. LT has not re-visited this organizational pillar, despite the subsequent turmoil in Pakistan.

Al-Qaida retained a small presence in Pakistan, particularly Peshawar. But it largely stayed out of the sectarian fray in Pakistan. Pakistan was not a conflict or jihad site for al-Qaida. Nor was sectarian violence an area in which al-Qaida generally participated during this time. Quite the contrary, as discussed earlier, this was close to the time that al-Qaida was tentatively exploring cooperation with Iran and Hizballah while it was in Sudan.

*The Conflict in Indian-Administered Kashmir*

MDI mujahidin were among those who joined what has been dubbed the “jihadi road show” or the “jihadi caravan” upon disengaging from Afghanistan. Around this time, MDI officially designated its military wing as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba or “Army of the Pure”—the name that is commonly used to refer to the broader organization and that is used as such for the rest of this chapter. A small number of LT volunteers went to Bosnia, Tajikistan, the Philippines, and other hot spots where conflicts that fit its definition of “defensive jihad” were underway, a credential frequently overhyped by the group’s leadership relative to the group’s actual level of involvement (Fair personal interview). But LT was soon immersed in the jihad that would come to define its mission—and to a lesser extent, Islamabad’s Deobandi proxies—India’s control of the disputed state of Kashmir (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 21).

LT believed—with significant encouragement from ISI and the Army—that its most pressing religious obligation was to “liberate” the Muslim state of Kashmir from Hindu rule in India and unify it with Pakistan. As the war in Afghanistan came to a close, the Pakistani Army channeled LT and its Deobandi proxies, particularly HUM and HUJI, in that direction to transform the conflict into a movement to unite Kashmir with Pakistan. The indigenous uprising was geared more towards an independence campaign or an effort to improve governance in Kashmir prior to their
insertion. Their involvement earned these groups the misnomer "Kashmiri groups," though their membership was almost entirely non-Kashmiri Pakistani. Although LT’s ambitions were not limited to that territory, Kashmir consumed its attention throughout the 1990s (Tankel Storming the Stage 40). Over time, LT grew from a minor player from a small sect to a significant force, a pawn, and a spoiler in the intractable Indo-Pak rivalry.

The Deobandi groups involved in the anti-Soviet war also participated in the conflict in IAK. Their attention was more divided than LT’s because of their involvement in sectarian violence and Afghanistan. HUM and HUJI undertook their India-g geared efforts separately and in competition with one another at first (Rana 245). Each exaggerated its accomplishments in IAK, and denigrated its rival’s efforts, to the detriment of the broader cause. Reconciliation and negotiation talks came to fruition in 1993, and the two groups merged under the banner of HUA (Rana 245-6). A more coordinated Pakistani Deobandi effort in Kashmir then commenced under HUA.

The heightened Pakistani interest in IAK began in the late 1980s, when growing indigenous disenfranchisement with Indian misrule, stoked by blatantly fraudulent elections in 1987, provoked demonstrations and sporadic acts of violence in Indian-Administered Kashmir (Tankel Storming the Stage 51). Kashmir is divided into two parts—Pakistan-Administered Kashmir (PAK), called Azad Kashmir or “Free Kashmir” by Pakistan, and Indian-Administered Kashmir (IAK) (Haqqani 27). This bifurcation of Kashmir has been the cause of several wars between India and Pakistan.

Kashmir’s history is complex, contested, and beyond the scope of this dissertation, but to briefly summarize: Kashmir’s status is considered by both India and Pakistan to be a reflection of their respective identities. In 1947, after a prolonged campaign for independence, the British prepared to hastily withdraw from its colony of British India. At that time, the British Government agreed to an appeal by the Muslim League, led by Mohamed Ali Jinnah, that British India should be divided into two nation states. One state, Pakistan, was created as a homeland for Muslims in the
region, while the other, India, was predominantly Hindu. India rejected the “two-state theory,” as it implied that Muslims could not co-exist as part of an independent, democratic India, but its objections were overruled. The process of partitioning the two states, particularly the accompanying migration, was chaotic, bloody, violent, and left both sides bitter.

With its Muslim majority and geographic contiguity with the newly-created Muslim nation, the Pakistani Government insisted that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan. On the other hand, New Delhi saw retaining Kashmir as a way to demonstrate that India was, in fact, a nation that could accommodate a pluralist religious polity. Kashmir was ruled by a Hindu maharaja at the time of partition. Pakistan’s first fateful use of asymmetric warfare tactics involved deploying ethnic Pashtun fighters from western Pakistan to Kashmir to forcibly coerce its inclusion in the new Muslim nation. Under siege, the maharaja appealed to the Indian Army for support. The Indian Army’s price for such assistance was the maharaja’s agreement to join India, which he hastily provided. Kashmir thereby became the only Muslim majority state in India, and as such, a source of perpetual acrimony between the two states (Cohen 51). Its contested status has been the source of several wars. The outcome of the wars in 1947-1948 and 1971 was a Kashmir divided along the Line of Control (LOC), a ceasefire line that demarcates PAK from IAK without being an official border (Jones and Fair 7).

The pro-independence, generally secular Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front launched its campaign against the Indian government in March 1988 (Howenstein 11). By 1990, unrest in IAK spiraled into a full-fledged indigenous uprising. Islamabad interpreted this as confirmation of its contention—indeed, Pakistan’s very raison d’etre—that Muslims would be oppressed under Hindu rule in India (Cohen 55). The Indian Government’s heavy-handed response further alienated Kashmiri Muslims and fueled the violence. Islamabad saw a golden opportunity to exploit the situation to its advantage—to bleed India through Kashmir and secure IAK’s unification with
Pakistan (Fair and Jones 7). The Pakistani Government pumped support into the insurgency in IAK, and in so doing, changed the complexion of the conflict. It cultivated factions that sought accession to Pakistan, undercut those that agitated for independence or reform to the status quo, and injected foreign Islamist fighters with no attachment to the indigenous society and thus fewer constraints on their actions (Abou Zahab and Roy 54-5).

The Hindu "occupation" of IAK, especially given the timing and presence of triumphant mujahidin next door, earned the conflict a place on the “jihadi road show.” Some remaining Afghan Arab volunteers fought in IAK, particularly after the Soviet-backed government in Kabul fell in 1992. Islamabad, meaning the Pakistani Army, believed it could replicate the success achieved in Afghanistan, and encouraged the remaining Arab Afghans and the Pakistani militant groups to redirect their efforts to Pakistan’s other border (Fair and Jones 12-3). While Islamabad had used proxies against India since partition, it took the proxy foundation developed during the anti-Soviet jihad and institutionalized it as part of its national security apparatus. Proxies soon became an integral tool in Islamabad’s foreign policy arsenal on both of its borders. This coincided with Pakistan’s development of its nuclear capability. Fair and Jones pointed out that “[n]uclearization permitted Pakistan to expand the scope, scale, and geographical boundaries of asymmetric conflict with limited fear of retaliation” (6).

11.4 The Formative Period

*Guns Trained to the East*

Events in India consumed LT’s attention as the decade progressed. LT considered the United States to be a Crusader enemy allied with the Hindus and Zionists. It also echoed the nationalist sentiments of its Army patron, which bemoaned the United States “abandonment” of Pakistan. But the United States did not rise to the top of LT’s agenda as it did with al-Qaida. One
reason for this divergence was the simple fact that, unlike al-Qaida, LT's main cause—IAK—was not a U.S. foreign policy priority (Department of State “Letter” 1). With al-Qaida's move to Sudan, issues in South Asia dropped precipitously on al-Qaida's agenda. This was not the case for LT, which had a myriad of both religious and nationalist reasons to focus on its Hindu neighbor. In addition to the unrest in IAK, communal tensions flared in India in December 1992 when Hindu hardliners destroyed the 16th century Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, in order to claim the disputed holy land for Hindu use. Widespread communal riots followed, during which an estimated 900 people were killed, mostly Muslims, and thousands more were injured. The rioting in Bombay (now Mumbai) was among the worst in the country (Tankel Storming the Stage 89).

In retaliation for the mosque's demolition and the riots, in March 1993, an Indian organized crime syndicate known as the D-Company bombed a dozen locations in Bombay, including the Bombay Stock Exchange, several shopping centers, hotels, and the airport. Approximately 250 people were killed, and hundreds more wounded. It was one of the largest mass casualty terrorist attacks to date. The D-Company's leader, Dawood Ibrahim, was believed to have had ISI support for the operation. To the Indian Government's dismay, Ibrahim and his top lieutenants then fled to Karachi where he remained out of Delhi's reach and well connected with ISI and Pakistani militant groups, including LT (Tankel Storming the Stage 90).

During this time, LT—a committed, but still small and relatively inconsequential, group in the landscape of the region—primarily worked with other militant outfits in IAK and received ISI support. LT had both competitive and cooperative relationships with its perpetually fractious Deobandi counterparts, some of which were also engaged in militant activity in IAK under ISI direction and support (Tankel Storming the Stage 108). One source of strain between LT and the Deobandi groups was LT's recruitment and conversion of Deobandis. Because the Ahl-e-Hadith community was so small and LT's relationship with it was strained, it had to recruit members from
other sects, including Deobandis, and then convert them. Deobandi groups’ membership was fluid, with individuals moving among the various Deobandi organizations as well as sometimes starting their factions. But LT’s members were not as readily transferable because joining the group often involved a conversion (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 30).

LT began conducting its own operations in IAK, and engaging in longer-term planning to expand its operational theatre (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 58; 40). For example, in the wake of the destruction of the Babri Mosque, LT dispatched an operative to mainland India to recruit Indian Muslims. The group thus had someone on the ground to capitalize on Indian Muslim disenfranchisement when the ensuing communal violence swept through Indian cities (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 89). Indian operatives were particularly coveted by the group, given both their symbolic significance and their ability to operate undetected in India. LT’s activity in IAK increased markedly between 1993 and 1995, coinciding with ISI’s increasing assistance to the organization.

LT was not ISI’s primary proxy during much of the 1990s, but its stock with ISI continued to rise as the decade wore on (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 40). LT had the advantage of sharing some ethno-linguistic characteristics with districts in IAK that were insufficiently restive for ISI’s comfort, so the group’s operatives could be more readily deployed there than other Pakistan-sponsored organizations (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 57). LT’s lack of a substantial constituency in Pakistan because of its strained relationship with the small Ahl-e-Hadith community was advantageous from the Army and ISI’s perspective (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 40; Abou Zahab 1-4). This limitation made the group a relatively manageable proxy—a quality that ISI increasingly valued as the Deobandi groups began demonstrating an unwelcomed independent streak (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 40).

In particular, HUA—the name adopted by HUJI and HUM when they re-united for a period—was a preferred recipient of ISI’s support. But the organization soon proved to be an unwieldy
proxy, in part because of its fractious internal dynamics. Its actions served as an early warning of the problems ISI and the Army would continue to face with the Deobandi proxy groups. In particular, HUA’s kidnapping of Western tourists in 1994 drew unwanted international attention to ISI’s relationship with militants, even though the hostages were released seventeen days later (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Historical Background” 1-4). The kidnapping—claimed by the alias al Hudaid—was in response to the Indian’s arrest of a prominent HUA ideologue and leader by the name of Masood Azhar. The kidnappers claimed that the Indians double crossed them by reneging on an agreement to release Azhar and a colleague, after the hostages had been released (Rana 246).

Then in 1995, a faction calling itself al-Faran kidnapped five foreign tourists. It demanded the release of Azhar and other HUA militants in Indian custody, which New Delhi refused. The hostages were never heard from again and a HUA militant captured by the Indians confessed that they were killed (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Activities” 1). Al-Faran was widely believed to be a front for HUA, an alias adopted to deflect attention from Pakistan and make it more difficult for Islamabad to pressure the group (Rana 246). The merged group soon reverted to its constituent groups using previous structures and names, HUM and HUJI, a move that coincided with HUA’s designation by the United States, along with al-Faran as an alias. Some attributed HUA’s break up as a way to avoid the sanctions associated with the U.S. designation, while others claimed that the kidnapping and fallout exacerbated existing schisms in HUA, which caused the group to split back into two factions again (Rana 246). In the aftermath of these events, ISI reduced its support for HUA. As a result, the group went in search of new patrons, and one source was bin Laden (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Activities” 3-4). Yet rather than eschewing the use of proxies, ISI looked for a more malleable alternative and found one in LT.
LT already had operatives with combat experience in Afghanistan, but they now received advanced military training and bomb-making instruction directly from ISI and the Army as well as assistance infiltrating across the difficult terrain into IAK (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 90). As it ramped up its jihadist activities and capability in IAK, LT simultaneously invested in its infrastructure in Pakistan because, unlike al-Qaida and its Deobandi counterparts, it still considered *dawa* to be an obligation on par with jihad (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 68). The support and encouragement LT received from the Army provided the requisite space for the determined group to grow well beyond its limited base.

*The Rise of the Taliban to Pakistan’s West.*

In 1996, bin Laden returned to the region from Sudan, re-connecting his group with its Soviet-era *mujahidin* allies. But it was a new ally that would prove to be the most critical for al-Qaeda during the next period. The Deobandi Afghan Taliban was simultaneously sweeping through Afghanistan, with ISI’s backing (Coll 328). As discussed in Chapter 8, in order to return, bin Laden relied on his relationships with local Afghan commanders in the east, primarily Jalalabad, an area not yet conquered by the Taliban (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65). The Taliban’s subsequent ascendance in Afghanistan was a game changer from an alliance perspective. Afghanistan under the Taliban provided the critical forum for interactions between al-Qaeda and the mélange of Pakistani militant groups, and was critical for the array of relationships that subsequently formed.

The Pakistani Deobandi groups viewed the Afghan Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan with glee. The recently-returned al-Qaeda and Pakistani Deobandi groups cultivated close ties with the Taliban, and expanded their presence in Afghanistan under its rule. LT was an exception to this trend. It continued to maintain an arm’s length from the violence wracking Afghanistan. Its remaining tentacles in Afghanistan were still attached to fellow Salafists in Konar and Nuristan.
Provinces, most of whom viewed the Deobandi Taliban’s rise with suspicion, if not outright hostility. Likewise, LT was skeptical of the Deobandi Afghan movement, which it viewed as religiously erroneous and culturally backward (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 50).

These same Afghan Salafists had a relationship with al-Qaida that dated back to the anti-Soviet years, another testament to bin Laden’s ability to negotiate ties with rival factions. Some LT and al-Qaida operatives operated in Konar. The two groups cooperated there in some areas, such as training at one another’s facilities in Konar. Over time, some personal relationships developed across the two groups. A senior al-Qaida operative of Palestinian descent, Abu Zubaydah, in particular had relationships with a number of LT members resident in the area (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 109). This was the forum—in Konar with their co-religionists, rather than under the Afghan Taliban—where al-Qaida and LT interacted during the late 1990s.

Al-Qaida differed from LT and the Afghan Salafists in its posture towards the Afghan Taliban. Like these entities, al-Qaida did not have a pre-existing relationship with the Afghan Taliban. It shared an overarching Sunni religious orientation, though al-Qaida’s Salafist and Wahabbist religious roots differed from those of the Deobandi Afghan Taliban. Al-Qaida was ideologically closer to the Afghan Salafists and LT. Nonetheless, al-Qaida was receptive to working with the Afghan Taliban (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks 65). The major difference between al-Qaida and its ideological brethren was its organizational needs. Al-Qaida grew heavily invested in a Taliban victory in part for organizational reasons. Its ouster from Sudan made it clear how critically it needed haven, particularly haven that afforded freedom of movement and action so it could expand its activities, which was exactly what the Taliban offered.

Unlike its fellow Pakistani groups or its Arab religious counterpart, LT did not forge a comparably close or dependent relationship with the Taliban. There were four main reasons for the divergence in LT and the Pakistani Deobandi groups’ relationships with the Afghan Taliban, which
also affected their postures towards al-Qaida as well. First, the Pakistani and Afghan Deobandi groups were the product of a common ideological infrastructure in Pakistan (Fair personal interview). The Afghan Taliban emerged from the same Deobandi madaris and mosques in Pakistan as the Deobandi Pakistani groups, so from the outset they had inter-organizational connections, personal relationships, and shared narratives that were the product of common religious authorities and education (Jaffrelot 92). These were reinforced by strong ideological affinity and sometimes also ethnic affinity, as a fair number of Pakistani Deobandis were also Pashtun.

LT, on the other hand, maintained its disdain for Deobandism. In addition, its leadership and members were largely Punjabi, and they looked down on Pashtuns. Therefore, LT did not have the same degree of ideological or ethnic affinity with the Taliban. One LT leader went so far as to publicly dismiss the Taliban as “a group of misguided elements.” Realities on the ground meant that LT sometimes cooperated tactically with the Taliban as the need arose, and it was careful not to antagonize the new Afghan powerbroker (Tankel Storming the Stage 108).

Second, in addition to their common roots in Pakistan, the Deobandi Pakistani militant groups developed joint infrastructure in Afghanistan with their Taliban brethren. This cemented their alliances, while conveniently allowing Islamabad to the veneer of plausible deniability when India accused Islamabad of supporting anti-India Pakistani militants (Fair personal interview). On the other hand, LT had a more limited presence in Afghanistan, still mostly in Konar. It ran its own facilities in areas not readily under Taliban control. As a result, these resources were largely separate from the Deobandis’ facilities. LT continued to invest heavily in developing its presence in Pakistan, so the facilities in Afghanistan were supplemental rather than central (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 7). Put simply, LT did not have the same “organic links” to the Taliban as its Deobandi counterparts (Fair personal interview).
The third difference between LT and its Deobandi counterparts’ connections to the Afghan Taliban was their posture towards the conflict in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Deobandi groups and al-Qaida were eager contributors to the Afghan Taliban’s ongoing civil war with the Northern Alliance. They were willing to participate in the conflict as they saw it as a jihad to secure their ally’s rule over the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” as well as a way to get hands-on combat experience. The Deobandi groups’ participation was apparent when examining the prisoners held by the Northern Alliance prior to the U.S. invasion. Nearly half of its foreign prisoners held in 1999 and 2000 hailed from the Deobandi Pakistani groups (Sirs). Contacts of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad estimated that between twenty to forty percent of the Taliban’s fighting force was Pakistani, mostly fellow Deobandis (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: Taliban Said to Loosen Grip” 5-7).

In general, as previously noted, the Deobandi groups were much more prone to engage in sectarian violence against fellow Muslims who were deemed “kafirs” or in Pashto “munafiqat,” meaning hypocrite, than LT, which avoided conflict with any fellow Muslims. LT still did not see the Afghan Taliban’s internal conflict against the Northern Alliance as a legitimate jihad, so it continued to focus on jihad in IAK and dawa in Pakistan, where it had ample haven. Irrespective of their motives, the Pakistani Deobandi groups and al-Qaida’s involvement in the Afghan Taliban’s war against the Northern Alliance provided a shared experience that helped bind the groups in alliances, whereas LT did not have those interactions or the corresponding identity affinity.

Lastly, LT maintained a high degree of organizational unity and cohesion, while its Pakistani Deobandi counterparts perpetually suffered from unity problems. The Deobandis engaged in a series of splits and reunifications in the name of theological disputes that barely masked internal rivalries, unfulfilled personal ambitions, and ISI meddling. Individual Pakistani Deobandi groups used the relationship with the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaida to compensate for their organizational
weakness. Their alliances were thus a fluid combination of individual and organizational-level relationships. While LT operatives also had personal relationships with al-Qaida or Taliban counterparts, LT leadership managed organizational-level alliances, and it did not opt to ally with the Taliban or al-Qaida.

The web of Afghan and Pakistani Deobandi alliances had implications for the Pakistani Deobandi groups’ relationships with al-Qaida. Their mutual partnerships with the Afghan Taliban created a ready forum for them to interact. The Pakistani Deobandi militants groups were not dependent on al-Qaida like other foreign, generally Arab, groups in Afghanistan. When the Taliban recognized militant groups resident in Afghanistan, the Pakistani groups were exempt because of their “special” status (Tawil “Brothers in Arms” 169). Their situation did not hinge on al-Qaida’s ability to provide money or training and haven by virtue of its ties with the Taliban. The Pakistani Deobandi groups had their own relationships with the Taliban, and they did not require al-Qaida to act as an intermediary or conduit. The Taliban treated the Deobandi Pakistani groups accordingly. The Taliban allowed HUA to maintain its main camp in Khowst when it took over the area and permitted it to move additional camps into Afghanistan from PAK (United States Central Intelligence Agency “Al-Qaida in Sudan” 14, United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad 1, United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad 7). A camp known as Amir Muawiya in Paktia became a haven for the SSP breakaway militant group LJ (Abou Zahab and Roy 48-9). Therefore, while al-Qaida developed alliances with the Pakistani Deobandi groups, these relationships were not as inter-dependent as their respective ties with the Taliban or subordinate like some of al-Qaida’s other alliances. This was largely because they did not look to one another to fill major organizational needs. But Pakistani Deobandi militants trained and fought alongside al-Qaida members, thereby nurturing strong personal relationships, trust as well as narrative and ideological affinity (Reidel 84).
Pakistani Signatories to the International Islamic Front Statement

In February 1998, al-Qaida took stock of its allies when it issued the "International Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders." The statement, which had been so divisive for the two major Egyptian groups, got a lukewarm reception from most Pakistani groups. Upon closer examination, clarity about who exactly signed this statement was lost in the overall reaction to the statement. It is regularly asserted that HUM and a political party called Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan were both Pakistani signatories, which would make the Pakistani groups a critical part of the coalition. Upon further examination, the identity of these representatives and what group they represented are not clear. The signature commonly attributed to HUM was provided by a Fazlur Rahman, who purported to represent "the Jihad Movement of Bangladesh." There is no apparent reason why HUM's leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil would claim to represent a Bangladeshi group. Therefore, this signatory was more likely on behalf of a Bangladeshi group active in Afghanistan at the time, Harakat-ul Jihad Islami Bangladesh (HUJI-B) than HUM.

The signature by Shaykh Mir Hamza purporting to represent Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Pakistan was even stranger. There was a political party in Pakistan known as Jamiat-ul-e-Pakistan, but it was a Barelvi party, which, as discussed earlier, is a Sufi-derived sect adhered to by many Pakistanis. It had no known links with militant groups, especially not the Deobandi militant groups that viewed Barelvis as insufficiently devout. Alternatively, this may have been a signature by one of the factions of the Deobandi political party JUI, particularly JUI-F which was led by a different Fazlur Rehman, and which has had a relationship with its Deobandi militant counterparts (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad "Afghanistan: [name redacted]" 3). However, it is unclear if there was a JUI faction led by an individual known as Mir Hamza. Ultimately, it is difficult to assess which Pakistani entities actually aligned themselves with bin Laden in 1998, but they did not represent a quorum of Pakistani militant groups.
For its part, LT did not sign onto al-Qaida's 1998, and it rejected al-Qaida's logic for declaring the United States as the priority. Following the publication of the statement, LT leader Hafiz Saeed told an international Urdu news outlet that “[t]he Holy Koran has set the itinerary for the holy war. It asks Muslims to start their holy war with those infidels that live nearby. Therefore, our first target should be India, according to the Holy Koran” (qtd. in Scheuer 187). Interestingly, Zawahiri employed this same rationale when he defended prioritizing Egypt above Israel in the mid-1990s.

Then in August of that year, al-Qaida launched simultaneous attacks against the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing more than 300 people. Less than two weeks later, the United States retaliated by launching cruise missiles at targets in Sudan and Afghanistan. The targets struck in Afghanistan were camps in the eastern province of Khowst (“U.S Missiles Pound Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan.”). One, a complex known as Zhawar Kili, included a base camp, a support camp that stored what a senior Administration official described as "a large amount of weapons and ammunition," and four training facilities, including "tent stands, obstacle courses, firing ranges and burned areas for explosive testing and training" (Gellman and Priest). Approximately 70 cruise missiles pounded these facilities around the time when intelligence indicated a large gathering of militants was going to take place (Zill; Gellman and Priest).

The strike in Sudan against a pharmaceutical plant believed to be involved in producing chemical weapons was a source of subsequent controversy and debate. There was comparatively less examination of the strikes in Afghanistan against what an intelligence official called “the largest Sunni terrorist training facility in the world,” and a "terrorist university for a wealth of worldwide terrorist organizations" (qtd. in Gellman and Priest). But who was in control of this location? It was a well-known facility, as it dated back to the anti-Soviet era. Given its location and history, it is likely to have had some connection with Soviet era mujahidin commander and Taliban ally, Jalaluddin
Haqqani. If losses sustained were any indication, it was clearly a place frequented by Pakistani Deobandi groups. HUM lost nine members in the strike, the largest contingent in the estimated twenty-four people killed (Fair and Jones 16; Richter 220-221; Bennett). Some sources maintain, including HUM leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil, that the camps were being run by HUM, not al-Qaida, and that HUM allowed al-Qaida personnel to train at its facility (Raman). Khalil made a number of subsequent public statements threatening the United States for the strike (Raman). Shortly thereafter, HUM was accused of killing two United Nations workers in Kabul, possibly in retaliation for the death of its fighters in the U.S. strike (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: Taliban Said to Loosen Grip” 5). Questions about which group the camp belonged to aside, what is clear is that HUM and al-Qaida were engaged in close cooperation at this juncture, and the U.S. strike inadvertently brought the two closer together (Jaffrelot 93).

Sectarianism Grows Increasingly Brazen

Sectarian enmity showed no signs of waning, even nearly twenty years after the Iranian Revolution. It continued to adversely impact relations in the region, particularly between Islamabad and Tehran. The Taliban’s rise only exacerbated these tensions. The Iranians were deeply troubled when the Islamabad-backed Taliban seized Herat—a location proximate to Iran in both geography and culture—in September 1995. This, coupled with the ongoing sectarian violence in Pakistan, caused Tehran to re-double its efforts against Islamabad and its proxies (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan and Sectarian Violence” 6-7).

Within Pakistan, sectarian violence simmered dangerously. Throughout the decade, Pakistani Deobandi militants—some of which had continuing ties to Islamabad—assassinated Iranians in Pakistan, including the Iranian cultural attaché in 1997 and an Iranian diplomat in 1990. They destroyed Iranian cultural centers, of which there were more than a dozen during that time (United States Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan and Sectarian Violence” 13). A perverse incentive
structure was at work; the more audacious the act, the more attention and support these groups received. LJ was accused of killing of five Iranian military personnel in Pakistan’s military capital, Rawalpindi, and of murdering twenty-five Shia in Lahore in 1998, which prompted Tehran to warn Islamabad to take steps to prevent such violence (Jaffrelot 93). Shia militant groups in Punjab were responsible for their share of violence, such as a bombing in January 1997 that killed twenty-six people, including an SSP leader (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan and Sectarian Violence” 6-7).

The Deobandi sectarian violence that was once a tool of the state to hedge against Iran was now a danger to domestic security. The Punjab Provincial Government under then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif’s brother Shahbaz Sharif finally took a hardline against sectarian groups during the late 1990s. The PML-N’s crackdown on Deobandi sectarian groups in Punjab soon drew the wrath of LJ. The group created “kill lists” that included prominent Shia personalities in Pakistan, and it conducted mass killings at Shia mosques. But it now turned its guns on the most power civilian in the country, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. In January 1999, LJ attempted to assassinate Prime Minister Sharif (Jafferlot 100). In the wake of the unsuccessful attack, more LJ operatives shifted to Afghanistan to evade the increasing intense campaign against the group (Abou Zahab and Roy 26).

Sectarian violence had the more subtle, but equally pervasive effect of eroding law and order in Pakistan throughout the decade of civilian rule. The weakness of the judicial and prison system encouraged the use of extra-legal means, such as police “encounters” with LJ operatives, to eradicate the group (Rana 206). Then as the security situation deteriorated, the military step in, which hamstrung any hopes of developing a strong civilian democratic system. Sectarian violence was one of the factors that helped justify an ongoing prominent role for the Army in domestic affairs, and helped pave the way for the impending military coup (Jaffrelot 100).
One of the major flaws of Islamabad’s proxy policy was the reality that Deobandi sectarian groups could not be neatly divided from the Deobandi proxy groups being supported by the Army. Often the same parts of the government that were responsible for cracking down on the sectarian groups were simultaneously supporting the proxy groups (Jaffrelot 94). This counterproductive policy was pursued, despite the fact that the latter activities negated the impact of the former efforts. For example, the ties between LJ and HUM were sufficiently strong that an estimated 800 LJ operatives trained in HUM camps in Afghanistan in the late 1990s, including those responsible for the attempt on Sharif’s life (Jaffrelot 94-5). These same individuals found haven in these HUM camps after their failed attempted on Sharif (Jaffrelot 99). Given the complementary training efforts between al-Qaida and HUM, this offered another forum for LJ to interact with al-Qaida.

This sectarian conflict within Pakistan was not a high priority for either al-Qaida or the Afghan Taliban, though neither had any affection for the Shia or Iran. Yet it still had an impact on current and future relationships between Deobandi militant groups and both al-Qaida and the Taliban. SSP and LJ sought to precipitate a Taliban-like revolution in Pakistan, and while there was not widespread interest in this project during the 1990s, it would garner more attention after 2001 (Rana 208-9). The Pakistani sectarian groups pursued their violent campaign with similar vigor in Afghanistan, and encouraged the Taliban’s repression of the Shia Hazara population in Afghanistan. LJ was also believed to have been at least partly responsible for the murder of Iranian diplomats in Mazar-e-Sharif in August 1998 (United States Department of State Embassy Islamabad “Afghanistan: Taliban Said to Loosen Grip” 4-5, Abou Zahab and Roy 56).

*As Kashmir Loses Steam, Other Forces Intervene*

While militant groups from all over the world thrived in Afghanistan and sectarian violence continued unabated in the latter half of the decade, the indigenous insurgency in IAK stagnated. Unwilling to concede defeat, Pakistani groups increased their efforts and ISI continued to pump in
support. LT increased its tempo of operations to compensate for dwindling Kashmiri efforts. Despite its protestations that it does not target civilians, LT fighters became notorious for its brutal massacres of non-Muslim civilians in IAK, mostly Hindus, Sikh, and Indian soldiers’ families. LT expert Stephen Tankel argued that these seemingly senseless acts of brutality by LT actually fit into the Pakistani Army’s strategy of driving non-Muslims out of IAK. The Army calculated that these tactics would not only improve the insurgency’s prospects, they would also help to eliminate non-Muslims in IAK and thereby bolster Islamabad’s argument that the Muslim-majority state rightfully belonged to Pakistan (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 57). These attacks, therefore, were not the irrational indulgence in violence they appeared to be, instead they reflected LT’s willingness to adhere to and implement the Army’s vision.

Accordingly, by the late 1990s, LT steadily grew into the most capable Pakistani group operating in IAK. Its Deobandi counterparts continued to participate in the conflict as well. But their efforts in Afghanistan and disunity detracted from their participation in IAK. As discussed earlier, the kidnapping of Westerners in particular harmed their utility to ISI by invoking international censure. After all, those operations were more about their organizational desire to free their members than the larger goal.

Then in May 1999, the Pakistani Army, led by Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf, orchestrated an incursion into the Kargil District, in India’s territory across the Line of Control. The Army thought that it could use its proxies to mask its involvement. Framed by Islamabad as a spontaneous action by “freedom fighters” seeking “Kashmir’s liberation,” it was in fact a thinly-veiled attempt by the Army to claim a position high in the Himalayas (Haqqani 251-2). Fair astutely argued that:

such a brazen incursion would have been unlikely before Pakistan’s attainment of overt nuclear weapons status in the late 1980s and the reciprocal nuclear tests in 1998.... The Kargil conflict underscored the importance of nuclear weapons to Pakistan’s strategy in Kashmir and India, while amply illustrating the destabilizing aspects of the nuclearization of 628
the subcontinent. Pakistan’s possession of such weapons was a critical precondition that enabled the planning and execution of Kargil because nuclear weapons ostensibly provided security against a full-scale Indian retaliation. While Kargil may have been the first conventional conflict under the nuclear umbrella, the most brazen use of asymmetric and proxy warfare happened after 1998, consistent with the notion that nuclearization has enabled, if not emboldened, Pakistan’s use of militancy (120).

LT operatives were among the small number of militants who participated in the Army-orchestrated action at Kargil to provide cover for the Army (Tankel Storming the Stage 175). The move sparked another inter-state conflict between two nuclear-armed states, and the international community rounded criticized Pakistan’s provocation. Pakistan’s civilian Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif — whose exact foreknowledge of the plot remains a source of debate — hastily traveled to Washington to engage in diplomatic negotiations to bring the conflict to an end. The ink was barely dry on a de-escalation agreement when LT conducted a “fedayeen”-style attack in IAK. On July 12, two LT operatives assaulted an Indian border security camp using automatic rifles and grenades.

The group’s signature method has sometimes incorrectly been equated with suicide attacks. Fair clarified the distinction:

In fact, LeT does not do suicide operations per se in which the goal of the attacker is to die in the execution of the attack. Rather, LeT’s “fidayeen” missions are more akin to high-risk missions in which well-trained commandos engage in fierce combat during which dying is preferable to being captured. While martyrdom is in some sense the ultimate objective of LeT operatives, the LeT selects missions where there is a possibility (howsoever slim) of living to kill more of the enemy. The goal of LeT commandos therefore is not to commit suicide in the execution of an attack. Rather, they seek to kill as many as possible until they either succumb to enemy operations or manage to survive, perhaps by decisively eliminating the enemy in the battle. [T]hese spectacular and well-planned attacks bring the LeT maximum publicity, expand recruiting and donations and demoralize the enemy which must resort to heavy fire, which destroys their own buildings and causes substantial collateral damage in the process (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 7).

A series of LT attacks employing this tactic followed, contributing to a resurgence in violence in IAK (Tankel Storming the Stage 63). By the end of the decade, LT had distinguished itself with the ferocity, audacity, and sophistication of its attacks. Its “success” improved its organizational position further, especially compared to the Deobandis’ fractiousness (Tellis 4).
From the Indians’ perspective, prospects for improvement in the situation deteriorated further when the architect of the Kargil incursion, General Pervez Musharraf, seized power in October, orchestrating a military coup when Sharif attempted to dismiss him as the Chief of Army Staff.

*The Convergence of Pakistani Militancy in Afghanistan and India*

Indian fears soon proved warranted in December 1999 when operatives hailing from HUM hijacked an Air India flight departing Katmandu and diverted the aircraft to Kandahar. While New Delhi had complained about anti-Indian groups finding training and haven in Afghanistan, this was the most brazen demonstration of the overlap in the two theatres (Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research “Afghanistan” 2). The hijackers may have received covert assistance from ISI agents stationed in Nepal, and they clearly received aid from the Taliban when their hijacked aircraft arrived in Afghanistan (Reidel 68). In a scene bizarrely reminiscent of the scene in Entebbe in 1976 when Idi Amin deployed Ugandan troops to protect the Air France plane hijacked by the PFLP-SOG, the Afghan Taliban helped guard the plane against an Indian rescue attempt (Reidel 68-70). After about a week, the Indian Government acquiesced to the hijackers’ demands and exchanged three imprisoned militant leaders for the remaining 155 passengers.

One of the freed militants was an HUM leader, Masood Azhar, who had been imprisoned in India since 1994 and whose imprisonment precipitated the kidnappings in 1994 and 1995 (Abou Zahab and Roy 29-30). With his dramatic release, a triumphant Azhar had considerable cachet among the perpetually divided Deobandi militants. But if he returned to HUM, he would immediately be embroiled in the inter-organizational disputes between HUM and HUJI, and be discredited in the eyes of HUJI members. HUJI courted Azhar as well, but likewise, leaving HUM to join HUJI held the same drawbacks. Azhar wanted to transcend these rivalries and unite Deobandis in one organization, which he, of course, would lead (Rana 214-221).
Therefore, rather than return to HUM, Azhar elected to form his own Deobandi terrorist organization, Jaish-e-Mohamed (JEM). With the publicity surrounding his triumphant release, JEM quickly emerged as the most powerful Pakistani Deobandi group and as LT’s primary rival. Deobandi militants from other groups defected en masse to join JEM, especially from Azhar’s parent organization (Reidel 68). Azhar’s decision was backed by SSP. But if Azhar hoped to avoid further infighting among Deobandis, his decision did not accomplish this. His new group was immediately at odds with HUM over property and assets. JEM believed it was entitled to offices and areas of control in places where HUM members had defected to the new group. But HUM was not prepared to relinquish these resources to JEM (Rana 221). Efforts at mediation failed, and the disagreements sometimes escalated into violence. Eventually, bin Laden was brought in to negotiate a settlement, which ultimately involved him donating a substantial sum of cash and vehicles to HUM to compensate it for the losses it incurred to JEM (Rana 222). HUJI also experienced upheaval as rumors swirled that the entire group was joining JEM, which created dissension and accusations that JEM was falsely spreading lies in the name of unity (Rana 264-5). Pakistan expert Nicholas Howenstein captured this dynamic when he noted the Deobandi groups’ tendency to “ally based on convenience, only to split over tactical differences and skirmishes over resources” (8).

The level of ISI involvement in these splits and alliances is a source of constant speculation. Some believe that ISI fostered these divisions among Deobandi groups to support leaders it believed were more pliable or simply to keep the groups more manageable. The absence of such splits within LT was thus taken as prima facie evidence that LT was ISI’s favored proxy. In any event, if ISI believed that a divide and conquer approach would be the most effective for managing the Deobandi groups, it would prove sorely mistaken (Howenstein 8).

This latest split between JEM and HUM added an ethnic dimension to the Deobandi alignments, which impacted alliance patterns. The operatives who stayed with HUM tended to be
Pakistani Pashtuns, including HUM leader Fazlur Rehman Khalil. After the split, his group maintained a significant presence in Afghanistan co-located with its ethnic and religious brethren, the Afghan Taliban. As bin Laden’s effort to recompense HUM suggests, the group retained a partnership with al-Qaida as well. HUM continued to have a proxy relationship with ISI, though it was no longer a leading proxy in either theatre of operations (Abou Zahab and Roy 28).

In contrast to HUM, Masood Azhar’s JEM was predominantly ethnically Punjabi. The defectors from HUM, HUJI, and, to a lesser extent, the sectarian groups, tended to be Punjabis. The group soon set up its headquarters in Bahawalpur in Punjab Province, a city that conveniently also hosts a Pakistani Army Corp and the province where LT’s complex was also located (Cohen 2011 100). Consistent with the more Punjabi-centric concerns about India, JEM turned much of its attention to IAK. Immediately, it was a significant player in the militant landscape in Pakistan and LT’s clearest competitor. Some assert that ISI encouraged JEM’s formation as a counterweight to an increasingly powerful LT, but as with many allegations surrounding ISI, the accuracy of these claims is difficult to ascertain (Abou Zahab and Roy 54).

The newest Deobandi player operated in all three realms of militancy. Its rivalry with HUM reared its head in IAK, as the groups issued competing claims for actions and “martyrs” killed in actions there and they sought to outbid one another (Rana 222-3). Azhar brought his close ties to SSP to his new organization, and JEM was involved in sectarian violence against Shias as well (Abou Zahab and Roy 30-1). Azhar initially received a hero’s welcome upon his return to Pakistan and hailed Musharraf for overthrowing Prime Minister Sharif. But he soon ran afoul of the government for vocally criticizing the Musharraf regime, leading to his detention twice in 2000 (Abou Zahab and Roy 28-9). JEM also assisted in the Taliban’s efforts against the Northern Alliance and conducted training alongside its religious brethren, though it did not depend on the Taliban for haven and
training to the same degree as the other, more weakened Pakistani Deobandi groups, like HUM and HUJI.

For its part, HUJI remained heavily engaged in Afghanistan with the Afghan Taliban. While weakened by JEM’s creation and the subsequent loss of members, the ethnic fissures were not as pronounced for HUJI, which retained some Punjabi and Pashtun members. It was so closely allied with the Afghan Taliban that some of its members held positions in the Afghan Taliban government. It sustained heavy losses in the fighting with the Northern Alliance, and was rewarded for its efforts with more resources and facilities in Afghanistan (Rana 272).

By the time Musharraf’s nine-year rule commenced in late 1999 and JEM was formed in 2000, LT had steadily grown under ISI’s tutelage to become the pre-eminent terrorist organization focused on IAK. It had largely restricted its activities to that arena, generally eschewing involvement in the other two theatres, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Instead, it had made a name for itself for its ruthless massacres of non-Muslims and its audacious fedayeen-style operations against Indian security services (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 7-8). But with a new government in Pakistan and a new competitor challenging its position, LT was preparing to begin a new chapter and to expand its theatre of operations beyond IAK. At the same time, al-Qaida was barreling ahead with its plans to strike the United States, which would impact all of the groups in the region, allies or not. All of the major groups were now operating and had developed identities as well as organizational frames, routines, and cultures.

### 11.5 Identity and Organizational Characteristics

**LT’s Ideology and Narrative**

LT’s ideology guided its two-fold mission to both execute jihad and transform Pakistani society through proselytization and the provision of social services. While LT’s jihadist activities
were focused on India for the majority of its existence, it ideologically supported the establishment of a transnational Islamic caliphate. Its propaganda regularly proclaimed its commitment to opposing the “Hindu-Zionist-Crusader” enemy (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 7-8). While this list of objectives appears to situate the group in the same global jihadist league as al-Qaida, LT has not ideologically aligned or positioned itself as an “al-Qaida affiliate” for several reasons. First, it did not sign onto al-Qaida’s agenda of fighting the “far enemy” as the most pressing priority. Nor has LT endorsed the idea that attacking “apostate” regimes is a legitimate form of jihad, although it acknowledged that some of these governments have strayed (Tankel Storming the Stage 1; 36). This is principally because LT has adhered to the “classical jihad” interpretation propagated by both groups’ shared, founding religious scholar, Abdullah Azzam, and also because it was allied with the state rather than in conflict with it (Tankel Storming the Stage 36).

Azzam’s view that jihad was a religious obligation to oppose the occupation of Muslim lands by non-Muslims continued to shape LT long after he was killed and displaced in bin Laden’s thinking (Tankel Storming the Stage 36). The clearest example of this was LT’s unwillingness to declare Muslim governments as apostates, which was a point of friction with al-Qaida as early as the 1991 Gulf War. LT did not support al-Qaida’s denunciation of Saudi Arabia as illegitimate. This was not just a practical consideration, though the Kingdom was an important fundraising hub for LT (Tankel Storming the Stage 93). More than that, for the Saudi-educated LT leaders, the Kingdom remained a religious authority.

Consistent with this interpretation of jihad, LT’s direct actions against the United States have occurred in theatres where it deemed the United States to be an “occupier” of Muslim lands, namely Afghanistan and, to a much lesser extent, Iraq (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 14). However, LT’s expansive definition of “occupied
“territory” extends to all lands once controlled by Muslims, including Spain and, most importantly, India (Tankel Storming the Stage 36). This means that its ambitions are not confined to unifying IAK with Pakistan; it seeks to establish Muslim rule and sharia law in accordance with its interpretation of Islam throughout the entire Indian subcontinent (Tankel Storming the Stage 41).

To borrow and adapt Zawahiri’s infamous logic, for LT, the road to Jerusalem goes through New Delhi and IAK’s state capital, Srinagar. With ample encouragement from the Pakistani Army, LT has consistently deemed India, particular IAK, to be its most pressing jihad obligation. Lakhvi, LT’s long-time leader of operations, provided his fighters with a three-part justification to explain LT’s continued prioritization of jihad in India even after the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. First, the ratio of “occupying” forces to population is highest in IAK. Second, IAK is the most geographically proximate jihad for the group, closer than even Afghanistan because LT’s infrastructure is largely based in PAK and Punjab, which border India. Third, IAK is the theatre where LT can be the most effective, given its composition and experience (India. Government National Investigation Agency 73).

Ethnic and Nationalist Identity

While LT frames its goals against India in religious terms, its mindset reflects the deeply-rooted Pakistani nationalist psyche. The group has a strong ethno-nationalist streak that is often underappreciated. In Pakistan, nationalism and Islam are intrinsically linked. With a diverse ethnic and linguistic population, successive governments, most notably Zia’s regime, have promoted a national identity that unifies its people on the basis of Islam (Haqqani 3). As Pakistan’s former Ambassador to the U.S. argued:

Pakistan’s leaders have played upon religious sentiment as an instrument of strengthening Pakistan’s identity…. [R]ulers have attempted to ‘manage’ militant Islamism, trying to calibrate it so that it serves its nation-building function without destabilizing internal politics… Islamists have been allies in the Pakistan military’s efforts to seek strategic depth in Afghanistan and to put pressure on India for negotiations over the future of Kashmir (Haqqani 2-3).
Consistent with this nationalist identity, rather than the U.S. presence in Saudi Arabia or the Palestinian cause, the Indo-Pak rivalry has been the predominant determinant of LT’s jihadist activity (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 1). Pakistanis are indoctrinated to view India as an existential threat to Pakistan, and LT members are no exception (Fair and Jones 19). If anything, LT has embraced this narrative to a degree that rivals their Pakistani military counterparts. The threat from its Hindu neighbor has animated the Pakistani Army and justified its predominant position in the country since partition. LT’s enduring relationship with the Army coupled with its embrace of Pakistan’s national identity as a homeland for Muslims has produced a correspondingly strong sense of nationalism and loyalty to the state. This was, in no small part, by design. Although the Army’s objectives were overwhelmingly nationalist, it has deliberately imbued in its proxies the belief that Pakistan—as a homeland for Muslims—bears a religious responsibility for protecting Muslims everywhere, particularly against its Hindu neighbor (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 4). Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff turned President in a 1958 coup, General Ayyub Khan, articulated this sentiment in an address to the Pakistani public in 1965, claiming that the Indians:

> have given final proof... of the evil intentions, which India has always harbored against Pakistan since its inception. The Indian rulers were never reconciled to the establishment of an independent Pakistan where the Muslims could build a homeland of their own. The 100 million people of Pakistan whose hearts beat with the sound of 'There is no God but God and Muhammad is His messenger' will not rest til India's guns are silenced (qtd. in Haqqani 48).

Similarly, LT’s fervent anti-American sentiment is not rooted solely in a religious rationale or embrace of al-Qaida’s propagated “far enemy” agenda. Antipathy towards the United States was and remains pervasive in Pakistan, owing to a widespread perception that the United States has repeatedly betrayed and victimized Pakistan. Islamabad resents its pathological dependency on the United States, particularly given Washington’s fluctuating interest in Pakistan’s affairs (Cohen 86). For example, in a 2011 Pew Research survey, seventy-five percent of Pakistanis reported an
unfavorable view of the United States. Although there is less concrete data on this question, the Pakistani military’s view of the United States is almost certainly equally, if not more, hostile. This institution has a long tradition of shaping and manipulating public opinion and has exerted considerable influence over LT’s thinking as well.

An under-appreciated aspect of LT’s ethnic composition and identity is how closely it mirrors that of the Army that has nurtured it for decades, which served as another mechanism to secure its loyalty. LT is not only overwhelmingly Pakistani, but like the Army, it is also predominantly ethnically Punjabi, especially in its senior ranks (Cohen 224). It has extensive facilities, like the compound in Muridke, and influence in Punjab Province (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 5). Of the five provinces in Pakistan, Punjab is the most politically and culturally dominant. It is also the wealthiest and most populous province (Cohen 223). Therefore, hailing from Punjab contributes to both LT and the Army's power in the country. The two institutions recruit from many of the same areas and districts (Tankel Storming the Stage 58). The profile of an LT recruit bears a striking resemblance to that of a non-commissioned officer in the Pakistani Army (Abou Zahab and Roy 36). LT’s ranks actually include former members of the Pakistani military (Tankel Storming the Stage 100). For much of the group’s lifespan, current and former military officers served as instructors in its training facilities. “Launching missions”—the terminology employed to describe militant infiltrations into IAK—were often conducted in close coordination with military units stationed in the area. The ties that bind LT to the Army thus transcend simple common interests and include identity affinity.

*LT’s Tactics and Targets*

LT is one of the few remaining Sunni groups that resisted employing suicide operations. Some of its fedayeen operations had such a miniscule possibility of the attackers’ survival that the distinction can appear blurred, but LT eschewed suicide attacks and invested heavily in recruiting
and training above average commandos for these fedayeen missions (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 8-9). Though the group denies targeting civilians, it has massacred civilians and conducted attacks against soft civilian targets. Accommodating Islamabad’s desire to obscure its role, LT frequently used aliases to claim its attacks and publicly denied responsibility for them, even when evidence clearly demonstrated its culpability.

The group has only conducted attacks in India and Afghanistan to date. Its fighters participated in combat in other active conflict zones, and LT has been linked to unrealized plots in Australia and Denmark. But its record does not include operations outside of its immediate neighbors. Perhaps most importantly, as discussed, LT has never targeted the Pakistani Government nor does it conduct attacks within Pakistan. For LT, jihad is strictly a foreign endeavor.

Fair, an expert on militancy in Pakistan, observed that LT:

is fundamentally non-sectarian and genuinely committed to the integrity of the Pakistani state and its diverse polity.... LeT's manifesto acknowledges that the Pakistani state has made mistakes, but insists that Pakistani Muslims are all brothers, irrespective of their sectarian commitments. Accordingly, Barelvis, Sufis or Shi’ites should not be attacked. Neither are they munafiqin (hypocrites), as Deobandis believe. On the other hand, non-Muslims outside of Pakistan (Hindus, Jews, Christians, atheists) are at war with Muslims and should be attacked. LeT’s manifesto urges all Muslims to fight these groups, lest Pakistanis turn on each other (as indeed they have done) (“Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 13).

LT's Organizational Dynamics and Relationships

LT's organizational dynamics have exerted a decisive influence over its trajectory. In addition to ideological differences, these qualities have also set it apart from other groups in the crowded Pakistani militant field. One important organizational quality has been LT's continuity of leadership and centralized structure. LT has been led by the same clique of men since its inception. This old guard includes men hailing from the last remaining generation with some experience or memory of partition. They are connected with one another through an intricate web of familial relations, constantly reinforced by inter-marriages.
Hafiz Saeed sits at the helm of the group and has held it together for decades in face of internal tensions and a sprawling, sometimes conflicting, mission. Although he denies that the jihadist wing falls under his command, in reality, major decisions flow through him and Lakhvi. The value of this stability is apparent when one considers that, in stark contrast to its Deobandi counterparts, LT has not suffered from any major splits of import. On the other hand, this consistency has had downsides. The group has been beset with complaints about nepotism and cronyism (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 68). These grievances and the accompanying stifled or unfulfilled ambitions have been the main cause of defections and small-scale splinters, but have not escalated to the point that they threaten the group’s overall cohesion.

LT’s organizational structure reflects its dual mission. While the overall group is often referred to as LT, LT is technically the name of its jihadist wing. This part of the group is organized in a military fashion with a hierarchical command and control structure, rather than as a series of discrete cells seen in other terrorist organizations, like LJ or EIJ. Field commanders are assigned to supervise operations within designated locales and report to supervisors through established chains of command. This reporting chain eventually leads back to Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi. The group’s training facilities are primarily located in PAK—where the Pakistani Army also maintains a significant presence—and to a lesser extent, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province (formerly the North-West Frontier Province) (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 74). Its training regimen is a tiered system organized into segments focused on religious indoctrination, basic combat skills, and then, for select trainees, more specialized military, terrorist or guerilla warfare training is provided (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 74-6).

While LT seeks to change Pakistani society, it does not participate in the political process in Pakistan or have a political wing, although it has ties to various political actors outside of the military. Unlike its Deobandi counterparts, the group has not actively cultivated a relationship with
a political party. Openly disdainful of civilian politicians, the group—like all savvy actors in Pakistan—is much more sparing and careful in its commentary about the Army. This does not mean that the group has agreed with all of the Army's actions, but it refrains from explicitly condemning its patron. Once again, this sets LT apart from the multitude of Deobandi militant groups, which not only denounce the Army, but also attack both the Pakistani government and fellow Pakistanis.

While its foreign agenda is dominated by the pursuit of jihad, its domestic goal of reforming Pakistan is of equal importance to the group. Its objective is to convert Pakistani society to Ahl-e-Hadithism through its proselytization and missionary work. With its privileged position in Pakistan—thanks to the state's patronage—LT has likely made some inroads in this quest, although concrete data is limited (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 27). LT's social welfare exploits are the mainstay to achieve this end, primarily through offering education and health services (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 42). LT leader Hafiz Saeed explained the group's approach in Pakistan by saying “[w]e do not believe in revolutionary change in Pakistan rather we want a gradual reform through dawa” (qtd. in Tankel *Storming the Stage* 43). This explains why LT trains and indoctrinates far more members than it will ever deploy on jihadi missions outside of Pakistan; it is an effort to inculcate its values into Pakistani society (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 3).

A shura committee acts as the group's overall governing body, while various activities are managed at the district level by area representatives (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 67). By 2000, LT had more than seventy district offices throughout Pakistan. It also maintains a presence on many university campuses, where it conducts recruitment activities. The group has designated departments responsible for external relations, mosques, education, finance, media, social welfare, health, missionary work, domestic outreach, and even women's affairs (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 68). Its organizational headquarters is in Muridke, a city in Punjab Province outside of Lahore.
200-acre facility holds a large mosque, both boys’ and girls’ schools, a hostel for male students, an agricultural plot, a housing complex, and health facilities ("Lashkar-e-Toiba"). Sharia is strictly enforced within the walls of Markaz-e-Taiba, or Center of Purity, the official name of the Muridke facility. Saudi donors provided much of the seed money for it and the group’s access to state patronage within Pakistan certainly helped as well. Some allege that bin Laden was among those who contributed funds, although this frequently-cited claim is of uncertain origins (Tankel Storming the Stage 69-70).

While LT's Deobandi counterparts draw heavily from madaris to fill their ranks, LT only draws a small percentage of its members from such schools. One expert estimated that the figure is as low as ten percent. While LT invests heavily in education, it does not use its schools as the primary way to bring in recruits nor are its schools strictly madaris in that they also teach science and English as well as Islamic studies (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 9). In her research, Fair found that:

LeT recruits are generally in their late teens or early twenties and they tend to be better educated than Pakistanis on average or even other militant groups such as the Deobandi SSP or JeM. A majority of LeT recruits have completed secondary school with good grades and some have even attended college. This reflects both the background of LeT’s founding fathers who were engineering professors and their commitment to technical and other education. Many LeT operatives likely came into contact with LeT through proselytization programs on college campuses, which in turn lured the potential recruits to the large “ijtema” (congregation) held annually in Muridke (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 8-9).

With Pakistan’s small Ahl-e-Hadith population, LT’s “natural” constituency is insufficient to sustain its sizeable ranks. Moreover, much of the Ahl-e-Hadith community rejects LT's violent jihad and disagrees with its contention that jihad is a compulsory individual requirement under the current conditions (Tankel Storming the Stage 29). Therefore, LT must look outside this base to fill its ranks. This need dovetails with its conversion mission. Most of its recruits are Deobandi or Barelvi adherents who convert to Ahl-e-Hadithism through LT’s indoctrination program. Tankel
notes that members of the Deobandi groups are more “portable” because they can move seamlessly between the various organizations, which has contributed to those groups’ lack of organizational cohesion (Storming the Stage 79). Joining LT, on the other hand, requires a change of religious commitment, which makes it more difficult, but by no means impossible, to readily leave for another militant organization.

In sum, LT is a thoroughly Pakistani group. It is overwhelmingly Pakistani in its composition, views reforming Pakistan as a central mission, has haven and homeland in Pakistan, and has been shaped by extensive support from the Pakistani Army (Tellis 2010 2). Estimates of its size are imprecise. The State Department admits that “[t]he actual size of LT is unknown, but it has several thousand members in Azad Kashmir and Punjab Pakistan and in the southern Jammu, Kashmir, and Doda regions” (Department of State 2009 Country Reports). While its long-term goals and objectives supersede narrow Pakistani concerns, these parochial considerations have consistently weighed most heavily in its calculations and decisions.

11.6 Entering Uncharted Territory

By 2000, al-Qaida was well entrenched in Afghanistan and operating as "a state within a state" alongside Pakistani Deobandi groups under the permissive rule of the Afghan Taliban. It had conducted an attack against two U.S. Embassies in East Africa in 1998, was in the midst of preparation for the USS Cole bombing in Yemen, and slowly advancing a plot against the U.S. Homeland. With its attention focused on the United States and supporting the Taliban against the Northern Alliances, al-Qaida had shown scant interest in India, even the “jihad” in IAK, despite its geographic proximity and robust relationships with Deobandi Pakistani militant groups. Islamabad, now under the military rule of General Musharraf, was still supporting militant and terrorist activity occurring under the Taliban rule in Afghanistan and against Indian rule of IAK. Al-
Qaida and LT worked together on a limited tactical basis in Afghanistan, but their differing priorities, organizational circumstances, and even variation in their definitions of jihad mitigated any interest in forging a deeper partnership.

The Pakistani militant field remained crowded, and JEM had emerged as a clear rival to LT. Former Pakistani Ambassador to the United States, Hussain Haqqani, estimated that there were eighteen militant groups based in Pakistan involved in hostilities in IAK by 2000 (100). Following his seizure of power in late 1999, General Musharraf was disinclined to take action against proxy groups and continued to view externally-focused groups as national security and foreign policy tools (Tankel Storming the Stage 301). LT was poised to expand the scope and visibility of its operations against India, despite, or perhaps in part because of, signs of tentative progress and greater attention to improving India-Pakistan relations.

On the eve of then-President Bill Clinton’s visit to India in March 2000, LT massacred thirty-five Sikhs in IAK, casting a pall over his time in India (“Lashkar-e-Toiba”). The ploy backfired on the group. With that atrocity fresh in his mind, during a brief stopover in Pakistan, Clinton appealed to Musharraf to cease supporting militants. Not to be outdone, the following month, JEM struck the Indian Army’s headquarters in IAK using a suicide operative (South Asia Terrorism Portal). It was the first time that the tactic had been used in IAK (Abou Zahab and Roy 31). Although the operative was the only casualty, it sent shockwaves through the region.

In the midst of this escalation by militant groups, India and Pakistan commenced informal talks. Islamabad declared a ceasefire along the LOC, where the Army typically provided cover fire and assistance for militants infiltrating into IAK (Tankel Storming the Stage 65). Militant groups continued their attacks in IAK apace, albeit with ISI’s involvement better disguised and without claims of responsibility. A new phase of the conflict was about to begin, one that extended beyond IAK and had to potential to escalate into inter-state war.
On December 22, 2000, two LT operatives infiltrated into mainland India and launched an assault in the heart of New Delhi against the Red Fort. They killed two Indian soldiers and a guard on duty there. The attackers then managed to escape without being caught, the perfect execution of a high-risk fedayeen attack (“Incident Summary for 200012220001”). The low casualty numbers disguise the magnitude of the act. It was the first time that one of the so-called “Kashmiri organizations” had struck outside IAK, let alone in India’s capital. The attack signaled a widening of the conflict and demonstrated that LT’s intentions and operations were not limited to IAK.

The Red Fort was a target with tremendous symbolic value. The massive fort was built in New Delhi by a 17th-century Mughal emperor when he shifted the capital there from Agra. It was a historical site, a tourist attraction, and a military facility all in one. The attackers specifically struck an area used as an interrogation center by security services where militants were questioned and, in some cases, never heard from again (Tankel Storming the Stage 66). Despite militants’ lowered profile in IAK, Saeed brazenly announced that “the action indicates that we have extended the jihad to India” (qtd. in Tankel Storming the Stage 66). A spokesman for LT attributed the attack directly to ongoing peace efforts saying, “[b]y attacking the Red Fort, we want to stress that India should stop this drama of cease-fire and talks; it should pull out its forces from Kashmir” (qtd. in Tankel Storming the Stage 66).

Three days later, JEM responded with its own attack. A JEM suicide operative drove an explosive-rigged vehicle into an Indian Army base in Srinagar (Abou Zahab and Roy 31). Four people were killed in the attack. The onslaught in India was escalating courtesy of Islamabad’s two most powerful proxies. This was in part an outcome of their competition with one another. Beyond JEM’s adoption of suicide attacks, which al-Qaida had used in the 1998 Embassy and USS Cole attacks, al-Qaida was not playing a role in these events or influencing their trajectory.
Then in early 2001, LT sent operatives to storm the Srinagar airport. The six *fedayeen* attackers died during the assault, but not before they killed six people, including four paramilitaries and two bystanders (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 66). Despite LT's and JEM's provocations, the Indians continued to exercise restraint and the uneasy ceasefire between India and Pakistan held. Both JEM and LT gained credibility at home for these audacious acts, which garnered the group more recruits and resources. Islamabad made no genuine moves to reign in its proxies, which confirmed its duplicity in New Delhi's eyes (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 66). The indications of progress in India-Pakistan relations were quickly proving illusory and were about to take a significant downturn.

Musharraf was not averse to acting against militants that threatened the state, while failing to appreciate how his proxy policies contributed to the sectarian problem. Concerned about the impact of sectarian violence on domestic stability, Musharraf banned LJ in August 2001 (Abou Zahab and Roy 31). However, he did not take action against SSP or the sectarian infrastructure that supplied LJ with its recruits and ideology, and as a result, failed to deliver a decisive blow to the problem. Moreover, the "strategic depth" Pakistan sought in Afghanistan under the Taliban, extended to have for anti-Islamabad militants. For example, after the crackdown that followed the attempt on Prime Minister Sharif, LJ operatives fled to Afghanistan for sanctuary (Nasr 100).

### 11.7 Stuck Between a Rock and a Hard Place

General Musharraf found himself facing a stark choice following al-Qaida's attack in the United States on September 11, 2001. The United States had repeatedly demarched his government to cease its support for militants to no avail. Following the 9/11 attacks, Washington insisted in no uncertain terms that Islamabad either be on the side of the United States or be prepared to incur its wrath (Nawaz 540). Islamabad’s proxy policy in Afghanistan was driven by a desire to guarantee
Pakistan’s security, but it had inadvertently nurtured a situation that now posed a potentially existential threat to the state. Desirous of strategic depth as a defense against India and a friendly government in Kabul that would not stoke irredentist sentiments among Pakistan’s Pashtun population, the Pakistani Army had nurtured the Afghan Taliban since its early days. Once again, it found that this type of assistance did not insure compliance with its demands (Reidel 64). The Taliban rebuffed Islamabad’s entreaties to hand bin Laden over, leaving Islamabad with no good options (Fair and Jones 16). The State Department’s polls in June and immediately after 9/11 found that support for the Taliban actually grew in Pakistan in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks: the percentage of respondents who advocated increasing support to the Taliban increased from 38% to 46%, the percentage of those that said they viewed the Taliban favorable skyrocketed from 32% to 52%, and the majority of respondents denied that the Taliban were a threat to stability in the region and approved of Islamabad’s ties with the Taliban (United States Department of State “Pakistan” 1-2).

Musharraf tried to frame his unpopular decision to cooperate with the United States in terms that his domestic audience would find the most acceptable—to defy the United States would hand India an unacceptable advantage (Reidel 79-80). Faced with this popular opinion and security threats, Musharraf hoped to protect Pakistan’s India-focused proxies from the fallout, given that the United States’ ire was directed towards al-Qaida and its host. In reality, the distinction between the Pakistani Deobandi proxy groups, al-Qaida, and the Taliban had blurred somewhat after years of co-location and cooperation in Afghanistan. But Musharraf’s gambit was enough to evade hostilities with the U.S. Washington publicly heralded Pakistan’s about-face and praised Islamabad.

Some clear and important signs of fresh thinking are already apparent. After September 11, Pakistan’s President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, made significant changes to Pakistan’s policy and has rendered unprecedented levels of cooperation to support the war on terrorism. Pakistan not only broke its previously close ties with the Taliban regime but also allowed the U.S. military to use bases within the country for military operations in Afghanistan. Pakistan sealed its border with Afghanistan to help prevent the escape of fugitives and
continues to work closely with the United States to identify and detain fugitives (Department of State 2001 Patterns 8).

Islamabad’s proxies were stunned by the turn of events. For its part, LT’s response to the 9/11 attacks and Musharraf’s decision can be best described as confused. The group struggled to situate itself within the rapidly changing landscape. It issued contradictory statements, alternatively praising and then condemning the 9/11 attacks, voicing opposition to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, vowing to stand with the Afghan people, and then affirming its commitment to opposing India. Its message was muddled and its path unclear as it now confronted a situation that set two facets of its identity—its loyalty to Islamabad and its pan-Islamist beliefs—which had long been mutually reinforcing, on a collision course (Tankel Storming the Stage 111-2).

The heavily Afghanistan-based Deobandi groups, like HUM and HUJI, stayed to fight the United States and Northern Alliance alongside the Taliban (“Harkat-ul-Mujahideen”). They were internally divided about how to respond to Islamabad’s decision. With their sectarian propensities, they had a history of declaring those that did not agree with their beliefs, whether they be Shia, Ahmeddiya or even Bareli, to be the enemy, so it was not an ideological stretch for them to view the Musharraf Government as such. LJ already had an adversarial relationship with the government. Some elements of the Deobandi groups immediately turned against Musharraf’s government, while others adopted a more wary posture, but did not break ties (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 7-8).

**India Still Fair Game?**

At least one of Islamabad’s more privileged proxies did not appreciate the gravity of its patron’s situation and proceeded to conduct one of its most audacious attacks to date. On October 1, less than a month after 9/11, JEM bombed the Kashmir legislative assembly building in Srinagar. The blast killed over 30 people and wounded at least 60 more (Haqqani 302-3). JEM initially claimed responsibility the same day as the attack, only to retract the claim days later (“Jaish-e-Mohammed”). The initial claim was unusual in that several JEM representatives contacted press
outlets to claim responsibility for the attack, though the group typically avoided this type of publicity. Observers questioned what would have caused JEM to do this, and one theory gained traction; in the face of Islamabad’s decision to turn its back on Afghanistan, ISI instructed its powerful proxy to claim this attack in order to signal that Pakistan had not abandoned IAK (Abou Zahab and Roy 55). If true, Musharraf’s divided policy towards militancy was apparent immediately.

Then, on December 13, 2001, five JEM gunmen penetrated the Parliament House in New Delhi where numerous Parliamentarians and other senior government officials were conducting state business following the adjournment of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament. The attackers killed several policemen, security guards, and a gardener. All of them died during the assault. One attacker was wearing a suicide vest, and died when he detonated it, according to some accounts (BBC).

The Indian Government publicly accused LT and JEM of being the culprits, based in part on confessions it extracted from several co-conspirators that were later thrown out of court (Tankel Storming the Stage 125). However, upon closer examination, all of the attackers hailed from JEM as did all of the defendants subsequently convicted in Indian court. The use of a suicide vest also points to JEM’s predominant role, because it, unlike LT, had a track record of using that tactic (Fair and Jones 29). Therefore, it is unclear what role, if any, LT actually played in this attack. The Indians did not subsequently provide concrete evidence of LT’s involvement. The two rival organizations had never conducted a major joint attack before—although the Pakistani groups cooperate on an ad hoc basis in IAK—nor have they done so since then. Some reports maintain that LT provided logistical assistance for the attack. LT publicly denied involvement, which it would do irrespective of whether it had participated or not (“Lashkar-e-Toiba”). In any event, the Indians’ initial
accusations stuck and LT was—and still is—often credited and blamed for the attack that nearly sparked a war between two nuclear powers.

India had certainly endured more lethal attacks without retaliation, but this provocation—the deliberate targeting of its elected leaders in the capital—necessitated a response (Haqqani 303). Given the accused perpetrators’ well-established relationship with ISI, New Delhi believed that the attack was sanctioned, if not directly supported, by Islamabad, and was thus an act of war (Nawaz 549). While the extent of the Pakistani Government’s prior knowledge about the attack remains a source of debate, its policies had, at a minimum, nurtured the culprits (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 113). The Indian Government deployed its forces, positioning several divisions and heavy artillery along its 1,800 mile border with Pakistan as well as placing naval vessels in the Arabian Sea (Haqqani 303, Nawaz 549). It was the largest mobilization of Indian forces since the 1971 war with Pakistan (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 5).

Already faced with a war underway on its western border, Islamabad undertook its familiar shell game of arresting senior terrorist leaders and detaining militants in mass, only to release them when the pressure subsided, seeking to both avoid a war with India or further antagonizing its proxies (Haqqani 303). Hafiz Saeed was among those imprisoned, only to be released three months later when the Lahore High Court ruled that there was insufficient basis to continue his detention (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 117). Masood Azhar was immediately placed under house arrest, which in his case lasted nearly a year, another indication that the evidence implicating JEM in the attack was more compelling (Abou Zahab and Roy 36). Dozens of low-level members from JEM were also arrested (Rana 235). The U.S. Government frantically sought to mediate the standoff before it escalated into nuclear war or irrevocably damaged the United States’ nascent campaign against al-Qaida in Afghanistan.
Islamabad made a public display of cracking down on the groups. In January, it announced that LT, JEM, HUM were banned. To evade the sanctions, they simply changed their names, with ISI’s encouragement, and lowered their public profile (Tankel Storming the Stage 117). For example, Saeed publicly resigned as the leader of LT, and re-branded itself as Jamaat ul-Dawa (JUD). In reality, LT still came under JUD, Saeed continued to lead JUD, and thus Saeed’s move was meaningless. But he had “technically” adhered to Musharraf’s dictates, and thus Musharraf could claim to have heeded calls for actions against his two more powerful proxies (“Lashkar-e-Toiba”.

The military standoff between the two countries dragged on for months, with neither side willing to be the first to de-mobilize. Perhaps unwilling to be outmaneuvered by its competitor, LT was disinclined to stay quiescent. In May, the group attacked a passenger bus and Indian Army barracks, where it slaughtered the wives and children of resident soldiers (Tankel Storming the Stage 125). The brutal attack re-ignited barely simmering tensions as the two militaries stood eyeball-to-eyeball on the border. With few remaining options other than to commence hostilities, New Delhi expelled the Pakistani Ambassador (Tankel Storming the Stage 125). Tensions remained dangerously high for nearly ten months before both sides finally demobilized and initiated talks (Nawaz 550).

In the meantime, proxy groups tried to adapt to the new environment with varying levels of success. By May, JEM’s office in the heavily militarized area of PAK was up and running under a different name. In the offices around Pakistan, some JEM workers were sent on leave, and identifying signs were removed or replaced from its offices (Rana 235). LT, now JUD, similarly masked its PAK contingent by changing its name and putting it under “Kashmiri” command (Abou Zahab and Roy 43). The other proxy groups went along with the charade to varying degrees. For example, HUM adopted another alias, Jamiat-ul-Ansar (“Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.”). But this
compliance masked the turmoil within the Deobandi groups in particular about what their relationship to the state should be in these changed circumstances.

*The War in Afghanistan Commences*

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, al-Qaida, the Taliban, their Deobandi Pakistani allies, and other resident foreign militants were routed from Afghanistan with a speed that surprised most observers. Pakistan initially provided the United States with cross-border assistance to intercept fleeing militants. But when tensions with India spiked, Islamabad diverted both its attention and forces to its eastern border, providing a critical opening for militants to cross into Pakistan (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 6). The Parliament attack and subsequent mobilizations occurred just as U.S. forces were engaged in a pitched battle at Tora Bora with al-Qaida fighters, likely including bin Laden. Unable to block the border, the United States requested that Pakistani forces seal the Durand Line to prevent militants from escaping into Pakistan (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 114). However, the troops slated to reinforce the Pakistani side were instead routed to the border with India.

With Islamabad preoccupied and U.S. pressure in Afghanistan unrelenting, militants fled across the border into Pakistan. This was the beginning of a shift in al-Qaida’s alliance circumstances. While al-Qaida had long been the service, haven, and resource provider for other groups, the tables had turned. It now needed assistance from others, particularly Pakistan-based groups. Al-Qaida had years of relationships and contacts to call upon in its hour of need, but the loyalties and disposition of the Pakistani groups were sometimes unclear and conflicted in the changed environment. Al-Qaida’s clearest ally was LJ, but because it did not have the same potential internal conflict given its existing antagonistic relationship with Islamabad.

LT’s extensive infrastructure and network offered a potential avenue for assistance and protection that would fulfill al-Qaida’s needs. Though LT had not been a close partner to al-Qaida in the years leading up to 9/11, LT was, from al-Qaida’s perspective, well positioned to help because it
had a presence throughout Pakistan, including its major cities (Fair "Lashkar-e-Tayiba" 8). At least one al-Qaida leader fleeing Afghanistan found shelter with LT. The State Department reported that “[s]enior al-Qa’ida lieutenant Abu Zubaydah was captured at an LT safe house in Faisalabad in March 2002, which suggested that some members were facilitating the movement of al-Qaida members in Pakistan” (U.S. Department of State 2009 Country Reports; Tankel Storming the Stage 150).

Zubaydah was among the al-Qaida leaders who had extensive personal relationships with his LT counterparts (Tankel Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective 109). It is not entirely clear the degree to which Zubaydah’s situation reflected an organizational-level decision by LT to offer safe harbor to al-Qaida. Either way, when al-Qaida’s had pressing organizational needs for haven and assistance, LT demonstrated at least some willingness to assist. The changes in the environment and organizational needs it created for al-Qaida presented an opening for an alliance to form between the two groups.

Zubaydah’s ability to hide in an LT safe house is frequently cited as evidence of an alliance between al-Qaida and LT. However, it is often overlooked that Zubaydah’s capture in an LT safe house was the first significant al-Qaida arrest outside of Afghanistan following 9/11. At the time, he was the most senior al-Qaida operative in U.S. custody. Therefore, LT’s inability or unwillingness to ensure Zubaydah’s safety, even though he had personal relationships with LT members, almost certainly caused al-Qaida to be leery about pursuing an alliance. While LT was a desirable ally in terms of its ability to offer haven, an al-Qaida immediate need, it was not trustworthy because of its loyalty to Islamabad. It was, at that point, a one-way need. Al-Qaida could not fulfill any of LT’s organizational needs because those needs were largely filled internally or through its relationship with Islamabad.

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Musharraf’s post-9/11 “moderated jihad” policy increasingly enraged sectarian groups like LJ that already opposed to his government. It also caused consternation among the Army’s longtime proxies, particularly the Deobandi militant groups like HUM, HUJI, and to a lesser extent JEM. The thing that these groups had in common, beyond being Deobandi, was that they all had grown close to the Taliban and al-Qa’ida and had grown dependent on the infrastructure in Afghanistan. After the Parliament attack, the environment in Pakistan grew more cumbersome because militant groups could no longer operate as overtly and were subject to occasional, albeit temporary, arrests and other constraints on their activities. While these measures did not actually meaningfully reduce groups’ capability, they stoked resentment. This sentiment was then compounded by Islamabad’s restrictions on infiltrations across the LOC into IAK, which demonstrated that the fall out of Musharraf’s decision would not be limited to Afghanistan (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 6-7).

A slew of loosely-organized, Deobandi splinter elements emerged with an explicit anti-Islamabad orientation. Existing Deobandi groups’ organizational cohesion and command and control—already tenuous at the best of times—further degraded (Tankel Storming the Stage 123). For example, JEM soon split into two factions: one remained loyal to Islamabad while another turned its guns on its former patron (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 6). Individual relationships grew increasingly important. For example, HUM and JEM operatives worked with al-Qa’ida in the kidnapping and murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002, but did not appear to be acting on behalf of their organization (“Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.”; Raman). Yet such splits were often not complete, and individuals fluidly moved among the various factions and drew upon personal ties to work together as needed. Their ability to engage in organizational-level alliances decreased, and individual-level relationships became more central.

Al-Qa’ida soon added Islamabad to its list of foes and worked with anti-Musharraf elements to target the government. It issued repeated calls for Musharraf’s overthrow. The most visible
manifestation of the coalescing militant opposition to the Pakistani Government’s alliance with the United States came in the form of two assassination attempts against Musharraf in late 2003 (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 127). The actors involved in these plots typified the terrorism problem Islamabad now faced. They included operatives associated with two of its Deobandi proxies, JEM and HUJI, commanders from the Army’s Special Services Group, police, and elements of al-Qaida (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 170). Islamabad could not deny that the terrorist threat was morphing in dangerous ways, and that its proxies were turning into a liability.

Amidst this growing threat within Pakistan, LT largely retained its ability to regulate its rank and file. Unlike the Deobandi groups, it did not experience any major splits. Freelancing by LT members increased and those unwilling to adhere to LT’s policies left the organization, but these developments did not seriously threaten its overall organizational coherence. One reason LT fared better than its Deobandi counterparts is that it did not have the same allegiance to the Taliban or investment in Afghanistan. Therefore, although the group objected to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, it was relatively unscathed by the action. While there was considerable dismay about Musharraf’s post-9/11 alliance with the U.S., LT adhered to Islamabad’s edicts, and it continued to eschew violence in Pakistan. Instead, LT maintained its campaign against India and thus, from the Pakistani Government’s perspective, remained a useful proxy (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 124). By 2002, with an estimated 1,500 fighters in IAK, thousands more prepared to fight, and still loyal to Islamabad, LT became the prime executor of what Tankel called Islamabad’s post-9/11 “controlled jihad” in IAK (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 139).

The diverging approaches of LT, on the one hand, and Pakistani Deobandi groups and al-Qaida, on the other, created friction. While it had always scorned the Deobandis’ interpretation of Islam, LT now objected to their decision to conduct jihad against Pakistan (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 5-7). For their part, the Deobandi groups and al-Qaida felt betrayed by LT’s continued loyalty to
Islamabad and singular focus on India (Tankel Storming the Stage 3). LT’s ties with ISI continued to beevil its reputation with other militants in the post-9/11 environment, but LT clearly deemed the benefits of that relationship as outweighing the censure it endured from its counterparts. From this position, it still cooperated occasionally with al-Qaida and the Deobandi groups, but these transactional relationships did not develop into alliances.

*LT: Still Ample Reasons to Focus on India*

LT soon found ample reason to validate its continued focus on India. In 2002, widespread communal riots erupted in Gujarat after a Muslim mob attacked and set fire to two train carriages carrying Hindu activists. The Hindu passengers were returning from Ayodhya, where they were campaigning for the construction of a temple honoring the Hindu god Ram on the site of a sixteenth century mosque destroyed by Hindu militants in 1992. Human Rights Watch vividly described the ensuing bloodbath.

Between February 28 and March 2, 2002, a three-day retaliatory killing spree by Hindus left hundreds dead and tens of thousands homeless and dispossessed, "marking the country's worst religious bloodletting in a decade. The looting and burning of Muslim homes, shops, restaurants, and places of worship was also widespread. Tragically consistent with the longstanding pattern of attacks on minorities and Dalits (or so-called untouchables) in India, and with previous episodes of large-scale communal violence in India, scores of Muslim girls and women were brutally raped in Gujarat before being mutilated and burnt to death.

In almost all of the incidents documented by Human Rights Watch, the police were directly implicated in the attacks. At best they were passive observers, and at worse they acted in concert with murderous mobs and participated directly in the burning and looting of Muslim shops and homes and the killing and mutilation of Muslims. In many cases, under the guise of offering assistance, the police led the victims directly into the hands of their killers. Many of the attacks on Muslim homes and places of business also took place in close proximity to police posts. Panicked phone calls made to the police, fire brigades, and even ambulance services generally proved futile. Many witnesses testified that their calls either went unanswered or that they were met with responses such as: "We don't have any orders to save you"; "We cannot help you, we have orders from above"; "If you wish to live in Hindustan, learn to protect yourself"; "How come you are alive? You should have died too"; "Whose house is on fire? Hindus' or Muslims'?" In some cases phone lines were eventually cut to make it impossible to call for help ("We Have No Orders to Save You": State Participation and Complicity and Communal Violence in Gujarat").
Though not in any way involved in the mayhem, LT pointed to these atrocities as confirmation of its contention that Muslims could not live securely under Hindu rule in India. The group used the tragedy to recruit Indian operatives, mobilize Pakistani volunteers, and garner support for its violent campaign against India. Moreover, this agenda still dovetailed with Islamabad’s national security posture, which viewed India as the biggest threat to Pakistan.

Islamabad persisted in its “double game” of supporting the actions of useful militants while taking sporadic and heavy-handed action against threatening ones. This proved an ill-advised attempt to draw a black and white dichotomy in an area where there was a tremendous amount of grey area. It was the worst of both worlds. Its hairsplitting infuriated the United States and India, which accused Islamabad of duplicity, while also provoking the militants’ ire against the state. Still Islamabad would not relinquish its remaining proxies, though it restricted their actions in India (Howenstein 13). In 2003, the Pakistani Government announced another round of bans on militant organizations and once again, the targeted groups simply changed their name to circumvent these actions.

Conspicuously absent from the 2003 list was JUD, LT’s front organization, which had vastly expanded its social service and missionary activities (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 14). Therefore, JUD continued to operate legally and overtly, using this status to embed itself deeper in Pakistani society through its missionary work. By virtue of this position, LT was the most accessible militant group for recruits seeking to join the jihad. By 2004, it was the only terrorist group still permitted to run sizeable, semi-permanent training facilities in addition to its numerous offices and branches throughout the country (Tankel Storming the Stage 128). But LT was not simply solidifying its position within Pakistan, it also sought to bolster its international legitimacy through efforts such as distributing aid to countries affected by the devastating 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 14; 28). The group even considered legally challenging the U.S. designation of LT as a
terrorist organization, but LT's operations chief insisted that the group would have to "take ISI into
confidence before making such a big move" (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 
83).

The Threat Looms in Pakistan

While LT continued to thrive above ground in Pakistan, al-Qaida, LJ, and the anti-Islamabad elements in the Deobandi proxies burrowed well below ground within Pakistan's restive, Pashtun-
dominated Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Islamabad's writ was virtually non-
existent in FATA. Under intense U.S. pressure to disrupt this safe haven, Islamabad initiated a series
of military operations in FATA, which succeeded primarily in further radicalizing and uniting
indigenous Pashtun and foreign militants there against Pakistani military forces (Fair and Jones 
25). For example, in 2004, the Pakistani Army launched Operation Kalosha in South Waziristan 
Agency (Jones 241). A powerful local militant leader, Nek Mohamed, in South Waziristan provided
sanctuary for al-Qaida and other foreign terrorists. While it soon "declared victory," the Army's
peace deal with Nek Mohamed was widely seen as an admission of defeat and surrender. Rather
than subduing the area, the operation further emboldened resident militants, left al-Qaida's safe
haven intact, and caused local resentment of the heavy-handed and often indiscriminate actions of
"foreign invaders," i.e. the predominantly Punjabi soldiers used in these operations in the Pashtun 
tribal areas. This result would be repeated dozens of times in FATA in the coming years,
contributing to the "Talibanization" of the area. The peace deal created a dangerous precedent and
militants, like Nek Mohamed, seized the opportunity to consolidate greater control over FATA,
filling the governance void with their own draconian brand of sharia (Jones 243).
11.8 “Moderated” Jihad?

On July 7, 2005, four suicide bombers struck three London subway trains and one bus, killing fifty-six people and injuring more than 700 (Department of State 2005 Patterns). All the attackers were British citizens, but the trail of their journey soon led back to Pakistan where two of the bombers had gotten training and guidance from al-Qaida (Tankel Storming the Stage 176). In addition, one of the bombers who stayed with family in Punjab was alleged to have made contact with LT and JEM officials during his time in Pakistan, although there is no evidence that these groups assisted with the attack (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 11). The “7/7 attack” was only one of several plots against the West that would have linkages, if not roots, back in Pakistan. Musharraf once again found himself under tremendous international pressure to “do more” against terrorism.

He made further moves to scale back the visibility and scope of militant activity in Pakistan to appease the West, further alienating proxies who once again felt spurned by their patron, but still falling well short of systematically addressing the problem. For example, ISI let it be known that training foreigners was no longer acceptable, though in practice foreigners were easily hidden from view when ISI came through training facilities. ISI also demanded that LT downsize or disperse some of its larger and more overt facilities (Tankel Storming the Stage 177). Islamabad further constrained militant cross-LOC infiltrations into IAK (Tankel Storming the Stage 177). This latter measure did produce some meaningful results. Even the Indian Government “gave the devil his due” and admitted that Musharraf’s moderated jihad policy contributed to a reduction in violence in IAK beginning in 2006 (Tankel Storming the Stage 180).

However, these policies did little to quell the growing rebellion in FATA or the al-Qaida threat emanating from there (Tankel Storming the Stage 180). In 2006, the level of violence by the Deobandi militants against the Pakistani state escalated dangerously and threatened domestic stability (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 10). Instead of the eliminating the threat, Islamabad tried in vain.
to coopt it through peace deals and efforts to bring disgruntled former proxies back into the fold. The groups and individuals that threatened the state now overlapped extensively with the ones that worked with the state in external arenas (Fair “Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 13).

Restraint in One Place Creates Openings in Others

Beyond inflaming militant opposition to the government, the LOC restrictions also had other unintended consequences. LT—still a compliant proxy, albeit at times reluctantly—obediently decreased its cross-LOC activities and dispersed its training facilities. Nonetheless, the group was not willing to leave its fighters idle, as such a move that would surely have resulted in a slew defections and splinters (Tankel Storming the Stage 193). Musharraf’s LOC initiative coincided with—and may have contributed to—an escalation in the insurgency in Afghanistan as the Taliban was re-surging, assisted by its sanctuary in Pakistan, and the U.S.’s diversion of forces into Iraq. In need of an outlet for its fighters and perhaps sensing an opportunity to improve its militant credentials, LT increased its involvement against Coalition forces in the Afghanistan, which had been fairly limited to date. It remained a tertiary actor in the anti-Coalition insurgency in Afghanistan, but brought its fairly sophisticated bomb fabrication skills and experienced fighters with it.

The move dovetailed with LT’s agenda and organizational dynamics. Not only did LT oppose the U.S. “occupation” of Afghanistan, it shared Islamabad’s deeply-held, but poorly-supported conviction that New Delhi was using the situation in Afghanistan to destabilize Pakistan by supporting anti-Islamabad elements (Fair personal interview). Anxious to ensure that Afghanistan would no longer be a safe haven for anti-India militants, after September 11, 2001, New Delhi poured several hundred million dollars in financial assistance to Afghanistan. Specifically, it helped fund construction of the parliament building, provided assistance to legislators, and offered development aid. Much to Islamabad’s chagrin, India built roads near the disputed Afghan-
Pakistani Durand Line, which were run by an Indian state-owned organization. In addition to its Embassy in Kabul, which militants repeatedly targeted, New Delhi established several consulates in Afghan cities like Jalalabad, Kandahar, and Herat. These facilities were seen as “evidence” by Islamabad that New Delhi’s presence is not benign, but were “in fact” a cover for intelligence and sabotage activity against Pakistan (Fair and Jones 18).

LT’s move into Afghanistan also quieted internal agitation by hardliners who wanted to increase the group’s efforts against the United States (Tankel Storming the Stage 194). To facilitate its escalation in Afghanistan, LT primarily built on its long-standing ties in Konar and Nuristan (Tankel Storming the Stage 196). Konar has long been a hotbed of militancy, particularly among foreign fighters. This augmentation in its efforts in Afghanistan gave a new generation of LT fighters greater exposure to militants involved in that insurgency, including al-Qaida (Tankel Storming the Stage 177-8). This offered another opening for the two groups to create an organizational-level relationship, but it remained limited to individual-level ties and transactional cooperation.

Unsurprisingly, in order to secure its influence, ISI meddling in Afghanistan and support for the Afghan Taliban commensurately intensified during this period, especially after the United States publicly discussed the possibility of downsizing its military presence (Fair and Jones 17).

The other face of LT was soon on full display as well. In October 2005, a 7.6 magnitude earthquake struck in South Asia. The quake’s devastating impact was felt acutely in its epicenter in PAK as well as its environs (Tankel Storming the Stage 135). Nearly 75,000 people perished, thousands more were injured, and millions were displaced (Tankel Storming the Stage 136). The harsh terrain and weather in PAK hindered the humanitarian response efforts, which were led and controlled by the Army. LT was ideally positioned to assist in the hardest-hit areas because it possessed extensive infrastructure and personnel in PAK, a longstanding training and deployment location for the group.
LT responded swiftly, deploying its resident members to distribute relief in areas inaccessible and unfamiliar to outsiders and using its health services to treat the injured. It erected makeshift hospitals and dispensaries within days of the quake and sent its vehicles to retrieve those who could not make it to its facilities on their own. LT’s early efficacy created a cycle that soon resulted in more aid flowing through it. Tankel observed that “[w]eak because JuD’s response was so quick and comprehensive, the Pakistani state relied heavily on it to carry out aspects of the relief work…. One consequence was to marginalize local, secular NGOs… Organizations had copious relief materials, but JuD provided the manpower to help deliver them” (Storming the Stage 137). Its ability to respond so effectively to the earthquake was a consequence of two inter-related qualities: 1) its longtime commitment to a domestic missionary mission, particularly health services; and 2) its institutionalized and robust relationship with the Army, which trusted it to assist in the relief efforts in a sensitive area. LT’s reputation and prestige in Pakistan soared, and donations flowed into its coffers. Islamabad supported LT’s erection of relief camps in the quake’s aftermath, which, at times, conveniently doubled as recruitment centers (Tankel Storming the Stage 138). LT’s impeccable humanitarian credentials now served as another reason for Islamabad to resist U.S. and Indian entreaties to crack down on its premiere proxy.

It soon became apparent that LT’s involvement in Afghanistan did not indicate a waning in its commitment to striking its primary enemy, India. While the group accepted Islamabad’s constraints on its activities in IAK, it proceeded to plot a strike in India’s mainland while hiding its hand. In 2006, it conducted its largest, mass-casualty attack to date. On July 7, 2006, seven bombs exploded within ten minutes of one another on packed commuter trains in the Indian mega-city of Mumbai (previously Bombay), killing over 200 people and injuring more than 700 (United States Department of State 2006 Country Reports). The attack was a product of LT working closely with indigenous Indian militants, who, as previously discussed, the group had been cultivating for years.
in order to disguise its involvement. LT recruited Indian operatives to plant the bombs and provide other support and logistical assistance (United State Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 9).

Following the attack, Indo-Pak relations resumed their wary posture. India withdrew from a peace dialogue with Pakistan that began in 2004. Unlike 2001, the threat of military escalation into war was limited. Once again, Islamabad undertook cosmetic gestures to give the appearance of taking action against LT, such as detaining Hafiz Saeed only to release him a few months later, but LT remained unscathed by Islamabad’s latest faux crackdown (Tankel Storming the Stage 183).

The Red Mosque Turning Point

LT was willing to play by Islamabad’s rules; however, other militants’ opposition to the government was growing both in scale and intensity. The internal Islamist revolt reached a dangerous new phase in 2007 when militants holed up in the Red Mosque in Islamabad and demanded, among other things, that sharia law be implemented in Pakistan. The mosque, which had long served as a recruiting ground for Islamabad’s proxies, now adopted an openly confrontational stance against the government. Musharraf soon deemed its provocations to be an unacceptable threat to his government, particularly because of its location in Islamabad. As tensions mounted, militants gathered in the mosque and security forces surrounded it. Gun fire was exchanged and ultimatums were issued, but the militants refused to yield. The government’s amnesty offer went largely unheeded. After a week-long standoff, the security services stormed the mosque. An unknown number of people were killed in the ensuing carnage.

The effect of the Red Mosque siege reverberated far beyond the walls of that mosque. The optic of security services raiding a mosque convinced fence sitters to turn against the state, and hardened the resolve of anti-Islamabad elements. They unleashed a torrent of violence from both newly radicalized and existing militants determined to topple Musharraf. Disparate Pakistani
Pashtun extremists in FATA rallied under the banner of the “Pakistani Taliban” led by a South Waziristan-based militant leader, Baitullah Mehsud. Mehsud had recently gained notoriety when he humiliated the Army by capturing over 200 soldiers after the latest local peace deal collapsed (Department of State “2007 Reports”). Mehsud was a particularly close ally of al-Qaeda, and areas under his control were a critical source of haven for al-Qaeda members.

Suicide attacks—which were introduced into the Afghan insurgency in 2005 and IAK in 2000, but remained a relatively uncommon tactic within Pakistan—skyrocketed. Most notably, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto was killed in a suicide attack at the end of that year. Significant controversy surrounded her death, given her opposition to Musharraf’s rule and the failure to provide her adequate security. Islamabad blamed Mehsud’s Pakistani Taliban for the attack. Bhutto had returned to Pakistan two months earlier amidst growing mainstream opposition to Musharraf’s rule. It was not the first attempt on her life. Her October homecoming procession in Karachi was the site of the most deadly suicide attack in Pakistan to date. Over 130 people were killed and hundreds more injured (United States Department of State 2007 Country Reports).

Terrorism in Pakistan was entering a new phase, and LT was moving against the militant current. After initially supporting some of the Red Mosque’s initiatives, LT managed to dissociate itself from the hostilities (Tankel Storming the Stage 191). The Deobandi proxy groups did not fare as well. Some tried with varying levels of success to pull their members out when it was clear that the government intended to forcibly quell the uprising. Some refused to adhere to their leaders’ instructions and a fresh round of splinters and offshoots from the Deobandi proxy groups ensued.

In what appeared to be the sole bright spot in an otherwise gloomy picture, violence in IAK decreased further in 2007, in part due to Islamabad’s continuing restriction on cross-LOC activity. The State Department’s annual terrorism report acknowledged that “Pakistan’s leaders took steps to prevent support to the Kashmiri militancy, and the number of violent attacks in Kashmir was

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down by approximately 50 percent from 2006, according to public statements made by the Indian Defense Minister” (United States Department of State 2007 Country Reports”). However, a decrease in violence in IAK was by no means an indicator that terrorism against India emanating from Pakistan was on the decline.

12.9 Un-Moderated Jihad

Pakistan was in turmoil in 2008. Al-Qaida and allied terrorists attacked the Danish Embassy and the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, demonstrating an alarming ability to penetrate secure locations in the capital. Musharraf was finally forced to resign in August, ending yet another era of military rule in Pakistan. Bhutto’s notoriously corrupt widower, Asif Ali Zardari, was elected President in September. His weak civilian government clumsily and unsuccessfully attempted to consolidate some influence over foreign policy and national security issues—areas traditionally the exclusive domain of the Army—as the security situation within Pakistan continued to deteriorate.

The same month that Zardari was elected and a new ISI chief was appointed, unbeknownst to all but a few dozen people, a team of LT operatives boarded a boat in Karachi and set off for Mumbai. However, their boat struck a rock and capsized. The would-be attackers nearly drowned before being rescued by another boat and returned to Pakistan (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 95). In October, a second attempt by the attackers also failed when an Indian boat fended off their attempt to seize it (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 97).

Undeterred, their plan was not abandoned; once again, they waited for another opening (Tankel Storming the Stage 209).

Then on November 26, LT made what Fair described as its “debut as an international terrorist organization” in India (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 2). Once again, the attackers departed on a boat from Karachi destined for Mumbai via
sea. This time they successfully hijacked an Indian fishing vessel, killed all abroad but the captain, and then used the boat to infiltrate Mumbai via a small fishermen's dock. Ten LT operatives armed with assault rifles, pistols, grenades, and IED materiel then divided into four attack teams and proceeded on a shooting rampage through the streets of India's financial and entertainment capital that lasted nearly four days. They struck soft targets, including two upscale hotels, a bustling train station, a cafe, and an obscure Jewish center. The attackers planted bombs in taxicabs—timed to detonate throughout the city when the assault was underway, thereby adding to the confusion—that killed the drivers when they exploded (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 99).

The attackers remained in regular communication with LT handlers in Pakistan, who provided instruction, guidance, and motivation throughout the assault. When the shooting finally stopped, over 180 people were dead. As befit an LT *fedayeen*-style operation, all but one of the attackers died during the course of their mission. However, the one surviving attacker was captured by the Indian authorities. While not as lethal as the D-Company's attacks in Mumbai in 1993 or LT's attack in 2006, this siege's impact was vastly greater as it gripped the mega-city—broadcast live on television—over the course of four days and revealed critical vulnerabilities in the Indian Government's counterterrorism capability ("Terror Attacks in Mumbai: Six Foreigners Among 101 Dead.").

LT denied involvement and issued a fake claim of responsibility for the attack under the alias "Deccan Mujahidin," a name which insinuated that the attacks were perpetrated by indigenous Indians motivated by domestic grievances ("Terror Attacks in Mumbai: Six Foreigners Among 101 Dead."). However, this thin façade of plausible deniability was soon shattered. The sole surviving attacker fingered his organization back in Pakistan. Furthermore, the Indian Government intercepted the hordes of the chilling phone calls placed by the attackers to their handlers back in
Pakistan. It also retrieved a satellite phone and other evidence left in the dingy that the attackers used to come ashore, but in their haste, forgot to sink as instructed (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 219).

In addition to elevating the group to the league of international terrorists, LT's choice of "global jihadist" targets in the 2008 Mumbai attack has been used as the basis to surmise about an alliance between al-Qaida and LT (Tellis 4). However, a closer examination reveals that these judgments are not as clear as they are sometimes portrayed. The primary evidence cited to support the argument that the 2008 Mumbai attack demonstrated a growing nexus between LT and al-Qaida is the targeting of places frequented by foreigners. Initial reports claimed that the attackers deliberately singled out foreigners at the attack locations; however, as the details became clearer, this assertion was largely unsupported (United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 13).

Descriptions of the attack still tended to emphasize that "[t]he attacks in Mumbai targeted places frequented by foreigners and wealthy Indians" (United States Department of State *2007 Country Reports*). This characterization overlooks the targeting of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) train station, which is used primarily by lower-class and middle-class Indians. This oversight is particularly important especially in light of the fact that CST was the location where the most causalities were inflicted (United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 12). Therefore, it would be more accurate to describe the attacks as striking targets that affected a cross-section of Mumbai society.

In addition, the two hotels, particularly the Taj, were not only places where foreign visitors stayed; they were symbols of India's economic success, prestige, and wealth (United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 12). The Taj hotel even overwhelmed its attackers, who wandered in a daze while taking in its opulence, and then revealed their lack of sophistication when they struggled to work the elevator (Taj Mahal Security). More
importantly, the characterization of the hotel target as an effort to target foreigners overlooks the rationale for its inclusion. David Headley, the American LT operative charged with casing the targets, was instructed to case the Taj Hotel by both his LT senior and ISI handler—who coordinated with one another prior to tasking Headley—to look at the conference rooms because Indian defense contractors and scientists gathered there for meetings (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 165-167). During much of the time Headley worked on the plot, the Taj Hotel was the sole target, primarily for this reason. Thus striking this hotel was not an act of global jihadism or specifically intended to strike foreigners, though LT surely knew that foreigners would be victims as well.

However, the murders at the Chabad House were seemingly a clear and unambiguous effort to target non-Indian Jews, particularly Israelis (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 89). LT and other Pakistani militant groups have long proclaimed their antipathy towards Israel and employed virulent anti-Semitic rhetoric, but LT was the first Pakistani group to operationalize this sentiment. There are several sizable and well-known synagogues in Mumbai. Headley surveilled these other possible Jewish targets, but deemed them as less desirable because they were primarily frequented by Indian Jews (Tankel Storming the Stage 229).

Chabad Houses are Jewish community centers focusing on outreach and education located in places where Jewish people tend to live and visit (“Chabad House”). It was a small, obscure facility run by a resident American rabbi and his family with a hostel that accommodated Jewish tourists, usually Israelis or Americans. Even those intimately familiar with the city were unaware of this modest, unmarked location. Headley was first told of the idea of casing the Chabad House, by his ISI handler, Major Iqbal, because it “was a front office of Mossad of India” and then he subsequently was also tasked by his LT supervisor (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 280-2).
LT considered its inhabitants to be invaluable to its plot. An LT handler in Pakistan exhorted one of the Chabad-based attackers whose resolve to kill the inhabitants was flagging that "every person killed there was equal to fifty killed at other locations" (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 214). By explicitly targeting what it thought was an Israeli target, LT appeared to be deliberately situating itself within the global jihadist milieu, though it was on ISI's terms. Headley reported that there was dissension within LT leadership about including the Chabad House. The main LT operational planner was strongly in favor of its inclusion, while another senior leader expressed reservations, arguing that targeting the Chabad House would unnecessarily provoke another enemy (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 91).

In addition to anti-Semitic sentiments, traditional parochial considerations heavily influenced the selection of the Chabad House as a target, namely a desire to harm the growing civil and military bilateral relationship between India and Israel (United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 13-4). One Pakistan-based LT handler explicitly articulated this rationale while advising an attacker to kill the remaining hostages at the Chabad House. “If the hostages are killed,” he urged, “it will spoil relations between India and Israel” (qtd. in United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 14). Fair pointed out that:

> the growing Indo-Israeli military, counterterrorism and intelligence relationship... has long irritated Pakistan and animated the rhetoric of Islamist militants across the region. Moreover, the Israeli lobby apparatus in the U.S. has nurtured India’s own emergent lobbying organizations and is rightly or wrongly associated with helping India achieve the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal. Thus the selection of the Chabad center—rather than any of India’s domestic Jewish institutions—may have sought to undermine this important bilateral relationship (United States Congress House of Representatives *Antecedents and Implications* 13-4).

Therefore, while the 2008 Mumbai attack did represent an expansion and shift for LT, it was not a radical departure or clear-cut effort to embrace al-Qaida’s agenda, as sometimes portrayed. The group employed its well-established modus operandi, rather than the suicide bombing tactic
that al-Qaida has become infamous for using and that has become prolific in Pakistan. It struck soft targets in an economically-important city in India, which it had previously attacked similarly. In order to indoctrinate and motivate the Mumbai operatives, LT drew on its traditional rhetoric about how the group must weaken India’s financial position by striking its economic and tourist center in order to achieve the liberation of IAK (Tankel Storming the Stage 231). Quite simply, as Tankel assessed “[t]he attacks were intended to punish and coerce India, a long-standing Lashkar objective” (231). LT was largely motivated by its existing grievances against India and encouraged by its long-standing patron, ISI. It directed its hostility at both ordinary Indians and symbols of India’s economic vitality. The group did enlarge its target set to include foreign targets, though not to the degree sometimes asserted. Given the “payoff,” in the form of publicity and attention that those deaths received relative to the others, it is quite possible that in the future LT will seek a similar impact.

The Mumbai attacks were indirectly influenced by al-Qaida. Al-Qaida’s actions set into motion a sea change within Pakistan—one that pitted many of Islamabad’s long-time proxies against it and strained those that maintained their loyalty, particularly LT. From that perspective, the Mumbai attacks were also an effort by LT to improve its jihadist credentials and re-gain position within the ultra-competitive and altered militant milieu in Pakistan. The group was in danger of being eclipsed and feared becoming irrelevant or worse in the current environment (Tankel Storming the Stage 232). In addition, it was experiencing internal dissonance about its loyalty to Islamabad, particularly in the wake of the 2007 Red Mosque confrontation, and internal frustration was mounting about its relatively limited participation in Afghanistan and insistence on maintaining an anti-India focus (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 72). LT was also concerned that its personnel was becoming too integrated with other militant outfits, and it was going to lose control of them—a concern ISI undoubtedly shared (Indian Government National
The combination of these pressures propelled the group to conduct a larger and more ambitious attack than originally envisioned, but also the operation turned out to be much bigger than the group anticipated because of the incompetent Indian response (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 74).

The 2008 Mumbai attack had the desired effect of bolstering the group's standing in militant circles, drawing in more support, and satisfying restless cadre. But it did so within the bounds of its relationship with the Army. The participation of Pakistani military personnel at the planning meetings and revelations of Headley's extensive interactions with an ISI handler while he was conducting the surveillance clearly indicated that, at a bare minimum, LT had reason to think that ISI supported the plan (Tankel Storming the Stage 228; India Government National Investigation Agency 77). General Pasha ascended to the top post in ISI that September—the same month the first aborted attempt took place—and his subsequent approach of an LT leader to learn about the attack's genesis suggest that he was not privy to the operation beforehand (Tankel Storming the Stage 222; India Government National Investigation Agency 8). At a minimum he was surprised by the scale of the attacks. But it is unclear, as always and by design, who exactly in ISI was informed. Headley assessed that ISI saw benefits in the Mumbai attack, namely that it would help ISI in: “a) controlling further splits in the Kashmir based outfits, b) providing them a sense of achievement, and c) shifting and minimizing the theatre of violence from the domestic soil of Pakistan to India” (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 74). LT was thus not defying or disobeying its longtime patron. It was still behaving as a loyal proxy while asserting its relevance in an altered environment.

It was thus still an untrustworthy partner from al-Qaida's perspective. This tight relationship with ISI and willingness to take targeting guidance from the very security service that worked with the U.S. to hunt al-Qaida made an alliance between these two groups too risky for
either party. A Pakistani al-Qaida operative captured the sentiment when he derided LT as conducting “ISI jihad” rather than “God’s jihad” (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 400). Even Headley concluded that LT would never “do business” without ISI (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 525).

In the wake of the Mumbai attacks, the international community braced for an Indian military response that did not come. After the large-scale mobilization and stalemate in 2001, India had explored options to retaliate against Pakistan with greater stealth and speed. But India once again demonstrated its ability to absorb the blows inflicted on it by its intransigent neighbor, a quality Fair aptly termed its “diplomatic fortitude” (United States Congress House of Representatives Antecedents and Implications 4). Like LT, Islamabad’s first line of defense was wholesale denial. It clung to that position, which was probably true for the civilian side of the government, until it became untenable in the face of irrefutable Indian evidence. President Zardari got an early lesson in the limitations of his authority when he offered to send Pasha to India in the wake of the attacks, only to find he was not in a position to dispatch Pasha without consulting the Army first. Interior Minister Rehman Malik eventually conceded publicly that some of the planning had taken place in Pakistan (Tankel Storming the Stage 220).

Islamabad then enacted its well-worn charade of undertaking symbolic acts designed to give the impression of cracking down on the group, while failing to take meaningful action. LT went along with the program as its camps were closed and a number of its operatives were detained. Most notably, Lakhvi, founder and head of LT’s jihadist wing, was imprisoned at Adiala jail in Rawalpindi along with a handful of others are being tried for their role in an attack. Indian press—citing Indian Government sources—asserts that the LT founder and his men are treated as VIPs in the prison and remain operational (Pandit). The civilian government was in no position to take real action against the group without Army buy in, which was not forthcoming.
At some point in the years since 9/11, the Army’s view of LT had undergone a shift. As the Deobandi groups fracture and turned on the state, LT built a substantial, if sometimes exaggerated, humanitarian wing. It was no longer entirely, or perhaps even primary, a foreign policy asset. In fact, the group had the potential to start an unwanted war with India. But it was, as discussed earlier, both a jihadist and a Pakistani nationalist organization. Its domestic and foreign agenda dovetailed with the Army’s in so much as it was hostile to India and the U.S. designs in Afghanistan, while intent on preserving the sanctity of the Pakistani state. Fair cogently laid out this argument.

LeT is the only organisation actively challenging the Deobandi orthodoxy that has imperiled the domestic security of the state. Moreover, it is the only militant organisation that has defined the targets of its jihad and explained the utility of external jihad in a way that regular Pakistanis can understand. Thus, LeT’s doctrine works to secure the integrity of the Pakistani state domestically even while it complicates Pakistan’s external relations with India, the United States and others..... While Pakistan’s reliance upon LeT may be a risky proposition, LeT/JuD appears to have an enormous role in securing Pakistan’s interests externally. Equally and perhaps more importantly, LeT appears to contribute not just to Pakistan’s external interests but to the very cohesion and survival of the state (“Lashkar-e-Tayiba” 14-5).

Whereas the two had insufficient reasons to ally before and reasons to distrust one another, LT was now at cross purposes with al-Qaida. LT’s loyalty and utility to the Pakistani state were a counterweight to al-Qaida’s efforts to instigate violent change in Pakistan. Pakistan’s greatest value to al-Qaida was as a safe haven; however, Islamabad’s actions and cooperation with the United States threatened its sanctuary. Conversely, LT’s safe haven remains firmly intact. Al-Qaida’s leadership has been perpetually harassed, detained, and killed while LT’s leaders, on the other hand, have lived quite comfortably in their home country and have enjoyed a degree of immunity and protection. Hafiz Saeed inadvertently illustrated this point in a press conference in Pakistan’s military capital of Rawalpindi less than a year after bin Laden was killed by U.S. Special Forces in Abbottabad. In response to a U.S. announcement that Saeed was a candidate in the Rewards for Justice Program, Saeed quipped “I’m in Lahore tomorrow. The U.S. can call me anytime” (qtd. in
In effect, LT's position within Pakistan was mitigating al-Qaida's influence and thwarting its goals.

11.10 Jockeying Over a Crown Jewel

The two groups' differences took on a concrete form in their competition over David Headley. A proven commodity, LT did not leave Headley idle after using him to plan the Mumbai attacks. Born in the United States as Daood Sayed Gilani and raised in Pakistan, Headley joined LT in approximately 2002 (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 224). His clean American passport, flawless English, and “Americanized” name and appearance proved to be indispensable assets in the plotting of the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Even before the attacks were executed, still working in collaboration with ISI, LT deployed Headley to Denmark. His next assignment was to surveil a target reviled by all jihadists alike, the *Jyllands-Posten* newspaper (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 308).

The Danish paper caused a firestorm when it published denigrating cartoons of the Prophet Mohamed in 2005, leading to large-scale protests in the Muslim world. For LT, striking the newspaper would have required an expansion in both its targets and its theatre of operations. While its operatives or individuals trained by it were linked to plots abroad, LT had not conducted an attack outside of India and Afghanistan. Prior to departing for Denmark, Headley told a friend who was an LT defector and former military officer, Major Aburrehman Syed, about the plot. Major Syed requested that Headley keep him abreast of the effort and urged him to work instead with al-Qaida (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 399-402).

The al-Qaida leader that Syed was associated with was none other than Ilyas Kashmiri. Kashmiri was a well-known, veteran Pakistani jihadist who was once a prominent leader of the Deobandi group HUJI. A long-time client of ISI and avid anti-India militant, Kashmiri’s defection...
against Islamabad and subsequent rise within al-Qaida made him a magnet for disaffected Pakistani militants. He was promoted to become the most senior Pakistani in the organization, serving on al-Qaida’s military shura and managing its coveted external operations (Jones 406). Upon learning of LT’s American operative and his assignment in Denmark, Kashmiri recognized Headley’s value and, sought to enlist him to work for al-Qaida (Tahawwur Hussain Rana v. United States of America. 400-423). As Tankel observed, “this was not a case of sharing resources…. Kashmiri was attempting to poach Lashkar’s operative and its operation” (Storming the Stage 251).

This was in part because Kashmiri and Syed were skeptical that LT would carry out the attack in Denmark. As they predicted, at ISI’s request, LT postponed the plot in the wake of the international fallout created by the Mumbai attacks. Undeterred, Headley pushed forward using his al-Qaida contacts instead (Indian Government National Investigation Agency109). He went to FATA to meet with Kashmiri in February 2009 and May 2009 to discuss the way forward. Kashmiri urged Headley to move the Danish newspaper plotting forward expeditiously (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 112). Kashmiri also demonstrated a continuing interest in the cause that had animated him for decades—India. Now at Kashmiri and Syed’s direction, Headley returned to India in March 2009 and conducted surveillance on targets in multiple India cities (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 104). Despite the seemingly common interests and enemies LT shared with Kashmiri, when LT leaders learned of Headley’s work with Syed, they were furious and ordered him to cease any further cooperation (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 110).

By then, however, Headley believed that LT was “coward and pliable,” and he proceeded with his activities under al-Qaida’s rubric (Indian Government National Investigation Agency 110). He traveled to the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Denmark at Kashmiri’s behest, demurring on an LT request to return to India for work on its projects around the same time (Tankel Storming the
Stage 252). From Europe, Headley returned to the United States in June 2009. However, his meetings in the U.K. had caught the attention of British security services (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 252). The noose was soon closing around him and, in October 2009, Headley was detained by the FBI while departing Chicago for Pakistan enroute to meet with Syed and Kashmiri (Tankel *Storming the Stage* 253). A consummate survivor, he immediately sought a deal with U.S. authorities and provided unprecedented insight into LT’s operations and the state of its relations with ISI.

The treatment of David Headley provides a rare glimpse into the dynamic between al-Qaida and LT as 2009 drew to a close. The two groups simultaneously were associates, competitors, and even opponents. Al-Qaida’s prolonged presence in Pakistan and the integration of Pakistanis, like Kashmiri, into its ranks as well as close ties with Deobandi defectors did not translate into an alliance with LT. However, in Afghanistan, their efforts were more complementary and cooperative as conditions on the ground required, although both were secondary actors, at best, in the Afghan Taliban-led insurgency. While al-Qaida had no affection for the Hindu-dominated Indian Government, this adversary was a low priority for it, far below other pressing threats that the group confronted both before and after 9/11. For LT, India was an existential threat, and it was a nationalist duty and religious imperative to confront it. With the injection of a veteran Pakistani militant like Kashmiri—who still harbored a grudge against India and continued to explore attacks there even after his integration into al-Qaida—there appeared to be another opportunity for collaboration between the two groups in India. Instead, Kashmiri initiated his own plotting in India and co-opted LT’s American operative, despite LT’s recent success and proven capability there. The two were not prepared to share resources or work together in pursuit of their common goal and instead, continued to move along their parallel tracks.
12.11 Conclusion

Al-Qaida and LT's Salafist jihadist orientation were seemingly similar and comparably compatible to other Salafist groups that allied with al-Qaida. They were more similar than the religious interpretation of Pakistani Deobandi militant organizations with which al-Qaida allied. Both groups were influenced by the teachings of Abdullah Azzam during their foundational years. The two groups also shared early experiences and resources during the anti-Soviet jihad when al-Qaida was more of an idea than a functional organization, and LT was still coalescing into a dual mission entity. Following al-Qaida's return to the region in the mid-1990s, the two groups operated in close proximity with one another for decades. With their common enmity towards the United States, Israel, and India, they had plenty of mutual enemies. They trained together in Afghanistan, but on a much more limited basis than the Pakistani Deobandi militant groups, which shared facilities with al-Qaida and the Taliban, and developed alliances. Nonetheless, these commonalities might appear to be an adequate basis for an alliance to form and blossom between LT and al-Qaida, yet the organizational-level relationship between the two groups remained limited to tactical cooperation.

An alliance between al-Qaida and LT was impeded by several factors. One was their differing priorities. LT's agenda was shaped by its efforts against India and its desire to reform Pakistani society. Al-Qaida, as a purely terrorist organization without a welfare or charitable wing, was not interested in such non-jihad related ventures and its focus was on being the vanguard jihad force against the United States. On its own, this discrepancy is not likely to have been enough to stymie an alliance, but it did hinder it. However, al-Qaida has been able to overcome this hurdle to forge partnerships with other organizations.

While they agreed that the United States, Israel, and India were adversaries of the Muslim world, the two groups' emphasis different and their definition of the enemy diverged in two
important instances. First, LT maintained its belief that Riyadh was a religious authority, even after U.S. military forces entered the Kingdom during the first Gulf War. Given the primacy of this situation in bin Laden's ideological development and agenda—it was, in his words, “a calamity unprecedented in the history of our umma”—this difference was not a trivial matter. Second, after 9/11, al-Qaida branded the Pakistani Government as an enemy and participated in a terrorist campaign intended to precipitate its downfall. Conversely, LT remained loyal and even obedient to its patron, despite misgivings about its positions, and condemned terrorist acts within Pakistan. The latter disagreement was of even more consequence than the former because it also had practical consequences for the safety and welfare of al-Qaida members hiding in Pakistan. This peril was illustrated by the capture of al-Qaida senior leader Abu Zubaydah by ISI in an LT house in Faisalabad. Zubaydah, the first major al-Qaida operative captured after 9/11, was subsequently rendered to the United States where he underwent enhanced interrogation methods, such as waterboarding, during his detention. Islamabad's “betrayal” in this case, let alone LT's possible complicity or negligence in it, probably hindered the further development of a relationship between the two groups in the post-9/11 aftermath. As evidence of Islamabad's treachery continued to mount, LT's decision to maintain its ties with it contributed to al-Qaida's mistrust of further cooperation.

It is possible that even these discrepancies could have been negotiated had there been sufficient organizational need. But LT already had access to the assets that made al-Qaida such an effective alliance hub—most notably safe haven, money, and training—through its relationship with the Army and ISI. LT focused on building a sanctuary within Pakistan, even when the Taliban was in power in Afghanistan, so it did not rely on al-Qaida's arrangement with the Taliban for its safe haven. The Pakistani Army not only permitted LT to run training facilities in Pakistan, but also allowed military officers to act as instructors in the group's camps in the early days. The Army
provided some funds, and LT cultivated independent funding sources both within Pakistan and overseas, particularly in Saudi Arabia. After 9/11, al-Qaida had a need for LT’s sanctuary, but as previously discussed, there were clear limitations to that type of cooperation as their agendas conflicted in ways that produced distrust on both sides.

After 9/11, al-Qaida used its reputation as an asset to cultivate allies, offering its brand to its partners to increase their stature and present a unified jihadi front. However, by then, LT was attempting to obscure its involvement in terrorist activity in order to continue its operations while preserving its relationship with Islamabad, which was under nearly constant pressure to cease supporting terrorist groups. Therefore, an open alliance with al-Qaida ran counter to LT’s organizational circumstances. Once again, LT did not need the enticements that al-Qaida had to offer an ally.

In conclusion, the lack of alliance between al-Qaida and LT demonstrates the importance of trust and organizational need for an alliance to form and endure, even in the presence of common enemies and a shared ideology. Conflicts in narrative, especially when they deal with core issues, impede affinity. The threat posed by cooperation between these two organizations has long been of concern, but the impediments have proven too consequential for the groups to overcome. The lack of alliance in this case also showcases the obstacles to relationships between terrorist organizations, thus why they continue to be a relatively rare occurrence.
12.1 Introduction

Al-Qaeda engaged in alliances that spanned decades and all stages of its organizational lifespan. It forged alliances throughout its existence, and its relationships evolved over the course of its time as an alliance hub. Prospective allies responded differently to al-Qaeda’s alliance overtures, which indicated that although al-Qaeda’s desire for allies remained constant, the incentives for allying with it changed. Even within organizations, differing views existed about the need to ally with al-Qaeda.

In the matched case studies in Section III, groups demonstrated an awareness of the value of allying against threat, but this imperative did not drive their alliance decisions. Al-Qaeda portrayed the United States as a threat that necessitated a counter-coalition, but this message had limited appeal among prospective allies. Groups with comparable incentives to balance engaged in different alliance behavior, even after the marked increase in the threat after 9/11. Ideological commonalities existed in all dyads, including those that did not ally, but this did not independently instigate alliances and could not explain the timing of relationships. Instead, ideology was a pre-condition that al-Qaeda readily met among its Sunni jihadist peers, but was not sufficient to cause an alliance. Groups were apt to seek or accept an alliance with al-Qaeda when they had organizational needs that al-Qaeda was positioned to fill. Allying groups tended to be suffering from bouts of organizational weakness and had limited self-reform capability, especially compared to groups that opted not to ally with al-Qaeda.

For its part, al-Qaeda sought allies from the outset, as soon as it conceived of itself as forming an “Islamic Army,” a mission that far outstripped its capabilities. Ideologically-shaped balancing imperatives shaped al-Qaeda’s overarching desire for allies, as it aspired to be at the helm
of a coalition in opposition to the United States’ power and threat. When the threat from the United States changed markedly after 2001, al-Qaida became more dependent on its allies. During all phases, al-Qaida sought and acquired partners that shared its ideological orientation, but it did not select allies based on a sense of solidarity. Instead, al-Qaida used ideological affinity in conjunction with narrative affinity to determine which groups were acceptable partners and to support the development of a shared identity. Not only were al-Qaida’s political objectives far-reaching, its organizational aims were equally ambitious. This created a perpetual need for allies to help it fulfill those needs.

This chapter presents and summarizes the findings and results of Section III, which examined al-Qaida behavior as an alliance hub as well as its relationships—or lack thereof—with politically relevant, non-competitor terrorist organizations. The first section of this chapter analyzes the collective results of the case studies in Chapters 8-11 based on the theoretical frameworks. The second section tests al-Qaida’s behavior against the alliance hub hypotheses to determine what drove al-Qaida to develop into an alliance hub.

12.2 Drivers of Egyptian, Algerian, and Pakistani Militant Alliances with al-Qaida

In the matched case studies, what influenced groups’ alliance decisions vis-à-vis al-Qaida? In the preceding three chapters, by process tracing six groups’ evolutions, ideologies, conceptualization of their enemies, and organizational dynamics, the causal pathways of their alliance behavior were revealed. This section will discuss the commonalities and differences of the al-Qaida’s relationships with Egyptians, Algerians, and Pakistani terrorist groups, and analyze what these findings suggest about the utility of the theoretical frameworks offered in Chapters 1-2. To review, these case studies are being tested against four theoretical frameworks: balance of threat, ideological solidarity, organizational needs, and identity affinity, as well as one intervening variable,
trust. Each theoretical framework has a hypothesis that deals with alliance creation and one that deals with alliance perpetuation.

The Role of Balance of Threat

H \text{(Alliance Formation: Threat)} 1.A: Terrorist organizations are motivated to ally with a hub when they face a common, greatest threat.

H \text{(Alliance Perpetuation: Threat)} 1.B: Alliances will endure until the threat subsides.

Threat changed markedly during al-Qaida’s tenure as an alliance hub, largely as a consequence of its actions. Al-Qaida propagated the idea that the United States posed the greatest threat and that Sunni jihadist groups should ally to combat it. Prior to 9/11, al-Qaida’s perception that the U.S. posed the greatest threat was not shared by potential partners, and threat played little discernible role in the groups’ alliance decisions. They faced far greater threats from their primary enemies. The United States had the most aggregate power and aggressive intentions, but other regimes had more offensive power, geographic proximity as well as aggressive intentions. Despite the lack of shared threat, several groups still formed alliances with al-Qaida during this time. With the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida precipitated the threat from the U.S. that it long claimed existed. Groups that had previously been reticent to ally with al-Qaida should have had a clear imperative to do so. While shared threat helped reinforce existing alliances, it did not change groups’ alliance decisions.

Prospective partners and al-Qaida invoked the need to unite against a common threat. The idea that the threat of the “Zionist-Crusader” alliance required a counter-coalition featured prominently in al-Qaida propaganda and alliance announcements. If these statements are accepted at face value, balancing against threat appears to be a primary causal force instigating alliances. However, the outcomes and process tracing of the cases suggests that this explanation is incomplete. Threat cannot fully explain when balancing needs are sufficient or cases when an alliance failed to form even though balancing needs seemingly existed.
If threat drives alliances, few groups should have been motivated to ally with al-Qaida prior to 2001. Of the cases examined in this section, none shared al-Qaida’s view of the U.S. as the greatest threat before 2001. Indeed, in the Sudan years, few of al-Qaida’s relationships reached the threshold of an alliance as most groups accepted al-Qaida’s assistance with little reciprocal cooperation or future consultation. Of the dozens of groups present in Afghanistan, only EIJ, HUJI-B, JUI-P and a faction of EIG signed onto al-Qaida’s 1998 statement identifying the “Crusader-Zionist alliance” as the greatest threat. Even for the signatories, this was more of a propaganda move than a genuine indication of their threat calculations. However, in the absence of a shared threat, the EIJ, a faction of EIG, the Pakistani Deobandi groups and the GIA all allied with al-Qaida.

Cairo posed the greatest threat to EIJ and EIG during the Sudan years, when both cooperated with al-Qaida. The U.S. and Egyptian Governments both pressured Khartoum to expel the Egyptian groups during this time. In addition, the U.S. relationship with the Egyptian regime was well established when the Egyptian groups began cooperating with al-Qaida. Therefore, some incentives to balance against a shared threat existed. Their cooperation with al-Qaida at this point was generally consistent with this hypothesis. But threat fails to explain their subsequent alliance decisions.

The EIJ’s decision to institutionalize its alliance with al-Qaida did not coincide with any increase in shared threat, though EIJ invoked a balancing rationale. A change in threat cannot account for what caused EIJ’s alliance behavior to change. Instead, the U.S. became a greater threat to EIJ as EIJ grew closer to al-Qaida. EIJ created a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby identifying and treating the U.S. as a threat, it provoked a greater threat from the United States. Yet EIJ’s decision to ally with al-Qaida was still controversial within the group, further lending credence to the idea that the U.S. was not EIJ’s greatest threat until after the alliance was cemented.
Variation in threat cannot fully explain the opposing views within EIG about allying with al-Qaeda. EIG also cooperated with al-Qaeda during the Sudan years, though the relationship was largely concentrated in the EIG members co-located in Sudan. A rift in EIG about whether to ally with al-Qaeda occurred following EIG’s expulsion from Sudan. This did not coincide with any changes in threat as Cairo continued to be the greatest threat. The Egypt-based group subsequently rejected the Afghan-based EIG faction’s decision to sign bin Laden’s 1998 declaration because it did not see the U.S. as the greatest threat and thought it was unwise to provoke it. Thus EIG’s decision to eschew an alliance with al-Qaeda at this stage is consistent with the null hypothesis of this theoretical framework. Even the Afghan-based EIG signatories did not appear to genuinely regard the U.S. as their greatest threat. Thus the diverging decisions cannot be explained by threat. The exiled faction officially merged with al-Qaeda in 2006, which did not coincide with a change of threat as the U.S. threat had increased over five years prior.

The GIA shared less of a threat with al-Qaeda than in the Egyptian cases, yet it also allied with al-Qaeda. Algiers did not threaten the young al-Qaeda organization. Conversely, the United States’ hands-off approach to the conflict in Algeria meant that it did not pose a threat to the GIA. The GIA considered France a far more important “distant” threat than the United States. Thus GIA and al-Qaeda’s alliance formation during this period was inconsistent with the threat hypothesis. Threat cannot explain why the alliance occurred. Furthermore, threat cannot explain alliance cessation in this case. The threat faced by the allied groups did not change prior to the decision to end the alliance.

Al-Qaeda’s relationships and non-alliances with Pakistani groups showed significant within and cross-case variation in threat, but this framework did not elucidate the timing of alliance formation. After some cooperation during the anti-Soviet jihad, the Pakistani groups’ were not allied with al-
Qaida during the Sudan years. While al-Qaida emphasized that the United States posed the greatest threat, most Pakistani groups saw India as a more pressing threat with its greater offensive power, geographic proximity, and perceived aggressive intentions. This divergence in threat views was consistent with the absence of alliances at this stage.

Al-Qaida’s alliances with the Deobandi groups were reinvigorated when it shifted back to Afghanistan. This re-kindling occurred, even though they still did not share a common greatest threat. Al-Qaida grew more insistent that the United States was the greatest threat, while the Deobandi groups had multiple enemies they viewed as posing a more pressing threats. The U.S. did not pose a direct threat to the Pakistani groups, except when it targeted al-Qaida in Afghanistan in ways that harmed them because they were co-located. Therefore, al-Qaida and the Pakistani Deobandi groups were able to establish or re-establish alliances, despite the absence of a common greatest threat.

At first glance, the change in the threat environment after 9/11 appears to explain the differences in the GIA and the GSPC’s alliance behavior and the within case variation in the GSPC’s relationship with al-Qaida. Prior to 2001, the United States posed a minimal threat to the GSPC, as was the case with the GIA. Therefore, no threat-based motive for initiating an alliance existed, and indeed, no alliance existed. After 9/11, the U.S. posed a markedly greater threat to the GSPC. Not only was the U.S. now present in the region and targeting the GSPC, it sought to build the capability of other governments to do so as well. Algiers was still the group’s greatest threat, but the GSPC now shared a threat with al-Qaida to a greater degree than ever before. Yet the GSPC still did not seek an alliance with al-Qaida.

More than any other event, the U.S. invasion of Iraq precipitated the GSPC’s interest in an alliance with al-Qaida, more specifically with AQI. But it is unclear why the Iraq war would change
the GSPC’s threat calculation more than the United States’ counterterrorism efforts in North Africa and the Sahel. Nor is it clear why a shared U.S. threat stimulated an alliance with AQI, but had not been insufficient to date to cause an alliance with al-Qaida. Thus threat may have played a role in stimulating the alliance-seeking behavior, but it does not fully explain the timing of the alliance effort or initial partner selection.

As was the case for the EIJ and EIG, allying with al-Qaida—even in the face of this heightened threat—caused internal divisions within the GSPC. As in the EIJ case, a pro-alliance segment of the group prevailed, gained control, and entered into an alliance with al-Qaida. Like EIJ, this act further increased the threat from the United States to the GSPC-turned-AQIM. Overall, a convergence of threat helped enable alliance formation and reinforce the relationship, but was not the sole, or even the primary, motive.

The threat posed by the United States to Pakistani groups also changed dramatically after 9/11. The Deobandi groups acutely felt the increased threat from the U.S., given their extensive presence in Afghanistan and close relations with the Afghan Taliban. The U.S. now clearly possessed the offensive power, geographic proximity, and aggressive intentions in addition to its aggregate power. This shared threat contributed to the Deobandi groups’ willingness to help al-Qaida in its hour of need. Threat thus reinforced existing alliances and changed the power dynamic, but did not cause of the alliances.

Likewise, the increased U.S. threat after 9/11 created a potential opening for an alliance between al-Qaida and LT. Due to LT’s more limited presence in Afghanistan and more distant ties with the Afghan Taliban, it did not experience the same degree of increased threat from the U.S. as did its Deobandi counterparts. Nonetheless, it saw the U.S. as a greater threat than ever before. Threat encouraged cooperation between the groups, namely LT assistance to al-Qaida after the fall
of the Taliban. But this cooperation did not develop into an alliance and organizational cooperation soon ceased, though the threat from the U.S. did not diminish. Threat was thus insufficient to cause an alliance to form in this case.

Threat cannot fully account for the alliance decisions in the case studies and was not the primary motive for any of the alliances to form. Threat bolstered existing alliances. When an alliance did not exist, an increase in shared threat encouraged alliance formation, but was not adequate to precipitate it. Threat was insufficient to quell internal divisions about the wisdom of allying with al-Qaida. This resulted in alliances involving weakened groups. They did not meaningfully add to the counter-balancing coalition. Moreover, allying with al-Qaida provoked more attention from the U.S., i.e. a greater threat. In other words, weak or weakened groups actually increased the threat by allying with al-Qaida and had little to offer in terms of strengthening a counter-coalition to the threat.

*The Role of Ideological Solidarity*

H \_\_ (Alliance Formation: Ideology) 2.A: Terrorist groups are drawn together based on the degree of their shared ideological tenets.

H \_\_ (Alliance Perpetuation: Ideology) 2.B: Alliances last as long as a high degree of ideological compatibility endures.

All the dyads examined shared an ideology, including those that did not ally. Alliance decisions were not primarily motivated by a sense of solidarity, except in one case. This theoretical framework has three key shortfalls in illuminating the alliance behavior in the case studies. One, it cannot explain the variation in outcomes when comparable levels of ideological commonality existed. Ideology sometimes shifted slightly in response to alliances, rather than acting as a force to produce a partnership. Second, ideological solidarity offered little insight into alliance timing or
duration. Third, ideological solidarity cannot explain the internal resistance to allying with al-Qaida among partner groups, if relationships were the “natural” outcome of a shared ideology.

In the Egyptian cases, no distinctions existed between EIJ and EIG’s level of ideological solidarity with al-Qaida that were sufficient to produce the divergent outcomes. They should have been equally desirable allies and viewed al-Qaida similarly, if ideological solidarity acted as the main motive. The EIJ changed its ideological tenets to adapt to al-Qaida’s positions, but this was the product of the alliance, rather than its cause. The EIG was unwilling to adjust its ideology to create greater solidarity, which suggests that solidarity was a deliberate decision that occurred as a result of alliances, rather than a “natural” force motivating alliances. The exiled EIG faction that allied with al-Qaida slowly adopted al-Qaida’s ideological positions over the course of the alliance. Ideological compatibility was pertinent to alliance behavior, particularly the willingness to make ideological adjustments, but alliance decisions were not made based on assessments or beliefs of solidarity.

Across and within case variation occurred in both Algerian cases. The GIA was slightly closer than the GSPC to al-Qaida ideologically in that it embraced the need to take the battle to a “far enemy,” which was still a marginal view at the time. The GIA and al-Qaida alliance relied heavily on a sense of post-Afghanistan ideological solidarity. The outcome was a fragile and unsustainable relationship, which was derailed by changes in the GIA’s ideological positions. When the GIA’s ideology became nationalist to the point of xenophobic, its sense of ideological solidarity with al-Qaida dissipated and the relationship faltered.

The GSPC’s level of ideological solidarity with al-Qaida increased after 2003. Prior to that time, the GSPC was highly nationalist and defined its ideology narrowly in those terms. The GSPC moved closer to al-Qaida ideologically after 2003, when the GSPC increased its emphasis on the “far enemy,” particularly France and the United States. Simultaneously, al-Qaida gave France a more
prominent place in its ideological platform to accommodate the GSPC. This increased ideological similarity helped to facilitate the relationship. Rather than a naturally occurring phenomenon or independent casual force that produced the alliance, this change was a deliberate effort by the two groups to close the ideological gap in order to foster a relationship.

In the Pakistani cases, the outcomes ran directly counter to the predictions of ideological solidarity as an impetus of alliance formation. As a fellow Salafist organization, LT should have been al-Qaida's ally choice over the Deobandi organizations. LT was more ideologically similar to al-Qaida than its Deobandi counterparts, yet the Deobandi groups were consistently closer to al-Qaida than LT. This result cannot be explained if ideological solidarity drives alliance decisions. One would have anticipated that, at a minimum, LT would have allied with al-Qaida as well, but that was not the outcome. Instead, the negative result remains left unexplained.

Rather than ideological solidarity producing alliances, groups seeking alliances made ideological adjustments to accommodate al-Qaida's platform and vice versa, to a lesser degree. Ideological solidarity did not act as an independent causal force or motive for an alliance to form. This was initially obscured as the alliances and ideological shifts occurred in close proximity, and groups emphasized the ideological reasons for allying. Ideological solidarity was insufficient to produce an alliance in the LT case and proved an unstable basis for the GIA's connections to al-Qaida.

The Role of Organizational Needs

$H_{(Alliance\ Formation:\ Organization)}$ 3.A: Terrorist groups seek alliances to address organizational learning and adaptation requirements; they look for partners that they believe can fulfill these needs.

$H_{(Alliance\ Perpetuation:\ Organization)}$ 3.B: The duration of the relationship is based on the type of organizational needs being addressed and the ability of the allying groups to fulfill each other's respective needs.
Organizational needs stimulated alliance formation in the EIJ, Afghan-based EIG faction, GSPC, and, to a lesser degree, the Pakistani Deobandi cases. Groups that experienced and identified organizational weaknesses and lacked self-reform mechanisms sought alliances with al-Qaida. The degree of fit in fulfilling one another’s needs, more than any other incentives, motivated alliances and determined the viability of relationships. Organizational adaptation needs played a more prominent role in alliance behavior than organizational learning needs in the case studies.

The Egyptian groups faced comparable balance of power and threat incentives, and possessed similar degrees of ideological solidarity. Critically, they differed in their organizational needs and propensity to use alliances versus self-reforms to cope with weakness. EIJ’s receptivity to an alliance with al-Qaida was driven by its continuous organizational adaptation needs. EIJ’s repeated failures to develop self-reform capability led it to engage in an increasingly dependent relationship with al-Qaida in order to survive. EIJ’s continuous needs were in areas that al-Qaida was best positioned to offer assistance: funds and haven. In return, EIJ offered experienced advisors, an asset al-Qaida coveted to address its own organizational needs. Overall, the more veteran Egyptian groups did not rely on al-Qaida for organizational learning needs, like training, to the degree other Afghan-based groups did; instead, they often acted as al-Qaida’s trainers and thus fulfilled a need for al-Qaida.

In contrast, the EIG had fewer continuous organizational needs and more internal capability to address problems. The EIG was a more self-sufficient organization throughout its lifespan, though it too benefited from al-Qaida’s resources. But, it was not beset with the same continuous organizational needs that caused EIJ to become dependent on al-Qaida. For example, EIG enjoyed access to al-Qaida’s funds. But this fulfilled a discrete need, rather than a continuous one, because it had other sources of revenue. When EIG came to a pivotal juncture in terms of its organizational
needs, al-Qaida’s assets could not address them. EIG did not want for capability, thus al-Qaida’s training apparatus could not solve its organizational woes. Al-Qaida’s safe haven could not help EIG, with its leadership and many of its members in prison in Egypt. Critically, unlike EIG, the EIJ and the Afghan-based EIG faction shared a need for safe haven to address their exile. Their perpetual state of exile necessitated a sanctuary, a continuous organizational need that al-Qaida fulfilled.

Al-Qaida’s short-lived relationship with the GIA commenced when the GIA was at its peak. Even though the GIA was a relatively young organization, its organizational needs at this juncture were modest. It was a rapidly growing organization, but this did not generate any corresponding organizational adaptation needs that spurred the alliance. Al-Qaida’s assistance supplemented the GIA’s capability, but it did not rely on al-Qaida to fulfill any organizational needs. It had a robust guerilla capability, former Algerian military officers in its ranks, and a popular cause that generated international support so the assets al-Qaida offered—funds, advisors, and training—were of use, but not of particular need to the GIA.

Al-Qaida saw the potential for the GIA to fulfill one of its organizational needs. The GIA could offer haven and a model for similar struggles occurring across the Muslim world, if it succeeded in taking over the state. This became a more valuable commodity to al-Qaida as the sanctuary in Sudan grew less secure. But in the absence of reciprocal needs, combined with the GIA’s xenophobic culture, the GIA was unwilling to engage in that level of cooperation. Their relationship did not have a strong fit in terms of organizational needs, and thus was vulnerable and short-lived.

Furthermore, the GIA was unable to build stable organizational frames and routines because of the constant turnover of its leaders. Alliances failed to become embedded in its culture. Then its organizational culture grew more insular, to the point that it precluded alliances, especially
under the leadership of Zoubrai and Zitouni. Allies’ efforts to intercede went unheeded. Soon this dysfunctional culture prevented the group from identifying its weaknesses and undertaking self-reform. In the absence of either allies or self-reform, the GIA soon self-destructed.

As an offshoot of the GIA, the GSPC simultaneously reset its organizational age and incorporated some of the GIA’s characteristics. It did not have the learning needs of a typical young organization, as it inherited experienced cadre. But the GSPC adopted the GIA’s aversion to alliances and preference for self-reform. As a result, alliances were not part of the GSPC’s organizational frames until there was a change in leadership and re-setting of its organizational age. These organizational frames and routines were revised by the incoming leaders. They were not only receptive to alliances, they actively sought such relationships to adapt. By this point, the GSPC was dealing with both organizational decline and a changed environment, thus it had significant organizational adaptation needs. Without the leadership change that led to this re-setting of the group’s organizational age and the accompanying frames, its alliance with al-Qaida probably would not have been instituted to address these needs.

Most critically, the GSPC was operating in an environment where its cause had lost resonance. Therefore, it struggled to attract new members while it continued to suffer from losses at the hands of the Algerian security services. The group’s alliance choice was a partner who could fulfill this continuous need, i.e. one involved in a popular cause, namely AQI. An alliance offered a partial solution to the GSPC’s woes in that it could insert itself into that domain and avail itself of a portion of the resources, recruits, and appeal that it offered. But it was an imperfect solution as most Algerian recruits wanted to go to Iraq rather than stay in Algeria. Thus Zarqawi’s proposal that the group ally with al-Qaida and adopt its name provided a more complete solution to the group’s continuous organizational adaptation need for relevance. Thus al-Qaida had a resource that
the GSPC now sought under its revised organizational frames. Likewise, al-Qaida sought to compensate for its beleaguered and isolated state, by acquiring another affiliate in the Middle East that would project its continued viability. Without accounting for these organizational dynamics, the explanation of this alliance behavior is incomplete.

As perpetually weak organizations, the Pakistani Deobandi groups used al-Qaida to address their organizational learning needs. Al-Qaida was well suited to assist with needs, like training and funds, when the groups were co-located in Afghanistan prior to 9/11. But they did not depend on al-Qaida to the same degree as other Afghan-based partner groups did because they had independent relationships with the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani Government that also fulfilled their needs. Moreover, with a few exceptions, they were not exiled from Pakistan; thus they did not depend on al-Qaida for haven. Overall, these groups enjoyed the ability to train with al-Qaida and exchange various forms of assistance. But unlike EIJ or the Afghan faction of EIG, they did not need al-Qaida to fulfill continuous needs over the course of the alliance. Their pursuit of several causes meant that they could continually adapt to maintain relevance, unlike the GSPC. Fittingly, there are no indications that any of these groups contemplated adopting al-Qaida’s name.

In contrast, LT did not turn to al-Qaida to address organizational needs for three main reasons. First, it was a fairly strong, cohesive organization with robust self-reform capability. Unlike the Deobandi groups, it did not experience major splits or divisions that re-set its organizational age or challenged its organizational frames. Second, its organizational learning needs were fulfilled by the Pakistani Government from an early organizational age. Thus its problem solving frames were oriented towards Islamabad, rather than other terrorist groups. Its relationship with Islamabad was also more stable than its counterparts. Third, al-Qaida could not offer assets that addressed LT’s organizational needs. LT did not require money, advisors, training or safe haven. LT
had its own sources of money, training facilities, and sanctuary in its homeland. It did not want to learn how to conduct operations like al-Qaida because it did not use suicide operations, al-Qaida’s primary modus operandi. Overall, al-Qaida was not a good fit in terms of LT’s organizational needs, so there was little impetus for an alliance to form.

Organizational needs illuminated more about groups’ alliance behavior than the other theoretical frameworks examined. Weakened groups’ propensity to seek alliances with a hub was derived from their efforts to address identified organizational needs that could not be remedied through self-reform. In particular, continuous organizational adaptation needs were the main motivation for groups’ to ally with al-Qaida. These needs coincided with recovery from crises and unanticipated or swift changes to the environment, rather than organizational youth or rapid growth. Internally cohesive organizations had more self-reform capability and were less inclined to ally with al-Qaida to fulfill their needs. These groups were also slow to turn to al-Qaida, even when they grew weaker, especially if their leadership remained unchanged.

The Role of Identity Affinity

H (Alliance Formation: Affinity) 4.A: Identity affinity sets the parameters of acceptable alliance partners. Organizations must satisfy an identity affinity threshold in order to forge an alliance with one another.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Affinity) 4.B: Identity affinity that evolves into a shared identity and the construction of constitutive norms supports the sustainment of an alliance.

As discussed in the ideological solidarity section, ideology played a role in alliance decisions, as evidenced by al-Qaida’s preference for allying with fellow Sunni jihadist groups and the fact that it largely attracted groups of the same ideological orientation. But ideology did not act as the causal force that stimulated alliances, as posited by ideological solidarity theory. Instead, ideology was the core of identity affinity requirement that determined which partners were acceptable and which relationships were sustainable. Once the ideological threshold was met,
enemy and victim narratives became a prominent source of identity affinity, but also the most common basis of dissension and identity conflict. Ethnic affinity supplemented the other facets of identity affinity, but was not the primary or even secondary source of it. Overall, as posited by these hypotheses, identity shaped alliance preferences and behavior in these case studies, but did not independently cause or sustain alliances.

An initial baseline of ideological affinity existed for these dyads. All hailed from the Sunni jihadist movement that dominated the ideological landscape. The flexibility or rigidity of the groups’ ideological interpretations and their specific ideological affinity standards varied, but there was an overarching ideological commonality. Partner groups’ enemy and victim narratives often fell within al-Qaida’s expansive narrative. Perhaps more importantly, the groups that allied with al-Qaida adjusted their narratives in ways that brought them more closely in line with al-Qaida’s, either due to a deliberate decision or because external events increased the resonance of al-Qaida’s narrative. Al-Qaida shared an Arab ethnic identity with the EIJ, EIG, GIA, and the GSPC, but not with the Pakistani groups. Only groups that shared al-Qaida’s ethnic identity merged with it or adopted its moniker.

EIJ and EIG had largely the same degree of identity affinity with al-Qaida at the time of alliance initiation. Both had numerous partner options, given the overall ideological landscape and similar criteria for ideological affinity. The EIJ’s ideological disposition was more rigid and exclusive than EIG’s, which sought to build a broader base as compared to its small, secretive competitor. Nonetheless, both shared an adequate level of affinity with al-Qaida at the time of alliance initiation. Ultimately, EIG was unwilling to adjust its narrative to accommodate al-Qaida’s broader view of the enemy, whereas, EIJ—or at least a critical mass of the group—and the Afghan-based faction of EIG opted to adopt al-Qaida’s more expansive enemy narrative and shift the emphasis of their narrative.
away from their founding cause. This narrative adjustment helped EIJ and the Afghan-based faction of EIG to build a shared identity and norms with al-Qaida to support alliance sustainment. In contrast, EIG not only failed to embrace al-Qaida’s narrative, but it revised its narrative to expressly reject al-Qaida’s enemy conceptualization.

Identity affinity helps illuminate why al-Qaida and GIA’s relationship faltered. The two groups had some basis for identity affinity when the alliance was initiated. They had ideological affinity, though GIA’s ideology tended to be rigid and became increasingly idiosyncratic. Their narratives had overlap, as al-Qaida included the struggle in Algeria as part of its narrative. Both had ethnic Arab identities as well. But the GIA’s enemy and victim narrative subsequently diverged from al-Qaida’s narrative in ways that eventually constituted identity violations to al-Qaida. The GIA’s treatment of its competitors was deeply divisive at a time when al-Qaida was trying to gain purchase for a narrative that emphasized unity. Then, the GIA’s move to identify the Algerian population as an enemy, rather than a victim, was in conflict with al-Qaida’s narrative. This further heightened the identity friction that contributed to the relationship’s demise. While there was sufficient affinity to initiate an alliance, the identity changes and conflicts stymied the relationship.

In contrast to the GIA’s narrowing identity, the GSPC’s narrative and ideological expansion after 2003 facilitated its alliance with al-Qaida. Prior to 2003, its narrowly nationalist narrative and rigid ideological disposition inhibited its ability to forge identity affinity with al-Qaida or other groups. After 2003, the GSPC, initially through its rhetoric and then through its operations, signaled greater receptivity to alliances by expanding its narrative and adopting a more flexible ideological disposition. Perhaps equally importantly, once the alliance was formed, al-Qaida made adjustments to its narrative to emphasize the Algerians’ view of France as a more prominent “far enemy.” Their common Arab identity was peripheral, but reinforced the other affinity points when they finally
aligned and probably underlined the GSPC’s willingness to adopt al-Qaida’s name, as only Arab organizations did so. Thus the two groups were able to establish sufficient initial affinity to forge an alliance as well as a shared identity that supported alliance sustainment.

In contrast to the GSPC, al-Qaida’s identity affinity with the Pakistani Deobandi groups developed out of their close interactions and extensive shared experiences. Because al-Qaida’s ideological affinity included all Sunni jihadist groups, it was able to establish affinity with the Deobandi groups. Their narratives converged as they worked together in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance and in support of the Afghan Taliban. The Deobandi groups then began including the United States into their narrative, in part as a consequence of al-Qaida’s actions, and then more completely after 2001 when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan. This produced growing narrative affinity. However, al-Qaida did not make the same narrative adjustments for the Deobandis as it did for the GSPC. India occupied a tertiary position in al-Qaida’s narrative at the outset, and this did not change even as its relationships with Deobandi groups developed. Unlike the Egyptians and Algerians, the Pakistani groups lacked ethnic affinity with al-Qaida. Most significantly, this meant that there was not a common language, thus affinity relied more heavily on individuals who spoke Arabic and/or Pashto.

Al-Qaida and LT possessed common identity affinity characteristics, but suffered from identity tensions. A basis for ideological affinity existed, given their shared Salafist orientation and ideological founder, Abdullah Azzam. But, in addition to the lack of ethnic affinity, no comparable convergence of narratives occurred. LT did not experience the same narrative change as the Deobandi groups, thus al-Qaida’s disinterest in India was more consequential. Moreover, conflicting narratives about the Pakistani state hindered affinity between al-Qaida and LT. After 9/11, al-Qaida included Islamabad in its enemy narrative. Al-Qaida’s emphasis on Islamabad as part of its enemy
narrative increased with each arrest or loss it suffered in Pakistan, until al-Qaida was openly calling for the overthrow of the government. LT continued to maintain that the Pakistani Government, while imperfect, was not an enemy and should not be included in the enemy narrative. This conflict in their narratives was not peripheral to either group’s view; al-Qaida faced a pressing threat from Islamabad, while LT’s relationship to the state was central to its strength.

Ideological affinity was relatively straightforward for al-Qaida to establish with these groups because of their common Sunni jihadist orientations. Once ideological affinity was established, narrative affinity became central to al-Qaida’s ability to forge identity affinity and shared identities. Groups’ willingness to espouse al-Qaida’s narrative and to a lesser degree, al-Qaida’s willingness to emphasize other groups’ narrative priorities was a central facet of developing a shared identity. Ethnic identity complimented other forms of affinity when they existed, but was not a major source of affinity.

_The Intervening Variable: Trust_

H (Alliance Formation: Trust) 5.A: In order for alliances to form, groups must have a willingness to build trust with one another or pre-existing reasons to trust one another.

H (Alliance Perpetuation: Trust) 5.B: Trust is necessary for an alliance to endure.

Trust was essential in all of the cases. Conversely, a lack of trust or loss of trust contributed to alliance avoidance or failure. In the Egyptian and Pakistani alliance cases, there were ample interactions and by extension, opportunities to build trust. Personal relationships between individuals in those groups helped to underpin the organizational-level partnerships. In the Algerian cases, a smattering of interactions and personal relationships existed, but reputation became an important source of trust determinations.

In the EIJ and al-Qaida alliance, there were abundant opportunities to interact, extensive cross-organization personal relationships, and well-known reputations. Their co-location in Sudan
and Afghanistan provided a firm foundation of interactions that cultivated trust. Thus there was ample trust to facilitate alliance formation. Yet trust concerns still existed. Some EIJ members questioned of whether al-Qaida, specifically bin Laden, was trustworthy and objected to the alliance on those grounds. This was not due to a lack of information; instead there was a perception that he had not fulfilled some of his promises. These individuals did not accept the alliance, but were ultimately overruled. Trust was centered on leaders and key individuals initially, but over time became embedded in both organizations until the point when they were indistinguishable.

Trust concerns did not inhibit the EIG’s relationship with al-Qaida, but the distribution of trust was consistent with the alliance outcomes. No reputation issues actively prevented trust from forming between the two groups. But the trust was concentrated between al-Qaida and the EIG’s members in exile. The Egypt-based portion of the group that determined the organizational alliance positions had much less interaction with al-Qaida and fewer personal relationships than those living in Sudan and then Afghanistan. This hindered either leadership trust or organizational-level trust from developing. Instead, the bulk of the interactions and personal relationships between the two groups occurred among the EIG members co-located with al-Qaida. Trust was concentrated among key nodes. Ultimately, the alliance behavior of that part of the group was consistent with the loci of trust.

Trust issues plagued al-Qaida’s relationship with the GIA and contributed to its demise. An initial pre-disposition towards trust existed because of the shared experience and interactions during the anti-Soviet jihad as well as a few personal relationships. The GIA’s representative in Sudan and delegations sent to Algeria offered opportunities for interaction and trust building, especially among key nodes. But the GIA’s erratic and counter-productive behavior soon spurred a perception that it was infiltrated by Algerian security services. This became the explanation for
actions that were otherwise inexplicable to its peers. Once the GIA acquired this reputation, it became a pariah. Its existing alliances ceased, and no further ones were attempted.

Trust posed a hurdle to the al-Qaida and GSPC alliance. Unlike the Egyptian cases or even the GIA, building trust was challenging because of the limited interactions and personal relationships between the two groups. Of the alliance cases, the GSPC probably had the least interaction with al-Qaida because it was not formed until 1998 or organizationally present in Afghanistan prior to 9/11. Moreover, it was plagued by the GIA's reputation. It is unclear if personal relationships existed between al-Qaida and the GSPC. Zawahiri and Atiyah’s uncertainty about the group, expressed in letters to Zarqawi, suggest that, at a minimum, personal relationships did not exist between al-Qaida and the GSPC’s leaders. Instead personal relationships developed between AQI and the GSPC, and AQI then vouched for the trustworthiness of the GSPC. Zarqawi played a pivotal role in forging trust between al-Qaida and the GSPC, particularly reassuring al-Qaida about the GSPC’s trustworthiness. Thus trust existed primarily between key nodes at the time of alliance initiation.

The Pakistani Deobandi groups built trust with al-Qaida through regular interactions in Afghanistan and a robust network of personal relationships. Their co-location in Afghanistan during the 1990s was a powerful trust-building period. The personal relationships were so extensive that they supplanted the organizational-level alliances at times. The Pakistani Deobandi groups’ reputation was in jeopardy after 9/11 because of their relationship with the Pakistani state, but personal relationships compensated for this potential pitfall and contributed to the devolution into personal relationships as opposed to organizational-level ties. The loci of trust in these relationships existed between key nodes, rank and file, and to a lesser degree, leaders. Building
organizationally-embedded trust proved challenging in the face of these groups’ decentralization, especially in the decade since 9/11.

Trust issues plagued the relationship between al-Qaida and LT in particular. The two groups had ample interaction opportunities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Their interactions were not as extensive as al-Qaida and the Deobandi groups’, but their shared presence in Konar in the 1990s offered a forum for trust building. Some personal relationships developed between LT and al-Qaida members, but they did not form a foundation for organizational trust. After 2001, LT developed a reputation for being untrustworthy among fellow jihadist groups as a consequence of its continued ties to the Pakistani security services. Given the strength of that relationship, LT was unable to overcome a reputation of being untrustworthy, though individual personal relationships offered an avenue for some cooperation.

In order for alliances to form, groups had to have a willingness to build trust with one another or pre-existing reasons to trust one another. The sanctuaries in Sudan and Afghanistan offered ideal trust building venues. Nonetheless, this was not sufficient to create trust between al-Qaida and the GIA or LT, when reputational issues existed. Building trust with the GSPC was more difficult because of the relative lack of interaction opportunities, personal relationships, and legacy reputational issues. But a willingness to build trust, coupled with AQI’s vetting, offered a basis to do so. In most dyads, trust was concentrated among key nodes, particularly initially.

**Conclusions about the Egyptian, Algerian, and Pakistani Groups’ Alliance Behavior**

Prospective partners’ alliance behavior was not determined by balancing prerogatives, whether that was against power or threat. There was a seemingly overwhelming imperative to balance against the United States, but partnering groups did not respond to this. Despite the
marked change in threat, it only exerted a secondary influence. Alone, it did not produce any of the alliances. Instead, it supplemented other motives and bolstered alliances when they already existed.

Ideological solidarity did not produce any of the alliances examined nor did it act as an independent causal variable. Ideology was not irrelevant, but it was a baseline commonality among all dyads. Within the Sunni jihadist movement, ideology did not distinguish specific groups as more desirable partners nor did it inform their views on whether to ally with al-Qaida. Ideological affinity existed among all dyads; therefore, narrative affinity took on greater prominence in terms of distinguishing levels of affinity and producing stable shared identities.

Alliance decisions were driven primarily by organizational considerations, particularly whether organizational needs merited allying with al-Qaida. The groups examined tended to be around the same organizational age as al-Qaida, or older, so they did not rely on al-Qaida for learning needs. Adaptation needs largely instigated alliances with al-Qaida. Discrete needs were adequate to produce and sustain alliances between al-Qaida and the Deobandi groups, as they were reinforced by close interactions and growing levels of affinity. Al-Qaida’s alliances with GSPC and EIJ were rooted in continuous needs, which produced shared identities and more stable alliances. Al-Qaida could not address LT and EIG’s needs, and those groups had other avenues for reform. This theory explains the absence of alliances in these cases, where other frameworks would incorrectly predict alliances should exist.

12.3 Al-Qaida: An Alliance Hub Par Excellence

Existing scholarship has examined al-Qaida’s alliances primarily in terms of the threat they pose or what they suggest about the group’s viability and strength. Its ability to develop into an
alliance hub and sustain that status for decades has received less attention. This dissertation sought to identify why al-Qaida emerged as a desirable partner and what motivated it to develop such an extensive network of allies. Drawing from the process tracing of Chapter 8 and the structured case studies in Chapters 9-11, this section will examine how al-Qaida became an alliance hub in light of the five theoretical frameworks and the intervening variable of trust.

**Alliance Hubs as a Product of Efforts to Balance against Threat**

H (Alliance Hub: Threat) 1.C: An alliance hub seeks numerous partners to improve its balancing position vis-à-vis a common threat.

Alliance hubs are a central force confronting a threat that also concerns numerous other organizations, according to balance of threat framework. They are at the core of a counter-coalition formed in response to that threat. Al-Qaida appealed to balance of threat principles in its efforts to create such a coalition. Al-Qaida identified the United States as the greatest threat after the U.S. stationed forces in Saudi Arabia. With that move, al-Qaida assessed that the United States possessed not only the greatest aggregate power, but it was now also geographically proximate and had revealed offensive power and aggressive intentions. Thus al-Qaida’s efforts to build a coalition against the United States were driven in part by its interpretation of the threat. The United States’ involvement in Somalia confirmed al-Qaida’s suspicions, and it began a campaign in earnest to persuade others of this threat and the need to ally in opposition. Though this was al-Qaida’s priority, its development into an alliance hub hinged on supporting groups against other threats, which was inconsistent with the balance of threat imperative it was propagating.

Through the Service Bureau and the training camps, individuals who would subsequently form the core of al-Qaida assisted in building a coalition of sorts against the Soviets. One of the lessons al-Qaida derived from the anti-Soviet jihad was that superpowers could be defeated if jihadists unified in opposition. This left an impression on al-Qaida as it began its project of building
an Islamic Army. Even in the group’s infancy, al-Qaida’s founders saw themselves as the core around which jihadist forces should rally. At that point, the envisioned coalition was not aimed at the United States. It was to be a nimble force that could be deployed wherever necessary. Thus al-Qaida’s aim to become an alliance hub predated its desire to balance specifically against the threat from the United States.

Once al-Qaida identified the United States as its primary threat—specifically with the location of U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia—al-Qaida’s perception of the need to balance grew commensurately. The United States did not pose the greatest threat to groups co-located in Sudan or in Afghanistan prior to 2001. While many Sunni jihadist groups agreed that the U.S. was an enemy and threat, the U.S. did not pose the greatest threat to them. The U.S. was also not the threat that animated their activities or alliances. Therefore, while a desire to balance against the U.S. threat served as the overarching motivation for al-Qaida to become a hub, this incentive did not make it a desirable partner. On the other hand, the lack of shared greatest threat did not prevent al-Qaida from developing into an alliance hub and acquiring numerous partners during the first two phases of its tenure as an alliance hub. Thus, a shared greatest threat was not necessary for al-Qaida to become an alliance hub. Many of al-Qaida’s relationships were initiated prior to the onset of a common greatest threat. But an effort to balance threat acted as an important facet of al-Qaida’s decision to develop into a hub.

During the jihadist lender years in Sudan, al-Qaida engaged in two relationships solely intended to balance against the threat from United States. First, it cooperated with Somali warlord Aideed to combat U.S. forces in Mogadishu. This example offers support for the balance of power hypothesis. Consistent with the predictions of this theory, cooperation was instigated by shared opposition to the U.S. presence in Somalia and ceased once the U.S. withdrew from Somalia.
However, al-Qaida turned to this strange bedfellow only after its efforts to work with the ideologically compatible AIAI faltered. Therefore, even in this instance, the desire to build a balancing coalition was first shaped by ideological considerations rather than purely power calculations.

Second, al-Qaida briefly forged a relationship with Hizballah due to a shared threat. While this coalition was aimed at opposing the United States, as balance of power theory would predict, this theory only provides a partial explanation. For al-Qaida, Hizballah was a powerful addition to its nascent balancing effort. The balancing requirements did not shift prior to alliance formation, so what specifically spurred the coalition effort is unclear. Overall, it appears to be a prime example of a counter-balancing coalition.

But what this theory cannot adequately address is why the relationship ended. Al-Qaida and Hizballah engaged in some cooperation and then the partnership soon abated. Yet the need to balance had not diminished. If balancing considerations offered a compelling justification for alliances or al-Qaida’s goal was to build the most powerful balancing coalition, it seemingly would have retained Hizballah as part of that effort. Thus other variables were at work or the balancing imperative alone was not strong enough to sustain the relationship.

When al-Qaida moved to Afghanistan, it grew more insistent about the threat posed by the United States and took measures to provoke the threat, namely the 1998 Embassy attacks and 2000 USS Cole attack. It also persisted in its efforts to situate itself at the center and helm of a counter-coalition. The idea that the “Crusader-Zionist” alliance posed the greatest threat to the ummah was embedded in al-Qaida’s 1998 declaration. But the United States did not genuinely pose the greatest threat to any of the signatories of the 1998 declaration. It had aggregate power, offensive power to strike in Afghanistan, and some aggressive intentions, but it was not geographically proximate to
the groups based in Afghanistan that formed the core of al-Qaida’s allies. Thus the alliance empire that al-Qaida built during the pre-9/11 Afghanistan period did not hinge on al-Qaida’s position in a coalition driven by threat.

The 9/11 attacks dramatically changed the threat environment in a way that was consistent with al-Qaida’s existing view. The attack provoked the U.S. invasion in Afghanistan, where it undeniably became the threat with the greatest aggregate power, offensive power, aggressive intentions, as well as geographic proximity. It was the only instance of a clear, common greatest threat in the four decades examined in this dissertation. Many jihadists in Afghanistan rallied to fight the foreign invader. But none immediately changed their organizational alliance decisions vis-à-vis al-Qaida. Those that were already allied with al-Qaida remained allied. In the face of the shared threat, organizations that were not allied with al-Qaida did not change their position. For example, Zarqawi upended his group and departed Afghanistan as did the LIFG. Threat was not thus sufficient to change al-Qaida’s appeal as an ally.

Of all the dyads, the Afghan militant groups and al-Qaida shared the clearest common greatest threat from the United States after 9/11. Prior to 9/11, the Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani Network saw the U.S. as a threat, but the Northern Alliance posed more proximate concern. After the U.S. invasion, however, the U.S. was unambiguously a shared greatest threat. Al-Qaida’s alliances with them were already in place prior to the threat increase, and the shared threat reinforced the relationships.

This pattern generally applied to groups that were not co-located with al-Qaida as well. Groups already allied with al-Qaida bolstered their ties in the face of a common threat, but un-allied groups did not change their posture. The GSPC kept its distance, even as the threat to it from the U.S. mounted. Threat cannot fully explain JI’s decision to escalate its allegiance to al-Qaida. Still
relatively unknown and not co-located in Afghanistan, it did not face the same degree of increased threat as other groups. Thus its decision to adopt al-Qaida’s cause in 2002 actually provoked a greater threat, but cannot be wholly explained as a reaction to a shared threat.

At first glance, Zarqawi’s subsequent decision to ally with al-Qaida in 2004 appears to be a response to the threat posed by the United States. But Jund al-Sham’s conflicting reactions to threat cannot be explained by this paradigm. Zarqawi opted to decline an alliance with al-Qaida in 2001 in the face of an immediate greatest threat. Then he approached al-Qaida seeking an alliance in 2004 when the two groups shared a common source of threat, but operated in different locations. If threat was sufficient to stimulate an alliance, it should have done so in 2001. While threat may have contributed to the subsequent alliance, it was not the primary, or at least sole, driver and cannot explain Jund al-Sham’s differing alliance decisions.

In the fourth phase of al-Qaida’s hub development, it forged a new type of alliance whereby groups adopted its name and became affiliates. It was the most visible manifestation of an ally’s decision to join al-Qaida’s anti-U.S. coalition. In the years after 9/11, al-Qaida’s name took on symbolic meaning and acts of terrorism were defined in relationship to the group: associated, linked, inspired by, and dozens of other variations. Anointing specific groups as al-Qaida served a balancing purpose as it offered al-Qaida a way to project greater power, thereby strengthening the counter-coalition. Likewise, groups that adopted al-Qaida’s name portrayed themselves as more powerful. Thus affiliate alliances had a balancing dimension, but threat does not explain which groups opted to re-name themselves as part of al-Qaida.

Threat can only partially explain the “faux” affiliates’ decisions. The members of LIFG and EIG who stayed in Afghanistan and Pakistan faced a shared threat with al-Qaida, and they subsequently formed the core of factions that adopted affiliate status. The rest of their organizations, which were
based elsewhere and had eschewed an alliance with al-Qaida, did not face the same degree of common threat. Thus the differences in their alliance behavior are partially explained by this theory. Yet these factions opted to stay with al-Qaida when others fled, so they chose to share al-Qaida's threat.

The faux mergers were announced years after the commencement of a shared threat. In reality, those relationships were in place long before. The Afghan-based EIG members’ alliance with al-Qaida dated back to at least 1998, prior to a common threat. The Afghan-based LIFG members’ ties were solidified by the post-9/11 environment, particularly the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan; thus threat did play a role in that alliance and subsequent absorption. But threat cannot explain the divergent reactions—with some eschewing an alliance and leaving Afghanistan and others opting to stay and embrace al-Qaida—within LIFG to the same threat.

In contrast, threat did not act as the main impetus for al-Shabaab to become an al-Qaida affiliate. The United States allegedly supported the warlord coalition that gave rise to the Islamic Courts takeover of Mogadishu, during which time the Courts shared an indirect threat with al-Qaida. By the time discussions for an alliance commenced, the U.S. role had receded and was not the greatest threat to al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab faced a far greater threat from Ethiopia and African Union peacekeeping forces. Balance of threat theory is silent on why this alliance formed and the timing of the alliance effort.

Lastly, a shared threat offers some insight into TTP’s alliance with al-Qaida. The Pakistani military's deployment into FATA stimulated the formation of TTP and immediately posed the greatest threat. Pakistani forces also threatened al-Qaida's sanctuary in the tribal areas. The perception that the Pakistani military's actions were undertaken at the behest of the United States further cultivated a shared sense of threat between the two groups. Threat thereby acted as an
impetus for the formation of this alliance. However, this foundation was not sufficient to prevent
the significant problems within the alliance, such as al-Qaida’s intense frustration with the TTP’s
indiscriminate operations and the TTP’s decision not to consult al-Qaida about its planned U.S.
Homeland attack. Threat helped precipitate the alliance, but did not meaningfully assist in
sustaining the relationship over time.

In sum, threat played a mixed role in al-Qaida’s alliances. Al-Qaida embraced the notion that the
“Crusader-Zionist” alliance required a counter-balancing coalition. Thus balancing imperatives
served as an important facet of its motive to become an alliance hub. On the other hand, threat
rarely served as an impetus for groups to ally with al-Qaida. Several important aspects of al-Qaida’s
alliance hub behavior cannot be fully explained by balance of threat. First, its decision to largely
limit its allies to fellow Sunni jihadist organizations was not consistent with balance of threat
behavior. A true realist approach to becoming an alliance hub would not be as concerned about
ideological considerations, especially given the potentially powerful partners that existed outside of
those ideological parameters. Second, al-Qaida was able to develop into an alliance hub even when
there was little interest in balancing against the United States. While the need to balance gained
traction in the wake of 9/11, some groups still did not join al-Qaida’s coalition in the face of what
was now an overwhelming balancing requirement. Therefore, this framework offers insight into al-
Qaida’s motive to become an alliance hub, but cannot fully explain its partner selection, the timing
of alliances, why it forged many alliances before the balancing imperative existed or what made it
an attractive ally to only some organizations when the balancing need extended well beyond that
subset of groups.

Alliance Hubs as a Product of Ideological Solidarity

H (Alliance Hub: Ideology) 2.C: An alliance hub seeks partners that share its ideological orientation and
many tenets of their ideology.
According to the ideological solidarity hypothesis, alliance hubs are those groups that hail from an ideology shared by other terrorist organizations, and this ideology causes groups to gravitate toward hubs. The degree of solidarity determines the level of attraction. A common ideology binds groups to the hub and the hub to the partnering groups. Hubs’ formulation of their ideology in particular generates a sense of solidarity with numerous groups.

Though vague, this theory appears to have credibility at first glance. Al-Qaida allied almost exclusively with groups of the same ideological disposition. Al-Qaida both sought partners that shared its ideology and largely attracted groups with the same overall ideological orientation. Al-Qaida’s alliance hub position cannot be explained by ideological solidarity. Ideology rarely was sufficient to produce an alliance with al-Qaida. Al-Qaida’s motive for becoming an alliance hub was rooted in an ideological platform that emphasized the need for united and viewed the struggle as an international in scope. Like threat, this ideological platform underpinned its desire to create alliances. But it did not attract partners based on a sense of solidarity with this specific ideological interpretation.

Al-Qaida’s ideology did not change substantially over the four periods it acted as an alliance hub. This consistency of ideology is at odds with the fluctuations in alliance outcomes. During the first two periods, rather than a sense of ideological solidarity producing allies, al-Qaida used its resources to try to cultivate greater adherence to its ideology with little success. The alliances it initiated during its jihadist lender years were largely with groups that shared its ideology, but not with groups that had a greater sense of solidarity. In fact, groups with comparable levels of ideological solidarity made differing alliance decisions towards al-Qaida.

Al-Qaida formulated an ideology that prescribed unity among Sunni jihadist organizations. It was based in large part on the idea that near enemy battles should be postponed until the far
enemy was defeated and that groups should rally together to combat the far enemy, i.e. the Zionist-Crusader alliance. However, this view was not widely held by fellow Sunni jihadists, particularly in the two pre-9/11 periods, the formative periods in al-Qaida’s alliance hub development. This ideological prioritization was contested by fellow Sunni jihadist groups, so there was a seeming lack of ideological solidarity on a key precept of al-Qaida’s ideology (Wright 2006b). Counter to the ideological solidarity hypothesis, al-Qaida was able to initiate numerous alliances during this time.

Al-Qaida’s ideology did not change in the post-9/11 periods. Thus its alliance position should not have changed. Any alliance changes would have been the result of changes in other groups’ ideological interpretations that brought them closer to al-Qaida. This may have occurred to some degree, as the post-9/11 environment gave al-Qaida’s ideological message more resonance.

In a number of cases, no ideological changes occurred that produced greater solidarity, yet alliances formed. Zarqawi’s decision to reject an alliance and then seek to ally with al-Qaida was not accompanied by any change in the level of ideological solidarity. In fact, he spelled out his ideological beliefs prior to allying with al-Qaida. No clear changes occurred between the time Zarqawi refused an alliance in 2001 and sought one in 2003, except that he now sought to expel the U.S. from Iraq whereas he was not committed to doing so in Afghanistan. Similarly, no ideological modifications occurred that prompted al-Shabaab to seek an alliance with al-Qaida out of a heightened sense of solidarity. These alliances are left unexplained by this theory.

Rather than ideological solidarity triggering alliances, groups made ideological adaptations after allying with al-Qaida. While the relationships then had more ideological commonality, this was not the cause of the alliance per se, it was the result. The GSPC and al-Qaida made ideological adaptations to accommodate one another as part of the alliance formation process, but these changes are not what produced the alliance. On the other hand, alliances sometimes followed
extended periods of seemingly adequate ideological solidarity, leaving the timing unexplained. The LIFG and EIG “faux affiliates” shared al-Qaida’s ideology years prior to the merger announcement.

Another indication that ideology was not an independent causal force was the lack of alliances between partnering groups. A number of other dyads not involving al-Qaida shared an ideology, sometimes with even more solidarity than they experienced with al-Qaida. All the Sunni militant groups in Sudan and Afghanistan shared an ideology, which was a central reason they gathered there in the first place, so there was ample ideological solidarity. However, of the potential dyads excluding al-Qaida, few forged separate alliances, even those that engaged in some cooperation. Instead, the organizational-level relationships occurred in a hub-and-spoke-configuration with al-Qaida as the main focal point. Cross-cutting alliances among spokes, when they did occur, were not particularly resilient. The relative lack of alliances beyond involvement with al-Qaida reflects the limitations of ideological solidarity as a motive for forming and sustaining alliances, even when there are comparable interaction opportunities and cross-organizational personal relationships.

Alliance Hubs as a Product of Organizational Needs

H (Alliance Hub: Organization) 3.C: An alliance hub has both the ability to fulfill other groups’ organizational learning and adaptation needs as well as its own organizational needs that are fulfilled by alliances.

From an organizational theory perspective, alliance hubs are groups that are well positioned to fulfill other organizations’ learning and adaptation needs, and simultaneously have ongoing organizational needs that are addressed through alliances. They have knowledge, skills, and/or assets that are in demand in the prevailing conditions, which prompt others to seek it out for partnerships. Alliance hubs integrate relationships into their organizational frames, routines, memories, and culture. They have ongoing or regular organizational requirements that they use
allies to fulfill, and, when new needs arise, they use alliances to address them. These groups are adept at anticipating how allies can assist with their organizational learning or adaption needs.

Al-Qaida regularly invoked the power and threat from the U.S. and need to defend Islam against it, as justification for its alliances. Yet it was able to create a position as an alliance hub even when these causal forces were not operating. Its ability to fulfill other organizations’ needs and the needs it experienced as a result of its ambitious enterprise accounted for far more of its position as an alliance hub than its rhetoric would suggest. From the outset, it positioned itself to be a resource for other groups. In the first two alliance hub phases, it offered concrete resources, like money, haven, and training. Then, after 9/11, al-Qaida lost many of those assets, but could still offer less tangible goods, such as reputation and cachet. As the nature of its assets changed, the incentives to ally with it also shifted. Therefore, al-Qaida had the ability to fulfill varying organizational needs throughout the four periods.

Al-Qaida’s initial ability to carve out an alliance hub position was inextricably linked to bin Laden’s deep pockets. His bankroll gave al-Qaida a heft that it could not command based on its arguments about the need to balance against power or threat or its ideological platform. Groups mainly sought out al-Qaida in order to acquire financial backing for their projects. They did not make adjustments to their agendas or ideologies. Access to bin Laden’s money came at a critical juncture as conflicts involving Sunnis flared all over the world, and militant groups needed financial support for their campaigns. For some, these were one-time monetary infusions to fill discrete needs that did not produce enduring partnerships. But al-Qaida’s earliest alliance with EIJ was rooted in bin Laden’s provision of funds to the perpetually cash-strapped group. Thus al-Qaida established its position in the crowded field through its willingness and ability to fill other groups’ needs for funding.
Al-Qaida’s early provision of resources while in Sudan was not merely philanthropic. Bin Laden and his inner circle used the money to establish a leadership position in the movement. Al-Qaida sought to carve out a place as a central node within the Sunni jihadist milieu, in line with its organizational goal “[t]o coordinate Jihad movements around the world in an effort to create a unified international Jihad movement” (“Al-Qai’ida Bylaws” 2002 2). Fittingly, during this time, al-Qaida both created its own relationships and positioned itself such that others were linked through it or via the forums it created, like the shura council which had representatives from the major groups resident in Sudan, and allied with al-Qaida.

Al-Qaida cooperated with many groups when they were at young organizational ages, as it was. Al-Qaida’s time as a trainer and financier during the anti-Soviet jihad and in Sudan occurred when many Sunni jihadist groups were young, with some notable exceptions. Alliances became embedded within the Sunni jihadist milieu as a result of the anti-Soviet jihad and then reinforced by al-Qaida shortly thereafter. Al-Qaida’s actions helped to embed alliances in the organizational frames and cultures of fellow Sunni jihadist groups. This increased their receptivity to alliances later on when needs arose.

Al-Qaida established alliances as a part of its organizational frames at a young age. The individuals who went on to form al-Qaida’s core ran the Services Bureau in Peshawar and training camps for fellow Arab Afghans in Afghanistan before al-Qaida was even an organization. Alliances were thus part of its problem-solving routines, even before operations commenced. Its culture was geared towards assisting and cooperating with other organizations as a fundamental part of its mission.

As the leader, bin Laden was both receptive to alliances and promoted them. He played a central role in embedding alliances into al-Qaida’s organizational frames. Al-Qaida’s networking
success was attributable in no small part to bin Laden’s personal charisma and acumen (Hegghammer 110). He actively sought ways to assist other organizations, sometimes even when they did not request assistance. His personality was conducive to alliances because he was not a domineering figure in a field with many such personalities. Hegghammer characterized bin Laden as effectively and “consciously cultivating the image of a grandfatherly, humble and inclusive figure... [B]in Laden’s success in building alliances is all the more remarkable given that the agenda he was pursuing—war against America—was actually shared by very few of his allies” (110-11). He had a keen sense of timing, was adept at seizing opportunities and acting at pivotal points to shore up support. Moreover, he was the one with resources in an environment where resources were often scarce.

With the move to Afghanistan, al-Qaida shifted from providing funds to other groups to using its funds to create an environment to cultivate alliances. Through its relationship with the Afghan Taliban, al-Qaida extended safe haven and training to existing and prospective allies in Afghanistan. By the late 1990s, many of the causes that bin Laden had funded were on the brink of defeat. To deal with ensuing organizational crises and environment changes, groups fled to Afghanistan where they could get much-needed breathing room to recuperate and acquire training to become more effective in the future. Exile produced a powerful continuous organizational need for the groups that journeyed to Afghanistan, thus al-Qaida’s role in securing haven provided a powerful alliance incentive. In addition, new groups emerged, and al-Qaida’s training infrastructure offered an ideal forum to quickly address learning needs.

What distinguished al-Qaida from other groups at this stage was that it used its assets and the freedom afforded by its safe haven to fulfill other groups’ organizational needs. In fact, servicing others’ needs was al-Qaida’s primary function as it developed into a hub. Without the state
sponsored safe havens, al-Qaida would not have been as accessible and readily able share its assets with other organizations. This was essential because, above all, it was al-Qaida's resources—and willingness to share them—that attracted prospective partners. Without these assets, al-Qaida's ability to forge these relationships and develop its alliance hub position would have been substantially weakened.

With the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaida lost the tangible resources that underpinned its alliance hub position to date. Its sanctuary vanished, infrastructure was destroyed, and financial resources were under attack. It faced a major crisis and a critical juncture in its alliances. Some groups, like LIGF and Jund al-Sham that had accepted al-Qaida's resources but balked at allying with it, opted to flee. No new alliances occurred in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. But al-Qaida's ability to rely on other allies in its hour of need was a reflection of the strength of its alliance position after a decade of resource and service provision for other groups.

JI's reaction to 9/11 illustrates this accomplishment. JI benefitted from al-Qaida's training, but its attachment to al-Qaida clearly exceeded any narrow calculation of reciprocation. JI's decision to launch the Bali attacks in 2002 fulfilled the increasingly pressing, adaptation need for al-Qaida to demonstrate continued viability in the face of international onslaught. While al-Qaida provided funds and other infusions of funds following the Bali attacks, the risk JI incurred cannot be fully comprehended without factoring in its alliance with al-Qaida. Arguably, JI was one of al-Qaida's only allies in a position to undertake such an action because it was not co-located in Afghanistan or fully recognized as an al-Qaida ally at this juncture. After a decade of fulfilling other groups' organizational needs and when al-Qaida was in a vulnerable position, its ally fulfilled its organizational needs.
In the post-9/11 period, al-Qaeda faced a new dynamic. It was both recovering from a major crisis and faced significant changes in the environment, which spurred the need for alliances. While its tangible assets were seriously damaged, it had executed the largest terrorist attack ever conducted. Thus, it had a new asset to offer: its reputation. The group may not have fully recognized that its name was a new alliance asset until Zarqawi approached it. An alliance with his organization had been elusive for years, but al-Qaeda now found itself on the receiving end of his overtures. Besieged in South Asia, al-Qaeda lacked a presence in the most important battlefront, Iraq, which damaged its claims to be the vanguard of the movement. For his part, Zarqawi wanted to co-opt the value of al-Qaeda’s reputation as a formidable adversary and expand the draw of his group. While al-Qaeda had long sought to bring Zarqawi under its wing, its organizational weakness at this time shaped the structure and conditions of the alliance. Al-Qaeda was forthright with Zarqawi about its weaknesses. Atiyah admitted to Zarqawi:

We are in the stage of weakness and a state of paucity. We have not yet reached a level of stability. We have no alternative but to not squander any element of the foundations of strength, or any helper or supporter. We are unceasing in our efforts to unite our nation’s strength and resources ("Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qaeda High Command" 10).

Zarqawi, while in many ways in a position of strength, sought the alliance to compensate for shortfalls in his organization’s position in the insurgency. Jund al-Sham’s weaknesses would have been exacerbated if al-Qaeda had its own presence and probably would have impeded the alliance. Without accounting for the groups’ complementary organizational needs, the change in Zarqawi’s alliance decision and the timing of this alliance is obscured.

With few exceptions, all of al-Qaeda’s partners experienced significant internal dissension, particularly about whether to ally with al-Qaeda. Internal disagreement was symptomatic of the organizational needs that spurred the alliance. Forming an alliance exacerbated internal divisions
and created even greater organizational needs. This had the effect of making some of al-Qaida’s new allies even more dependent on it.

One of the qualities that clearly differentiated the groups that allied with al-Qaida from the ones that did not was their organizational needs and ability to self-reform. All had incentive to balance against the United States’ power or threat. All had comparable levels of ideological solidarity with the hub. But groups with self-reform capabilities and little use for al-Qaida’s resources did not engage in alliances with it, even in the face of common threats, power, and an ideological motive.

The Role of Identity Affinity in Alliance Hubs’ Desirability as a Partner

$H_{(Alliance\ Hub: Affinity)}$ 4.C: An alliance hub seeks allies with which it shares identity affinity, while simultaneously meeting that threshold for numerous other organizations.

From an identity standpoint, alliance hubs are the purveyors of an identity that has resonance and saliency. They usually hail from the predominant ideological current of the day, have some flexibility in their ideological interpretation, and propagate an enemy and victim narrative that is compelling. They seek allies that adhere to their interpretation of their identity as a prerequisite to alliances, rather than a cause. Alliances bolster their credibility and allow them to further shape the construction of that identity.

Al-Qaida was a purveyor of an identity that had strong resonance and saliency. It hailed from the predominant ideological current of the day, had a powerful and encompassing narrative, and a secondary ethnic identity. After establishing its parameters, it only considered allies that met its identity standards. Alliances then bolstered its position and allowed it to further shape the construction of that identity.
Al-Qaida’s identity affinity operated on all three proposed levels: ideology, narrative, and ethnic affinity. Of the three components, ideological affinity, as the group defined it, was the core criteria of al-Qaida’s affinity with other organizations. Though it deviated from its ideological affinity requirement early in its hub development, these were short-lived ventures. Al-Qaida’s approach to ideological affinity was broad and flexible, while protecting a delineated sense of collective identity.

Al-Qaida rose to become an alliance hub as a broader Islamic revival was underway. Within that broader movement, a wave of Sunni jihadism swept the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, among other places. Thus the composition of the ideological landscape was favorable to al-Qaida. As a result, it had numerous options that would fulfill its ideological affinity requirement. This ideological landscape was advantageous for al-Qaida’s alliance hub ambitions.

Al-Qaida could have bounded its ideological affinity criteria in a variety of ways. It could have accepted all Islamic organizations, which, most notably, would have included Shia. Alternatively, it could have embraced only other Salafist organizations. Instead, it opted to define its affinity as extending to other Sunni groups, but excluded non-Sunni groups. It explored allying with Shia early in its alliance hub tenure, but was unable to comfortably expand its ideological affinity parameters.

It levied another ideological requirement on its allies: a commitment to jihad. It did not ally with groups that did not engage in jihad, even if they were fellow Sunnis. Its allies tended to be groups that saw jihad as the only means to accomplish change. This was the main idiosyncratic characteristic it levied when it came to ideological affinity. It excluded a number of groups with which it shared ideological principles, but that were willing to work within the existing system. Within these parameters of Sunni jihadist organizations, al-Qaida demonstrated a fair level of
flexibility in its ideological affinity. It was not rigid or arbitrary within these constraints in ways that precluded alliances with other Sunni jihadist groups.

Al-Qaida tended to ally most closely with other ethnic Arab organizations, but only if they met the other identity criteria. In other words, a shared ethnic identity was not sufficient for al-Qaida to view a partner as meeting the identity affinity threshold. Al-Qaida had an underlying ethnic Arab identity as an organization, though it was not frequently acknowledged by the group, which sought to unify and lead a broader movement. But al-Qaida's focus and passion was mainly geared towards the Middle East, its members and leaders predominantly Arab, and Arabic was the main language it used to communicate. Al-Qaida had some non-Arab allies, mainly in South Asia, so it showed an ability to overcome this ethnic identity as well as use it to amplify other forms of identity.

Al-Qaida's narrative was simultaneously the most difficult and most powerful facet of its identity affinity. This form of affinity operated within ideological affinity, which was the essential baseline. Al-Qaida persisted in its efforts to persuade prospective and existing allies to adopt its narrative. Its narrative encompassed its allies' narratives in that it viewed their governments as enemies and all Muslim people as victims. But its narrative went a step further in advocating for the expulsion and downfall of the U.S. as necessary in order to topple these individual regimes. The groups that embraced this narrative developed the most stable shared identity with al-Qaida. Most struggled to fully adopt this narrative, but a few adapted their narratives to more closely align with al-Qaida's and thus increased affinity and built a sense of shared identity.

Al-Qaida met the identity threshold for numerous other organizations. Had it been willing to expand its ideological affinity criteria, it would have had even more alliance options. As it was, it was seen as an acceptable partner by most fellow Sunni jihadist organizations. In other words, a
lack of identity affinity was rarely an obstacle to finding allies because of its identity position in the environment and its approach to identity affinity.

Overall, al-Qaida demonstrated an ability to build shared identities that helped to perpetuate its alliances. It was unable to do so in the Hizballah case, in part because of the tenuousness of the initial identity affinity. While al-Qaida primarily attempted to persuade its allies to adopt its narrative, it sometimes made accommodations for facets of its allies’ narrative. For example, following its alliance with the GSPC, al-Qaida more frequently condemned France as an enemy, which was an effort to make adjustments for the GSPC’s longtime foe. Because most of its allies’ enemies were already included in al-Qaida’s narrative, increasing narrative affinity was more about emphasis than incorporating new enemies.

Alliances Hubs’ Need for Trust & Trustworthiness

H (Alliance Hub: Trust) 5.C: An alliance hub is adept at building trust with other organizations through its reputation, accessibility, and ability to create supporting personal relationships.

During the first two phases of its development as an alliance hub, al-Qaida had ideal venues to build trust. The environments in Sudan and Afghanistan were rich with trust cultivating opportunities. Al-Qaida distinguished itself among its peers for its ability to forge trust with numerous organizations simultaneously. The opportunities to build trust were not exclusive to al-Qaida, but al-Qaida was far more able to cultivate trust than other organizations.

Many of the groups present in Sudan had opportunities for interactions with one another. Sudan was a forum for organizations to interact, develop inter-personal relationships, and build reputations. During its time in Sudan, al-Qaida created a reputation as a group willing and able to assist others. It was an entity that was known for its support for other groups, rather than for its own operational accomplishments. It was not suspected of being infiltrated or sloppy in ways that
would cause harm to its partners. In addition to bin Laden’s well-known treasury, al-Qaida had personnel who were respected for their combat experience, operational skills, and contribution to the anti-Soviet jihad. This factored into its reputation as a group that could help other groups and, by extension, was considered trustworthy.

The extended period of co-location in Afghanistan that followed the Sudan years removed many of the hurdles to building trust. Al-Qaida had autonomy and freedom to forge and sustain trust through the abundant opportunities for interactions and the corresponding personal relationships and reputation (Central Intelligence Agency 2001 1). In some cases, trust did not form, despite these opportunities, because of difficult personalities, egos, idiosyncrasies, or cultural divides. In other cases, the trust forged in the Hindu Kush would prove enduring.

The trust forged in Sudan and Afghanistan was essential to al-Qaida’s post-9/11 alliance hub phases, when it became considerably more difficult to develop trust. Al-Qaida had to rely on this existing trust foundation when it lost its haven and, by extension, its primary venue for trust building. The opportunities for interaction, especially with al-Qaida leaders, reduced considerably. Inter-organizational personal relationships took on greater importance, but were more fragile as individuals were regularly detained or killed. In cases where trust did not yet exist, reputation became an essential determinant.

In al-Qaida’s first two phases of alliance hub development, the loci of trust in its relationships tended to be concentrated in leadership or key nodes. In the post-9/11 periods, residual leadership trust existed, but forging new leadership trust was too dangerous for al-Qaida. Thus key nodes were responsible for more of the trust maintenance and building, but were also among the most exposed and also most frequently arrested. The loss of these key nodes impacted al-Qaida’s alliance with JI, for example. Al-Qaida’s trust with its Pakistani and Afghan allies grew
more rooted in the rank and file, which more regularly interacted on the battlefield and in the haven in Pakistan’s tribal areas.

**Conclusions about al-Qaida as an Alliance Hub**

Al-Qaida propagated the idea that jihadist forces needed to unite in opposition to the most powerful and threatening adversary, the Zionist-Crusader alliance. Thus concepts drawn from balance of power, balance of threat, and ideological solidarity informed al-Qaida’s overarching rationale for becoming an alliance hub. But when it came to alliance initiation, partner selection, and ally receptivity, organizational needs, within identity parameters, were the primary causal impetus. Al-Qaida’s resources, organizational dynamics, ability to establish identity affinity through multiple sources, and, lastly, build trust provided a powerful foundation for alliances. These were all inextricably linked. Individually, each may not have been sufficient, but altogether, they produced an alliance hub.

At times, al-Qaida was simply fortuitous. Al-Qaida could not have engineered a situation whereby the Taliban would rise to power in Afghanistan when militant groups all over the world were flailing and in need of haven. Al-Qaida both cultivated and benefitted from conditions in which it was ideally positioned to fill other groups’ critical organizational needs, particularly safe haven and training. This placed al-Qaida in a powerful alliance position at the center of a network of relationships. Simultaneously, al-Qaida’s desire for a leadership role in the movement and its international anti-U.S. mission necessitated allies.
Section IV: Conclusions about Hubs and Alliances
13.1 Introduction

Over the past twelve chapters, this dissertation has explored alliance behavior in dyads involving alliance hubs during more than four decades. The two hubs exercised a decisive influence over the terrorist landscape of their time and demonstrated an exceptional aptitude for forging and sustaining alliances. Their experiences offered the basis for a comparative examination of what factors drove the decisions of politically relevant, prospective partners to ally with hubs or to choose not to. Robust variation occurred across and within cases on the independent variables of threat, ideology, and organizational characteristics for both the alliance hubs and their potential allies.

The case studies demonstrated that the most prominent causal pathway leading to alliance formation with a hub involved a group seeking a partner with shared identity characteristics, mainly a common ideology, in order to fulfill organizational needs. Alliance hubs emerged as prominent alliance partners as a result of their ability and willingness to address others’ organizational needs. Hubs met many groups’ definition of an acceptable partner from an identity standpoint because they hailed from the prominent ideology of the time and propagated an enemy narrative that was salient and broad enough to encompass other groups’ narratives. This affinity foundation, combined with the hubs’ reputation, their ability to readily interact with other groups and thereby create personal relationships, was conducive to forging trust or at least a willingness to attempt to do so.

Alliance sustainment hinged upon the fit between groups’ needs, the type of organizational need being addressed through the relationship, and the partnering groups’ ability to develop a
shared identity. An initial fit between a group’s needs and the hub’s capabilities encouraged alliance perpetuation, whether the initial need was discrete or continuous. Continuous needs generally produced longer-lasting alliances than discrete needs, especially when discrete needs did not lead to further cooperation. A combination of ideological and narrative, affinity proved the most effective at producing a shared identity over time that helped to sustain relationships even when specific organizational needs were not being addressed. Because both hubs’ leaders were heavily involved in their groups’ alliances, the loci of trust often involved leaders or key nodes designated by leaders. On rare occasions, trust became institutionalized throughout the partnering organizations.

For their part, the hubs’ alliance behavior was motivated by a combination of the independent variables. Hubs saw themselves as the epicenter of a counter-coalition opposing an ideologically-defined threatening enemy coalition. Furthermore, both hubs adhered to an ideological interpretation that saw their mission as a global venture that was interwoven with others’ struggles and, by extension, required alliances. Threat and ideology played mutually-enforcing roles in hubs’ overall alliance posture, but rarely produced individual alliances.

A combination of internationally-oriented ideologies and expansive perceptions of threat translated into international missions, including operations that created continuous organizational needs for alliances. Hubs needed allies to execute their international missions and fulfill their international ambitions. Many groups had international ideologies, but in practice only pursued a local agenda. Hubs had parochial causes that topped their agenda, but they acted internationally. They also shared organizational characteristics; perhaps most importantly for their alliance behavior, the two groups were solely terrorist organizations living in perpetual exile.

Lastly, the two hubs identity parameters were sufficiently broad to include numerous other prospective partners. They lacked idiosyncratic requirements that eliminated seemingly
compatible partners. Their level of ideological rigidity differed, as al-Qaida was more doctrinaire than the PFLP-SOG, but neither was particularly inflexible about the ideological features of their partners, as long as an overarching shared ideology existed. Given the ideological landscape of the time, both had numerous partners that could meet their ideological threshold. Their narratives’ breadth was commensurate with their perceptions of threat and ideology, and thus could find common ground with many other groups.

This final chapter begins with an overarching analysis of the findings from Section II and Section III in terms of the theoretic frameworks offered in Chapters 1 and 2. The next section compares and contrasts characteristics of the two international alliance hubs, the PFLP-SOG and al-Qaida. The third section proposes a preliminary typology of alliance hubs, as all relationships are not equal or structured the same, based on the findings of the dissertation. The final section examines the policy implications that flow from these findings, acknowledges the limitations of this research, and suggests opportunities for future work.

13.2 Comparative Findings: Drivers of Alliance Formation and Sustainment

Organizational Needs as the Primary Impetus for Alliance Formation

Organizational needs often motivated the search for an ally and led groups specifically to alliance hubs. Organizational needs stimulated the alliance decisions of the Red Army/JRA, the Red Army Faction, the GSPC, and EIJ. In other cases, specifically the exiled faction of EIG and the Pakistani Deobandi groups, alliance formation was not as clearly attributable to a specific organizational need, as cooperation addressing needs pre-dated alliance formation and then gradually developed into an alliance. Eventually they allied with a hub because of their ongoing needs coupled with the hubs’ demonstrated ability to adequately fulfill their needs. Ally seekers did not all immediately identify hubs as ideal partners or alliances as the ideal solution; but once
approached, the hubs were generally well-positioned to fulfill the identified needs and were willing to initiate an alliance.

Partner groups’ behavior was largely consistent with the predictions of organizational theory. Learning and adaptive needs led to alliances during periods of intense change, namely when: 1) groups were relatively young or new to violence; 2) organizations were recovering from a major crisis; and/or 3) the environments were changing swiftly or in unanticipated ways (Miles, Snow, Meyer, and Coleman 549). The PFLP-SOG’s partners were more apt to be motivated by learning needs initially, while al-Qaida’s allies generally sought to fulfill adaptation needs.

Overall, groups tended to forge alliances with hubs at young organizational ages or shortly after the re-setting of their ages. The JRA formed an alliance with the PFLP-SOG at the time of its organizational birth; indeed, it is impossible to separate the JRA’s formation from its relationship with the PFLP-SOG. The RAF sought an alliance with Fatah in the wake of its formation and then the PFLP-SOG shortly after its re-birth. The initial Red Army in Japan, RAF, EIJ, EIG faction in exile, and GSPC all formed alliances with hubs in the wake of crises that re-set their organizational ages. Most also had previous exposure to relationships and, more specifically hubs, that fostered their subsequent receptivity. At a minimum, many groups that subsequently allied with al-Qaida engaged in some cooperation with al-Qaida starting at a young organizational age, even prior to their organizational “births” during the anti-Soviet jihad or in the havens in Sudan and Afghanistan. Thus, many future partners had early contact with al-Qaida as a service provider and exposure to the benefits of cooperation with it. Al-Qaida had connections with both of the Egyptian groups, the Pakistani Deobandi groups, and the GIA prior to alliance formation. The Egyptians’ ties dated back to al-Qaida’s creation, at which time the Egyptian groups’ organizational ages had recently been re-set.
Groups that sought alliances with hubs were often grappling with organizational crises, which caused the re-setting of their organizational age. The Red Army in Japan reached out to the PFLP after the hijacking failure. The JRA agreed to ally with the PFLP-SOG in the wake of the Red Army’s implosion in Japan. The second generation of RAF was born into an organizational crisis with plight of their imprisoned leaders. The EIJ was reeling from its defeat in Egypt and an inability to become self-reliant that led to constant internal turmoil. The EIG faction in exile allied with al-Qaida following the Egypt-based group’s renunciation of violence. Likewise, the overthrow of the GSPC’s founding leader caused major upheaval within the GSPC. The Pakistani Deobandi groups were in a state of perpetual organizational crisis due to their constant fracturing, a condition that grew more acute in the wake of 9/11, when al-Qaida relied on them for protection. Nearly all of the potential partnering organizations were in a weakened state or experienced periods of acute weakness immediately prior to alliance initiation.

However, organizational crises alone did not necessarily lead to alliance seeking or acceptance. The Egypt-based EIG opted to self-reform, by renouncing violence and making ideological revisions in the midst of its organizational crisis. Given the group’s condition in Egypt, al-Qaida could not fulfill its organizational needs. Thus the mismatch of fit between EIG’s need and al-Qaida’s assets helps to explain why an alliance was not the preferred solution in this instance. Similarly, the Weathermen did not elect to seek an alliance in the wake of an early organizational crisis. It opted to engage in self-reform following the townhouse explosion, specifically self-reform that limited violence rather than to improve its ability to execute it. The latter reform strategy would have been more likely to lead to an alliance with the PFLP-SOG. Later self-reform included a further reduction in violence, which, once again, was not a need the PFLP-SOG was positioned to address. The Weathermen’s organizational implosion at the end simply occurred too quickly for
alliances to receive any real consideration. But these cases demonstrate that an organizational crisis alone does not *ipso facto* lead to alliance seeking.

During al-Qaida’s tenure as an alliance hub, the environment changed swiftly and in unanticipated ways. In some instances, i.e. after 9/11, the change was a direct result of al-Qaida’s operations. Other environmental changes during al-Qaida’s time as an alliance hub included the closure of the haven in Sudan, the Afghan Taliban’s takeover in Afghanistan, the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and betrayal by the Pakistani Government, and then the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq. These environmental shifts encouraged alliances in order to adapt. The EIJ’s expulsion from Sudan and inability to secure an independent haven led Zawahiri back to bin Laden and into a full-fledged alliance with al-Qaida. The Afghan Taliban’s takeover created an overall environment conducive to alliances, where al-Qaida could offer haven to prospective partners, such as EIJ and an exiled faction of EIG. Al-Qaida also had increased opportunities for cooperation with the Pakistani Deobandi groups, leading to alliances, due to the Taliban rise to power. 9/11 and the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan marked a significant change in the environment for which most resident groups were unprepared, had to adapt, and which impacted their alliance decisions. Once again, such changes in the environment were not necessarily sufficient. Notably, LT experienced the exogenous shocks of 9/11, though to a lesser degree than its Deobandi counterparts. After a brief period of cooperation with al-Qaida, it opted to engage in self-reform and maintain relations with Islamabad, rather than ally with al-Qaida. Thus environmental changes interacted with organizational features to determine alliance behavior.
<table>
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<td>Training</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
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<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 13.1

Both discrete and continuous organizational needs stimulated alliances. Discrete needs sometimes led to ongoing acts of cooperation that subsequently produced an alliance. This result occurred in some of al-Qaida's alliances in particular because groups had access to al-Qaida's assistance prior to alliance formation through the Services Bureau, haven in Sudan, and even training facilities in Afghanistan. Training and materiel or financial assistance were the main discrete needs that caused groups to cooperate with al-Qaida, though these sometimes developed into continuous needs over time. The primary continuous need that motivated an alliance search or precipitated an alliance was safe haven. This was also a continuous need for the hubs, which they fulfilled through relations with governments. The hubs operated in exile and developed sanctuaries to deal with that condition that they often shared with their partners. Fellow groups in exile were among the hubs’ closest allies.

In addition to the type of organizational need, i.e. discrete or continuous, the organizational needs that stimulated partnering groups to seek an alliance with a hub fell into four broad categories. Partner groups sought to acquire expertise, security, credibility and/or materiel through an alliance with a hub. Expertise refers to the acquisition of skills or knowledge from an ally, usually in the form of training. Security consists of protection, often through the provision of safe haven. Credibility referred to the cachet acquired through association with an alliance hub’s cause or reputation. Lastly, materiel refers to money, weapons, forged documents, and other tangible goods.
needed for a partnering group to execute its mission. These types of needs could be either continuous or discrete; they did not, by definition, fall into one category or another.

While organizational needs stimulated al-Qaida’s cooperation and subsequent alliances with Pakistani Deobandi groups and the overseas faction of EIG, these partnerships were not as clearly forged due to specific organizational needs as al-Qaida’s alliances with EIJ and the GSPC or the PFLP-SOG’s alliances with the RAF and JRA. These alliances grew out of years of interaction and cooperation. For the Pakistani Deobandi groups, the ties with al-Qaida formed during the anti-Soviet jihad and were reinforced under the Afghan Taliban’s rule in the late 1990s. The Pakistani Deobandi groups trained in al-Qaida’s facilities in Afghanistan, where their interactions gradually developed into security cooperation and mutual expectations of coordination. While these groups grew out of the anti-Soviet jihad, the Pakistani groups’ organizational ages were constantly re-set by their splintering and re-unifications. In the midst of this constant organizational turmoil, the various Pakistani Deobandi factions cooperated with al-Qaida, but they did not rely on al-Qaida to the same degree as other groups. In particular, they did not need al-Qaida to secure a safe haven in Afghanistan, as most had their own relationships with the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani state. Likewise, while they trained in al-Qaida camps, they also had other training resources. Thus largely discrete organizational needs continuously connected them and underpinned their alliances, but no single, clear motivating need caused these alliances to form.

Similarly, al-Qaida’s connections with EIG’s faction-in-exile were forged in Peshawar and then re-enforced in Sudan and Afghanistan. This relationship ebbed and flowed over time, especially because of bin Laden’s preference for EIJ and the resistance to an alliance from the Egypt-based leaders. While in Sudan, the exiled faction’s cooperation appeared to be on behalf of the larger organization. Once the shift to Afghanistan occurred, the overseas faction began to act more autonomously, including in its alliance decisions. At that time, it solidified its own alliance with al-
Qaida, while the Egypt-based group rejected that relationship. The exiled faction had greater continuous organizational needs at that point, as it lost connections to Egypt, which stimulated its independent alliance with al-Qaida at that time.

The GIA was an anomaly. It lacked a clear organizational need that precipitated its relationship with al-Qaida, and this theory is unable to explain the formation of their alliance. Like EIG and EIJ, GIA members forged ties with al-Qaida’s future leaders during the anti-Soviet jihad. A subset of GIA members were thus exposed to cooperation with al-Qaida and the Arab Afghan-dominated Sunni jihadist milieu at an early point in the organization’s life. Then, the GIA had a role on al-Qaida’s shura council in Sudan, like the Egyptian groups. Like most groups, the GIA received money from bin Laden and some al-Qaida advisors during the early 1990s, but this cooperation did not stem from the GIA’s assessment of its needs. More important than what the GIA was receiving from al-Qaida, al-Qaida saw tremendous potential in the GIA’s campaign against Algiers. It appeared to be the most promising of the revolutionary jihads. Thus GIA did not experience an organizational crisis or environmental change that precipitated an organizational need that caused an alliance with al-Qaida. While the formation of an alliance is not fully explained by this theoretical framework, the absence of reciprocal organizational needs does partially clarify the brevity and cessation of the alliance.
Table 13.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Instigating Organization Need</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Organizational Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EIJ</td>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Materiel</td>
<td>&gt;1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIJ</td>
<td>Haven</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>&gt;1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIG Exile</td>
<td>Haven</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>&gt;1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIG Exile</td>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
<td>Materiel</td>
<td>&gt;1 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the GIA</td>
<td>Unclear: possibly financial resources</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
<td>Materiel</td>
<td>&gt;2 Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the GSPC</td>
<td>Improved resonance</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the GSPC</td>
<td>Financial resources</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
<td>Materiel</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the GSPC</td>
<td>Operational guidance</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani Deobandi</td>
<td>Unclear: possibly training</td>
<td>Discrete</td>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>&gt;2 Years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LT and the Weathermen did not experience organizational needs that could not be addressed through self-reform or existing relationships. This clearly distinguished them from most groups that sought partnerships with hubs. They did not undertake searches for alliances, though both were aware of the hubs. Neither saw such an alliance as necessary or prudent, given the other resources available to them, though they shared both an ideology and enemies with their respective alliance hubs.

Both of the non-allying organizations employed different operational tactics than their respective hubs. The non-allies made conscious decisions not to use the type of operations that the hubs were highly skilled at conducting. The Weathermen refused to conduct attacks that endangered people, which was in stark contrast to the PFLP-SOG’s hostage-taking operations. Similarly, unlike al-Qaida, LT was unwilling to use suicide operations, preferring its signature fedayeen-style attacks. These tactical differences alone were not sufficient to prevent an alliance, as EIG also elected not to conduct suicide operations, and its exiled faction was still willing to ally with al-Qaida. But these operational differences probably contributed to the non-allying groups’ belief that they lacked needs to be addressed through alliances with hubs.
From an organizational standpoint, the Weathermen shared numerous organizational characteristics with the groups that allied with the PFLP-SOG. Like JRA and the RAF, the Weathermen was a small, nationalist group solely dedicated to violence to achieve change. It was a fellow leftist organization that viewed the revolution as a worldwide struggle and saw its role as fundamental, as it operated in the “belly of the beast.” Thus it not only shared an ideology, its primary enemy was an important, threatening adversary for the PFLP-SOG as well as the RAF and JRA. But the Weathermen’s lack of need for expertise, security, credibility or materiel, coupled with its organizational commitment to maintaining an American identity free of foreign influence, prevented an alliance search. Towards the end of its lifespan, when its age had been re-set, the Weathermen might have considered undertaking a search to find an ally to increase its credibility by promoting a new cause, such as the Palestinian struggle, but the group fell apart shortly thereafter without seriously considering seeking an ally.

Similarly, LT shared an ideology with al-Qaeda and numerous common enemies. But unlike the Weathermen and the PFLP-SOG, LT’s organizational structure differed from al-Qaeda and most of al-Qaeda’s partners. LT was not solely dedicated to violence and terrorism as a means to achieve change. Unlike al-Qaeda, LT viewed dawa as an equally important mission as jihad, and thus it has a more multi-faceted organizational structure. Its social service provision activities put it at odds with al-Qaeda, which eschewed such activities. While the lack of alliance cannot be fully attributed to this difference, it contributed to LT’s sense that it did not require al-Qaeda as a partner. More importantly, LT had the same resource base as al-Qaeda, namely expertise, security, materiel, and credibility; therefore, its organizational needs could not be readily fulfilled by al-Qaeda. It had ample self-reform capability and a relationship with the Pakistani state to address any gaps.

The lack of alliance between LT and al-Qaeda points to a potential factor embedded in the organizational theory framework that merits further investigation: organizational structure. With
the exception of LT, all of the groups examined in this dissertation operated solely as terrorist
groups. They did not have political, social service or other wings dedicated to non-violent activities.
This was not wholly by design. When the PFLP was initially selected as an alliance hub, the PFLP-
SOG’s central as the alliance hub was not fully recognized. Nonetheless, groups that share similar
organizational structures may be more apt to ally due to shared organizational needs. Work on
military innovation suggests that larger, more complex groups are more resistant to change, thus
they may also be resistant to alliance and possess greater self-reform. Thus future work should
consider investigating what role organizational structure plays.

Lastly, leaders played the influential role in alliance formation and sustainment posited by
organizational theory, in ways that are admittedly difficult to predict. Leaders determined what
strategies would be considered to address organizational weaknesses and needs, thus defining
organizational problem-solving routines. They shaped organizational culture, and through culture,
receptivity to alliances. In the case of the GIA, the constant organizational age resetting that
occurred due to leadership losses contributed to its difficulties entering a stable alliance with al-
Qaida. Additionally, when two highly erratic and destructive leaders rose to the helm, all of the
group’s alliances collapsed. A lack of reciprocal organizational needs created a fragile alliance, and
leader behavior contributed to definite break. While EIJ faced fundamental organizational
deficiencies and lacked an ability to continue operating independently, Zawahiri still had to impose
the alliance on his group. The GSPC had to experience a leadership change for an alliance with al-
Qaida to occur, as Hattab was not willing to engage in such as a relationship and thus excluded it
from the GSPC’s organizational frames. The identification of organizational needs and many of the
decisions about how to address them rested in the hands of terrorist group leaders. More work is
warranted to examine the full scope of the leadership role.

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In sum, organizational needs instigated most partnerships with alliance hubs in one of two ways. In some cases, an organizational need prompted an alliance search that led to a hub. In other cases, a hubs’ willingness to provide assistance gradually led to an alliance as the partnering group grew to rely on the hub to fulfill organizational needs. Alliances often occurred early in the partnering groups’ lifespan, or at a minimum, acts of cooperation and interaction at the young age helped to facilitate subsequent alliance formation as the relationships was embedded in organizational frames. In the absence of the organizational needs that the hubs were well positioned to fulfill, alliances failed to form, even when ideological solidarity and common threats existed. Moreover, alliances did not form without organizational needs, even when acts of cooperation occurred, as was the case with LT and al-Qaeda. However, in one case, an alliance formed without a clear precipitating organizational need. Thus while organizational needs acted as the dominant pathway for alliance formation, they were not the sole pathway to alliances.

*The Role of Organizational Needs in Alliance Sustainment*

In addition to stimulating alliances, ongoing organizational needs perpetuated alliances, especially once the relationship became embedded in the partnering groups’ frames and routines. When needs arose, groups would turn to hubs for assistance or vice versa. In particular, the types of organizational needs being addressed through the alliance and the level of organizational need fit between the partners served as important determinants of alliance sustainment. Continuous organizational needs, particularly safe haven or operational guidance that required ongoing consultation, proved to be most conducive to alliance perpetuation. Discrete needs alone did not as readily sustain alliances, though a successful cooperation experience in which a hub fulfilled a discrete need sometimes helped facilitate a cycle whereby partners then sought hubs to fulfill subsequent needs and an alliance eventually formed through those interactions.
as discrete sometimes became continuous, such as money or weapons, if groups did not develop ways to address the overarching problems causing these shortfalls.

Over time, the EIG faction outside of Egypt became a parallel organization to its parent group in Egypt. For alliance purposes, EIG is more accurately viewed as two groups. The EIG’s overseas faction faced different organizational needs than its Egypt-based counterparts because of its condition in exile. Like EIJ, it did not rely on al-Qaeda for training as many other groups did. But its need for safe haven grew after it was expelled from Sudan and as it grew more detached from its parent organization. Its alliance entered a new phase with al-Qaeda following the Egypt-based EIG’s ceasefire and renunciations. By this time, it had engaged in extensive cooperation with al-Qaeda. From an alliance standpoint, the main distinction between the Egypt-based EIG and the exiled faction was their organizational needs, which stemmed from their varying environmental conditions and, by extension, adaptation needs.

Notably, when a hub fully addressed its partner’s needs, the alliance risked being downgraded. For example, the JRA reduced its alliance with the PFLP-SOG, once the PFLP-SOG fulfilled its continuous needs over time. The JRA reduced its reliance on the PFLP-SOG when it successfully adopted the operational system imparted by the PFLP-SOG. Also, the JRA was able to secure its own haven in exile. A total alliance break did not occur, but cooperation and consultation declined markedly.

The type of organizational need being addressed through the alliance was not the sole determinant of alliance longevity. The type of organizational need interacted with alliance fit. The fit between partnering groups’ needs—either continuous or discrete—and the hubs’ ability to fulfill those needs helped to determine alliance sustainment. Both hubs readily provided training, especially in certain types of tactics, haven, funds, weapons, logistical assistance, and a cause with resonance. When groups approached hubs with those types of needs, the hubs were well positioned
to assist. After a successful experience, groups were more apt to return with subsequent needs, and alliances tended to sustain beyond formation and gradually integrate into the partners’ problem-solving frames.

A prime example of fit failure occurred when the RAF sought training from Fatah in 1970, but found that Fatah’s training was ill-suited and inadequate for RAF’s goals. The incompatibility of fit was exacerbated by cultural clashes, which stunted the alliance’s prospects. In an example of alliance misfit later in the relationship, the PFLP-SOG’s alliance with the RAF faltered after the PFLP-SOG’s operational guidance—a continuous organizational need for the RAF—proved catastrophic and contributed to the death of the RAF’s imprisoned leaders. Given that their freedom was the RAF’s main mission, the PFLP-SOG’s inability to fulfill this need stunted the alliance, a condition that was further exacerbated by Haddad’s death.

On the other hand, al-Qaida was able to maintain many of its alliances even after it lost the assets that made it an attractive partner initially. Bin Laden’s fortune, particularly in the Sudan years, and its training and haven provision, especially in Afghanistan, fulfilled needs for its partners that underpinned its early alliances. But even after its ability to provide those assets was circumscribed, al-Qaida was able to maintain its alliances. This was, in part, because over the years of cooperation, the alliances transcended a narrow exchange mentality and became embedded in the partnering groups’ organizational frames and cultures, and as will be discussed next, forged shared identities. As a result, al-Qaida was also able rely on its partners and acquire new allies to fulfill its organizational needs, which proved critical to its long-term survival and viability after 9/11.

*The Role of Identity Affinity in Alliance Formation and Sustainment*

As hypothesized, identity affinity set the parameters of possible and desirable alliance partners for both hubs and prospective partners. Affinity supported alliance formation when the
relationship was instigated for other reasons, usually organizational needs. Groups were inclined to ally with partners with similar identity features, but did not seek partners solely or even primarily to enact or affirm their identity. Instead, affinity provided an initial basis to attempt alliance formation. While affinity minimized the potential identity dissonance experienced by the partnering groups, it did not eliminate internal divisions within the partnering groups about the wisdom of the alliance.

Ideology served as the primary and strongest basis for identity affinity when only one shared identity feature existed. Narrative affinity acted as the principal basis for affinity to support alliance formation in a few instances, but proved to be a weak foundation for affinity without ideology to reinforce it. Together, a shared ideology and narrative offered a more robust basis for affinity. Ethnic affinity did not operate in isolation to produce affinity in any of the cases examined and was not considerably stronger when combined only with narrative affinity. However, in conjunction with ideology and enemy narratives, ethnicity helped bolster affinity in the al-Qaida cases. Ethnicity affinity did not operate in any of the PFLP-SOG cases examined.

Ideological affinity was readily forged with hubs in most of the cases examined. All of groups hailed from the dominant ideology of the day, so they numerous partner options met the criteria for ideology affinity. None of the groups demonstrated a particularly idiosyncratic interpretation of what constituted ideological affinity, even when their own ideological platform possessed such characteristics. For example, while the RAF harped on seemingly obscure ideological differences to criticize fellow West German leftist militants, it did not apply that same intensity to evaluating its Palestinian partners’ ideological platforms. Nor did a group's rigidity in its own ideological views necessarily preclude forging ideology affinity. The Red Army and JRA hailed from an ideological environment in Japan that was highly intellectualized and rigorous in its application of ideology, but neither group demonstrated rigidity when evaluating ideological
affinity with prospective partners. In other words, hubs readily met the threshold for ideological affinity for prospective partners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>Ideological Affinity</th>
<th>Narrative Affinity</th>
<th>Ethnic Affinity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red Army</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRA</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.3

A sense of ideological affinity extended to the groups that did not ally with the hubs. The non-allies, the Weathermen and LT, both professed a sense of ideological affinity with the hubs and/or their causes. While the Palestinian cause did not feature prominently in the Weathermen’s agenda, it fit within the group’s ideological framework and the group championed Palestinian militant groups. Likewise, LT shared an ideological orientation, an ideological founder, and ideological sympathies with al-Qaida. The GSPC invoked a sense of ideological affinity, even solidarity, with al-Qaida years prior to alliance formation. Moreover, alliances between the partnering groups—i.e. dyads not involving hubs—rarely formed, though in many instances ideological affinity seemingly existed. Thus ideological affinity did not produce alliances, but it strongly shaped the alliance landscape in terms of which groups allied.

Graphic 13.2 Relative ingredients of Identity Affinity
When layered on top of ideological affinity, narrative affinity had the potential to strongly reinforce connections or create points of dissonance between alliance partners. Such dissonance was more common among al-Qaida’s partners than was the case with the PFLP-SOG, largely because al-Qaida sought to supplant its partners’ narratives or at least impart a broader narrative that adopted al-Qaida’s precepts. The PFLP-SOG sometimes absorbed its partners, which led to an abandonment of the partners’ founding cause and adoption of the PFLP-SOG’s narrative. But it did not directly challenge its partners’ narratives the way that al-Qaida did, and the PFLP-SOG was generally more accepting of an array of narratives. Overall, both hubs had expansive narratives that included numerous enemies, but also had clear priorities within those narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Affinity Characteristics at Alliance Formation</th>
<th>Al-Qaida</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partner</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideological Affinity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIJ</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIG-Exile</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIA</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSPC</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani Deobandi</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.4

Affinity offered a basis upon which to attempt alliance formation. In other words, shared identity characteristics provided a basis for a sense of affinity between the potential partners that was conducive to alliance formation. In some cases, after alliance formation, the ties between the partnering organizations largely continued to be based on a sense of affinity. In other cases, over time, the partnering groups adjusted their respective identities to accommodate one another and the alliance, such that they created a shared identity and norms. A shared identity provided a strong basis for alliance perpetuation, even in the face of diminished organizational need. A shared identity often proved difficult to forge as terrorist groups are protective of their in-group identity.
The Role of Threat in Alliance Formation & Sustainment

The idea that terrorist groups band together primarily to combat a shared threat was insufficient to explain alliance decisions, even though common enemies and alliances are highly correlated (Asal, Park, and Rethmeyer 33). Indeed, all of the dyads examined in this dissertation shared some common enemies. All the groups that allied shared enemies, but only some dyads that shared enemies formed alliances.

In order to ground the processes underlying the idea that common enemies cause alliances in a well-established theoretical framework, this dissertation proposed a modified version of balance of threat theory. Intuitively, it makes sense. Terrorist groups seemingly have a motive to balance. They operate at a power disadvantage compared to their enemies and sometimes share adversaries with other groups. Groups have invoked balancing logic to explain their alliance decisions. But threat did not operate as the primary causal impetus leading to alliances. Balancing dynamics alone were insufficient to produce alliances and a poor predictor of alliance behavior. A sense of shared threat bolstered alliance initiation that was instigated by other factors, primarily organizational needs.

While balance of threat dynamics had limited power to explain individual alliance formation, the overall pattern of alliances was generally consistent with this framework. All the organizations experienced a need to balance against their more powerful enemies, but groups suffering from significant losses of power more readily sought partnerships with alliance hubs or were receptive to hubs’ overtures. Weakened groups’ propensity to ally with hubs offers general support for the idea that balancing needs contribute to terrorist group alliance behavior.

The security-autonomy tradeoff hampered the formation of powerful terrorist balancing coalitions. Stronger groups exhibited reluctance to relinquish their autonomy or make the accommodations sought by alliance hubs. Some cooperation occurred among more powerful
groups and alliance hubs. The PFLP-SOG trained the Tupamaros and Sandinistas, but these relationships were discrete and short-lived. Likewise, al-Qaida’s cooperation with Hezbollah, LT, the GIA, LIFG, and Egypt-based EIG—the most powerful and desirable prospective partners from a balancing standpoint—was limited. In the latter two cases, the alliance only occurred after the EIG and LIFG were weakened, yet the decision to ally remained internally divisive and only included part of the group. Likewise, the GIA’s unwillingness to heed counsel from al-Qaida stemmed in part from its powerful position vis-à-vis the Algerian state.

The threat environment faced by the two hubs differed significantly. The PFLP-SOG did not share a direct threat from Israel with any non-competitive, politically relevant partners. Threat did not clearly converge during the PFLP-SOG’s tenure. Instead, groups conceived of threat more broadly as “imperialist powers,” which diluted its impact. Unlike al-Qaida, the PFLP-SOG did not expend capital trying to convince prospective partners of its threat interpretation. During the first three phases of al-Qaida’s time as an alliance hub, no one entity was viewed as the most threatening by most groups. Al-Qaida sought to convince others that the U.S. was such a threat, with little success. This indicates that a narrow, common threat was not necessary for an alliance hub to form, develop, and operate nor was it a prerequisite for alliances to form.

Threat had the most potential to produce alliances in the post-9/11 period examined in Section III, but it did not act as the primary driver of alliances even under those conditions. The U.S. response to 9/11 precipitated a convergence of threat against terrorist organizations to a degree previously unseen. Al-Qaida essentially created a situation whereby the United States posed the threat that al-Qaida long claimed that it did. Al-Qaida subsequently formed alliances with groups that had previously been reticent, namely the GSPC and Jund al-Sham. At first glance, this appears to be the result of an increased common threat. But threat alone was not sufficient because alliances did not form following threat convergence. Rather ideological commonalities shaped perceptions of
threat and the degree to which threat motivated these alliances. For example, al-Qaïda did not branch out to ally with non-Sunni groups that also faced increased threat from the United States and its GWOT.

The Role of Ideological Solidarity in Alliance Formation and Sustainment

As argued at the outset of this dissertation, ideological solidarity alone failed to provide a compelling causal explanation for terrorist group alliance behavior. In only one instance, the GIA and al-Qaïda, did an alliance formed primarily out of a sense of solidarity. Otherwise, groups were not driven to form alliances by a need to connect with their ideological brethren. Ideological solidarity was insufficient to explain both the timing and the duration of the alliances, as ideological similarities did not increase prior to alliance formation or decrease markedly prior to alliance cessation. Ideological compatibility existed prior to alliance formation in all cases and was present even when alliances failed to form.

Outcomes varied even when degrees of ideological solidarity were comparable. The JRA, RAF, and Weathermen possessed equal levels of ideological compatibility with the PFLP-SOG. All adhered to a leftist ideology that was primarily focused on a national level struggle, while ascribing to the notion that they were part of a broader global revolution against imperialism underway. They all viewed the Palestinian struggle as an important cause within that fight. Yet the Weathermen never sought an alliance with the PFLP-SOG, and the RAF opted to approach Fatah prior to the PFLP-SOG on two separate occasions. The Red Army's decision to ally specifically with the PFLP was most clearly influenced by ideology, though it had the least attachment to the Palestinian struggle. And ideological considerations did not prompt the JRA’s search for an ally.

Similarly, no discernible differences existed in the level of ideological compatibility between al-Qaïda and the Egyptian or Algerian groups. All were Salafist jihadist organizations pursing a revolutionary jihad agenda of overthrowing an “apostate” regime. Most notably, LT’s Salafist
orientation created significant ideological commonalities with al-Qaida; however, the Pakistani Deobandi groups opted to ally with al-Qaida, while LT did not. These alliance results were therefore the inverse of what ideological solidarity theory predicts. Overall, in cases involving alliance hubs, these findings indicate that ideological solidarity does not fulfill the role in alliance behavior often attributed to it.

Alliance hubs overwhelmingly allied with groups with a broadly shared ideological disposition, and the groups that sought alliance hubs as partners tended to hail from the same ideology. This finding crossed ideological type, as it applied to both alliance hubs. This finding is also consistent with quantitative findings that alliances tend to occur between groups with a shared ideology, regardless of ideological orientation (Asal, Park and Rethmeyer 32). However, other groups did not wholly share hubs’ specific interpretations of those ideologies in a way supports the idea that solidarity motivated their relationships. The PFLP-SOG’s ideology emphasized opposition to Israel and the imperialist world order that supported it. While many organizations revered the Palestinian cause, opposition to Israel was not integral to non-Palestinian leftist or ethno-nationalist groups’ ideological platforms operating during this period. To an even greater extent, al-Qaida faced resistance to its U.S.-first global jihadist view among its brethren, though many agreed with the principles that led al-Qaida to conclude that the U.S. was a key enemy. Thus neither the PFLP-SOG nor al-Qaida grew into an alliance hub because of a specific interpretation of their ideologies that somehow acted as a magnet to attract other groups. An overall sense of solidarity existed and supported alliances within their ideological framework, but this sentiment extended to groups that opted not to seek an alliance with the hubs.

Both alliance hubs used their ideologies to propagate the idea that alliances were prescribed by their respective ideologies. The hubs’ interpretation of their respective ideologies emphasized an international diagnosis of the problem, which, they argued, necessitated alliances as
part of the solution. While a sense of shared struggle existed among many groups within these ideologies, this rarely produced alliances. Instead, the hubs used alliances to acquire prominent positions within their ideologies, which then helped reinforce their alliance position.

13.3 Alliance Hubs

This dissertation examined the alliance behavior of two international alliance hubs, organizations that shaped how terrorist groups engage in alliances and that broke new ground in terms of their ability to cultivate these often-difficult relationships. The two alliance hubs were selected in part because of the variation they demonstrated in time, ideology, international conditions, and organizational type. The next step will be to investigate other groups that shared the qualities of the two alliance hubs, groups that did not become alliance hubs or whose attempt to become alliance hubs was unsuccessful. The findings of similarities and differences between al-Qaeda and the PFLP-SOG are preliminary and provide a useful starting point for future research.

Despite the involvement of multiple state sponsors in both cases, the alliance hubs did not rely on a higher authority or third-party arbiter to manage their alliances. Like states, they had to negotiate relationships in the anarchic international system. Unlike states, they did not have access to mitigation strategies, making their alliance achievements all the more remarkable.

They shared several characteristics from an alliance perspective: 1) they offered coveted forms of assistance; 2) they propagated ideologies that were salient in their respective eras; 3) they defined their enemies broadly enough that they shared common adversaries with many groups; 4) they demonstrated ample capability through sophisticated, high-profile attacks designed to garner publicity and were thus a “known quantity” to other groups; 5) they broadcasted their desire and willingness to entertain prospective allies; and 6) they were accessible to other groups during much
of their lifespan, owing to their close relationships with state sponsors that provided permissive forms of sanctuary.

When selected, the two alliance hubs appeared to have qualitatively different organizational structures. The PFLP’s organizational structure included political functions, which were supposed to be dominant, in addition to its military and terrorist wings. Ultimately though, the PFLP-SOG—the PFLP’s wing dedicated to international terrorism—was the unit of interest for alliance purposes. Likewise, al-Qaida was solely a jihadist organization. Thus both hubs were groups dedicated exclusively to terrorism. They did not participate in political processes nor have political parties, social service wings or the like. Violence was the sole tactic to achieve change. They primarily allied with groups that were similarly singularly focused on attacks.

Not only were the hubs dedicated to terrorism as the solution to their grievances, the PFLP-SOG and al-Qaida perpetrated violence all over the world. Their organizational and ideological goals required international reach and action. Both sought to portray themselves as international players through their attacks. For the PFLP-SOG, the decision to continue to conduct international operations acted as an important driver of its alliance behavior. It needed allies tactically to execute its attacks as well as to convey its message. Al-Qaida’s use of international attacks came later in its lifespan. Allies helped execute some attacks, but this was not as central for al-Qaida. It focused on allies for its message. In both cases, international operations served as advertisements that bolstered their appeal as a partner.

The two alliance hubs lived in exile throughout their lifespan. Exile was a major reason for their need for state sponsors. It also perpetuated their organizational needs for allies. Both alliance hubs were able to behave as quasi-state sponsors because of the benefits of permissive state sponsors. The PFLP-SOG operated with extensive freedoms in South Yemen, and to a lesser extent in Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, privileges it extended to its allies. Al-Qaida benefitted from sponsors
in Sudan and Afghanistan that allowed al-Qaida to use their territory to build alliances through the provision of safe haven, training, money, and other forms of assistance during the period from 1992-2001. They were able to provide sanctuary, a compelling continuous asset, to prospective partners. Al-Qaida’s hub status did not rely on sponsors though, as it maintained this role for a decade after losing its state sponsor.

In addition to these tangible assets, allying with these hubs offered status. During the PFLP-SOG’s era, allying with a Palestinian group had tremendous cachet. This was heightened further by the PFLP-SOG’s international operations and willingness to use allies in operations or conduct attacks that included allies’ grievances among the demands. The benefits of allying with al-Qaida increased post-9/11 in particular, as association with its name portrayed a level of threat and capability.

Though they had vastly different styles, the leaders of both al-Qaida and the PFLP-SOG were central to their respective alliance behavior. Bin Laden’s profile was so public that he sometimes drew criticism for being enamored with his own press, while Haddad remained in the shadows and eschewed any public profile. Haddad’s distaste for ideological considerations was in clear contrast to bin Laden’s role as the group’s most visible ideologue. Haddad was an operator par excellence, and though bin Laden was heavily involved in operational planning, he was not al-Qaida’s foremost operational mind. Despite these differences, some similarities existed in their styles. Both had a tendency to micro-manage and be involved in all aspects of the group, including alliance decisions. They engendered deep loyalty from their followers, though this is certainly not unique to these two terrorist leaders. Both came from elite backgrounds with bin Laden coming from a wealthy business family, while Haddad was a physician. They lived in exile most of their adult life, which shaped their worldview and fueled their grievances.
In terms of their approaches to alliance, the two leaders shared a number of attributes. Both saw alliances as prescribed by their ideologies and as a desirable way to address the gap between their ambitions and their respective organizations’ capabilities. These founding and long-standing leaders of their organizations welcomed alliances at a young organizational age, which embedded alliances into their organizational frames and routines as a way to solve problems. Alliances became an accepted part of the organizations’ culture, which made them more likely to be employed even though sometimes opposition existed to specific alliances or decisions.

The two groups demonstrated one notable difference in their posture towards alliances. Al-Qaida constantly and actively sought alliance partners from the outset. In contrast, the PFLP-SOG was in receiving mode and did not as actively seek partners. This probably reflected al-Qaida’s desire to convert partners to its ideology, while the PFLP-SOG’s agenda was primarily operational.

The alliances hubs shared a number of identity attributes and had similar approaches to identity affinity, particularly ideological affinity. Both hailed from ideologies that were highly salient during that period; thus many groups “qualified” as alliance partners from their identity perspective and conversely, many groups viewed them as ideologically acceptable partners. Neither adopted a rigid or narrow view of ideological affinity, though parameters existed: the PFLP-SOG viewed leftist and ethno-nationalist groups as ideologically compatible, while al-Qaida defined fellow Sunni jihadist groups as having sufficient ideological affinity. While aspects of the groups’ ideologies were idiosyncratic, this did not impact their ability to establish ideological affinity with numerous organizations.

The two groups’ ideological foundations differed from each other. The PFLP and PFLP-SOG’s leftist, ethno-nationalist vision shared little in common with al-Qaida’s Salafist jihadist orientation. Overall, al-Qaida was more ideologically nuanced and committed to its orthodoxy than the PFLP-SOG. However, their common perception that they were engaged in struggle with an international
dimension informed and reinforced their organizational tendencies towards alliances. Both saw the international system as underpinning the specific grievances that were most important to them. Their ideologies offered an international diagnosis of the problem as well as a solution that was international in scope. This provided an ideological foundation for alliances.

The impact of ideological affinity on both groups’ alliance behavior was apparent. The PFLP-SOG and al-Qaeda overwhelmingly allied with groups that shared their ideological affinity features. Attempted alliances or transactional relationships with groups that did not meet an ideological affinity threshold occurred, but they did not sustain over time. Many of their allies moved closer towards the hubs’ ideological interpretation, borrowing tenets and adopting them as their own. The hubs brought their partners’ ideological grievances under their broader umbrella as well, but mainly, the ideological transference occurred from hub to partner.

Their enemy and victim narratives were closely related to and reinforced their ideologies. Where there was a lack of ideological affinity, narrative affinity was adequate for some initial cooperation to occur, but alone it was rarely sufficient to provide an identity basis to sustain relationships. It was a powerful source of connection when combined with ideological affinity. As was the case with ideology, those partners most integrated with alliance hubs tended to adopt some of the hubs’ narrative and, to a lesser extent, vice versa.

The PFLP-SOG and al-Qaeda had international membership, yet they both had strong Arab cores and had a corresponding Arab ethnic identity. The impact of this identity on alliances varied. Al-Qaeda had far more fellow Arab allies than the PFLP-SOG. However, more Arab allies were available during al-Qaeda’s tenure as a hub than during the PFLP-SOG’s lifespan. Although, it is doubtful whether there is something inherent to the Arab ethnic identity that is somehow conducive to becoming an alliance hub.
The threat imbalance that the groups’ faced played a secondary role in the hubs’ search for allies. Both regularly cited the much stronger enemy alliance they faced necessitated unity. The same enemy alliance was actually largely constant for both hubs, though their rationale and characterization differed. The enemy alliance included the U.S., Israel, West Europe, and Arab Governments perceived to be supporting them. Terrorist groups always face a power differential with their enemies; however, both hubs viewed themselves as the center of a counter-balancing coalition against a powerful enemy alliance.

The alliance hubs’ ability to create and foster trust was interwoven with their provision of assets that required interaction, such as training and safe haven. They were thus more readily able to build trust with other groups and vet them for trustworthiness. Both eschewed alliances with groups that had desirable characteristics and identity affinity, namely the Red Brigades and LT, because of trust concerns. Being an alliance hub engaged in numerous alliances did not diminish the importance of this criterion. Both bin Laden and Haddad were involved in making trust determinations and sought to build personal relationships with leaders of allied groups. Both bin Laden and Haddad acted as a major locus of trust in many of their alliances because they were hands-on leaders. Yet al-Qaida’s alliances survived following bin Laden’s death, while Haddad’s did not, largely because other loci of trust were forged in the years that bin Laden was in hiding, whereas Haddad maintained a centralized role in trust.

13.4 Typology of Alliance Arrangements

When alliances formed, they exhibited significant variation in the type of arrangements that governed the partnering groups’ relations. Alliances varied in the level and type of cooperation as well as in the duration and frequency of collaboration. Some partnerships were critical to one or both of the allying groups, while others were more readily replaceable.
Few scholarly works have proposed ways to categorize the different types of terrorist group relationships. In his book on terrorist group coalitions, Ely Karmon proposes a hierarchy of relationships based on the type of cooperation groups engage in: ideological, logistical, and operational (49). Ideological cooperation, he assesses, is the lowest level of cooperation and consists mainly of expressions of solidarity and verbal commitments (50). The next level is logistical cooperation, which Karmon described as the most common type of cooperation. Examples include the provision of propaganda, documents, manuals, money, weapons, and other materiel. The highest form of cooperation is operational collaboration, because, Karmon argued, it entails the greatest risk to the participating organizations. It includes activities such as training, securing safe houses or escape routes, and jointly conducting or coordinating attacks (49).

Karmon’s hierarchy of cooperation posits the level of risk incurred by the partnering organization and then infers the significance of the relationship based on that risk. However, several important considerations are not adequately accounted for in his schema. First and foremost, it does not account for the degree of inter-dependence between partnering groups. For some organizations, ideological cooperation with a credible outside organization is essential to their reputation and by extension, their viability. Likewise, for some groups, the logistical assistance they receive from their allies may be critical to their ability to operate. It may be the primary means through which a group acquires resources that would not otherwise be available to them. Second, Karmon’s typology assumes the relative risk based on the type of cooperation without factoring in the circumstances of the parties involved. Aligning ideologically with another organization can be riskier than Karmon acknowledges, because groups can be held responsible by important constituencies for the actions of their ideological brethren. Because ideological cooperation is one of the most visible forms of cooperation, it entails reputational and audience costs. While joint operations are indeed a highly risky form of collaboration, other types of operational cooperation
may or may not involve substantial risk, depending on a group’s situation. Providing a safe house or basic training to a partner is not a considerable commitment for groups with ample safe havens, while it is a substantial burden for groups under intense pressure with no control over territory.

The third shortfall of Karmon’s typology is that it does not account for the frequency of cooperation. Coalitions that consistently engage in logistical cooperation may arguably be engaged in a closer relationship than allies that cooperate operationally only a handful of times.

Based on the relationships examined in this dissertation, a typology focused on the quality of the relationship and the level of inter-dependence between partners may offer greater utility. Instead of imposing a hierarchy of cooperation, this typology is based on four dynamics related to the relative importance of the relationship to the partnering groups: 1) how are resources, including money, materiel, weapons, skills, and knowledge, treated between partners; 2) the partners’ time horizon for the relationship and how it relates to the frequency and type of cooperation; 3) the partnering organizations’ degree of autonomy, equality, and independence, particularly in terms of how they view leadership, objectives, and organizational dynamics; and 4) the breadth and parameters of cooperation. Four types of alliances exist based on these criteria: pooled, integrated, subordinate, and reciprocal, but these are not ordered categories.

In a pooled relationship, resources are commonly held and freely shared with minimal sense of ownership by either organization. The relationship has an indefinite time horizon and, therefore, cooperation occurs frequently with an underlying belief by both parties that it will continue in perpetuity. The boundaries between the partnering organizations are fluid, where they exist at all, with few limitations on the type of cooperation. The objectives, identities, and organizational structures of the allied organizations become fused and largely indistinguishable. These allies are generally equal, as each party brings different, but complementary, strengths to the relationship. They are essentially co-dependent on one another. Cooperation is unlimited and without
boundaries, although groups may not actually cooperate in all areas. This type of relationship is akin to a full merger between two companies. Cases of this type of alliance include: al-Qaida’s merger with EIJ after 2001 and its eventual alliance and merger with factions of EIG and LIFG in the late 2000s. The PFLP-SOG and JRA’s alliance exhibited features of this alliance type from 1973 to 1974.

The second type of relationship is an integrated partnership. In an integrated alliance, partners extensively share their resources and knowledge, but they do not abdicate ownership over their respective assets. The time horizon remains extended with an assumption that the relationship will continue indefinitely. Partners retain some autonomy in terms of membership, objectives, and organizational structures; consider one another equals; and are co-dependent to a substantial degree. Their leaders consult regularly, although they maintain command and control over their respective organizations. Each group continues to pursue its own goals while also adopting some of its partner’s aims as well. Boundaries are generally permeable, so cooperation is dynamic and responsive to the needs of the allied groups. This type of relationship bears a loose resemblance to a joint venture or hybrid organization in business. Alliances that fit this category include: the PFLP-SOG’s alliance with the RAF from 1976 to 1977; the PFLP-SOG’s alliance with JRA from 1974 to 1975; al-Qaida’s relationship with EIG’s overseas faction from 1996 to 2006; al-Qaida’s alliance with the GSPC/AQIM after 2006; and al-Qaida’s partnership with Pakistani Deobandi groups from 1996 to 2011.

In a subordinate relationship, one partner is dependent on the other. Resources generally flow from the dominant party to the weaker organization. In exchange, the receiving group relinquishes some autonomy and assets to its partner. The weaker organization pursues its partner’s objectives and may even adopt its identity, at the expense of its own. The dominant organization’s leaders and decisions trump those of the dependent group. The time horizon is long
with an assumption that the relationship will continue for the foreseeable future. A subordinate relationship is similar to an acquisition in business parlance. The PFLP-SOG’s initial relationship with the JRA from 1971 to 1973 fit this definition, as the JRA adopted the PFLP-SOG’s agenda and depended on it for survival. Al-Qaida’s alliance with EIJ from roughly 1996 to 2001 was largely a subordinate alliance.

The fourth type of relationship is a reciprocal partnership. In a reciprocal alliance, a delineated sharing of resources occurs based on terms that both partners agree are equal. Both groups retain organizational sovereignty over their respective assets as well as independence in matters of strategy, membership, and organizational processes. The time horizon is sufficiently long that both partners believe that ongoing cooperation is mutually advantageous, although any given individual exchange may not involve the equal exchange of assets or knowledge. An expectation exists of ongoing, future cooperation from which both parties benefit. The areas and parameters of cooperation are generally established in accordance with these expectations. The PFLP-SOG and RAF alliance initially exhibited features of this type of relationship in 1975 before maturing into an integrated alliance, while the PFLP-SOG’s alliance with the JRA settled into a reciprocal partnership after 1975.

There is a fifth type of relationship, which does not qualify as an alliance: a transactional relationship. Resources are shared on a strictly equal basis. Transactional relationships have a short time horizon and calculations are narrowly made based on the desirability of individual exchanges with uncertain prospects of when future exchanges will occur. The cooperating organizations remain completely autonomous in their objectives, identities, memberships, and activities. It is a quid pro quo relationship limited to activities that can tangibly be traded. Exchanges occur on an as-need basis with no discernible adjustment, consultation or accommodations made by the organizations involved. A transactional relationship does not meet
the threshold of an alliance, but it can be the first step towards starting such a partnership. Al-Qaeda’s cooperation with LT, when it occurred, fell into this category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Type</th>
<th>Level of Inter-Dependence</th>
<th>Time Horizon</th>
<th>Partners’ Organizational Independence</th>
<th>Cooperation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pooled</td>
<td>Fully Co-Dependent</td>
<td>Infinite</td>
<td>No Organizational Independence</td>
<td>Unlimited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Extensive Inter-Dependence</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>Some Organizational Independence</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate</td>
<td>One-Sided Dependence</td>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>One-Side Relinquishes Autonomy</td>
<td>Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal</td>
<td>Limited Dependence</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Partners Fully Autonomous</td>
<td>Delineated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Partners Fully Autonomous</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13.6

These five types of relationships run the gamut in terms of the level of inter-dependence and scope of the partnership. This typology captures the expectations that the partners have about their relationships, which is key to understanding how to disrupt them. Relationships can shift from one type to another over time. Overall, this typology provides an analytic framework with which to conceptualize these alliances. First, it helps account for the partnering groups’ and their relationships’ resiliency. Groups in pooled, integrated, and subordinate relationships have an ability to recover from setbacks more readily because they can draw on the resources of their partners. Second, efforts to sever these relationships must account for the degree of inter-dependence of the relationship. Reciprocal alliances and transactional relationships will be easier to disrupt because the imposition of greater costs on cooperation will change the parties’ calculation of the benefits and risks derived from the relationship. On the other hand, the other types of relationship will be less readily broken by such measures because the principle of equal exchange is not the primary consideration. Variation in the inter-dependence of the relationship is a key component of what differentiates these partnerships, no matter what type of specific cooperation they engage in.
13.5 Policy Recommendations and Future Research

The conventional wisdom that common ideology or shared enemies causes alliance, leaves little, if any, room for policy intervention. The policy recommendations that flow from this research do not offer a silver bullet to disrupt and prevent terrorist alliances. But they suggest that strategies and tactics can be undertaken to damage alliance prospects.

First, governments should pay more attention to the obstacles groups face when they attempt to ally. They offer exploitation opportunities. Rather than emphasizing groups’ commonalities or what might draw them together, governments should exploit fears and risks. Given terrorist organizations’ difficulties forging credible commitments, governments should capitalize and highlight instances when groups, especially hubs, fail to honor promises or attempt to use cooperation opportunistically. When alliances occur, governments can highlight the ways in which the relationship has caused groups to deviate from their primary goals and focus on actions that would be considered undesirable by constituents. Because alliances have proven to be so internally divisive, sowing disagreements within groups about alliances can subvert the relationships or at least weaken any resulting alliances. Policies that treat alliances as static or use a low threshold for labeling a relationship inadvertently reduce the costs incurred by alliances. Conversely, once an alliance is identified, the targeted governments should increase the pressure on both groups, which will stoke residual concerns within the alliance and potentially help deter future alliances. Governments should focus on undertaking measures that increase the costs and capitalize on the existing obstacles.

Second, a better understanding the role of organizational needs in precipitating alliances opens up possibilities to focus on disrupting these exchanges. To target specific relationships, governments should identify what organizational needs are being fulfilled through the alliance and focus disruption efforts on denying groups’ ability to engage in those exchanges. Government
efforts to disrupt early cooperation, especially if the intervention creates the impression that cooperation was unsuccessful due the behavior of one of the partnering groups, will be particularly effective at preventing alliances. Early failure may indicate to the allying parties that a lack of fit exists, which will reduce the desirability of the alliance.

Because alliance hubs’ ability to fulfill others’ organizational needs underpinned their desirability as partners, efforts to eradicate their service provision capability, such as safe havens and training facilities, will have a long-term disruptive impact on alliances. Without the ability to train and offer sanctuary, both alliance hubs would have struggled to fulfill their partners’ organizational needs and find partners to fulfill their own organizational needs, which by extension, would have diminished their operational capability and their lifespan. Some of these efforts have already been achieved through the decrease in international tolerance for state sponsorship and the corresponding reduction in state sponsorship. Targeting safe havens in particular will have an impact on the emergence of future alliance hubs.

Admittedly, governments are often challenged to understand the dynamics occurring within terrorist organizations. However, during re-building periods, in the wake of organizational upheaval, and following significant changes in the environment, governments can be more vigilant to possible alliance outreach. The role of leaders in alliances suggests that governments must carefully evaluate new leaders and group behavior following a change in leadership. Changes in leaders may create newfound receptivity to alliances. For example, LT is probably unlikely to ally with al-Qaida at this juncture. As a mature organization, its organizational frames vis-à-vis alliances, particularly with al-Qaida, under the founding leaders have been set and are probably resistant to change. The combination of a complex organizational structure and long-standing leaders will create resistance within LT to revisiting an alliance with al-Qaida. However, the loss of these
leaders may create an opening for LT to consider a relationship, especially if rank and file personal
relationships have been forged in the interim.

In addition, governments want to reduce identity affinity by messaging on real or potential
points of identity fissures. This is another reason to question policies that treat alliance as static.
When governments label groups as ideologically similar or sympathetic, especially to hubs, they
may inadvertently help foster a sense of affinity. Instead, governments want to emphasize
ideological differences and conflicts in narratives. Highlighting actions that constitute violations of
shared identities can help weaken alliances.

Alliances are particularly vulnerable to mistrust. Eliminating venues for interaction, such as
safe haven, will hinder groups’ abilities to forge trust. Fostering the sense that alliance hubs or their
partners are infiltrated by hostile services or careless about operational and communication
security matters can also damage their reputations and, by extension, their ability to form alliances.
The elimination of key nodes or leaders that act as loci of trust will harm existing alliances,
particularly relatively young relationships. Eradicating the personal relationships that underpin the
formation of organizational-level trust can weaken alliances over time. It is most effective to
undertake these measures prior to trust becoming embedded in the allying organizations. Once trust
is well-established, the elimination of individuals or personal relationships will not have an impact
on the sustainability of the alliance.

Limitations and Future Research

This research has clear limitations and raises additional questions to be examined in future
research. One important outstanding question is whether the motives that influenced alliance
behavior in relationships involving an alliance hub are the same for partnerships without an
alliance hub. This research honed in on hubs, but the tradeoff of this focus is the recognition that
these alliance dynamics may be specific to hubs and thus not be generalizable to other types of
alliances. As mentioned earlier, the logical next step of the examination of the alliance hub phenomenon is to look at groups that sought to become alliances hubs or share characteristics of alliance hubs to determine what drives a group to actively seek numerous allies as well as what makes some more effective alliance partners. Organizational-level alliances only explain a subset of the cooperation that occurs between terrorists. Relationships exist at other levels of analysis, including networks and individuals. This research cannot explain those interactions, nor does it purport to. Lastly, this research examined Islamic militants and leftist groups with an ethno-nationalist streak, but it would be useful to expand it to right-wing groups and more narrowly ethno-national groups, if possible.

Qualitative methods were essential for building this theory of alliance behavior, but research using mixed methods is necessary to continue to test and refine the independent variables. Ongoing efforts to develop an alliance database at the University of Albany offer a potential realm for quantitative research, as does game theory analysis. This dissertation offers a starting point that challenges conventional wisdom, but further work on organizational features and characteristics is needed to more fully develop this theoretical framework.

This work suffers from the same shortfall as most work on terrorism: these are actors that operate covertly and use denial and deception. As a result, it is difficult to know what key pieces of information have not been uncovered or have been distorted deliberately. This work sought to minimize bias by examining numerous cases to identify broader pathways and patterns. But much work remains to be done on this important issue.


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Taj Majal Security. Personal interview. 2009


The Reminiscences of Mark Rudd (1987), in the Columbia Center for Oral History Collection.


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