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The Changing Nature of Al-Qaeda: Changes in al-Qaeda's Organizational Structure and the Effect of U.S. Counterterrorism Measures

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Following the attacks of September 11th, al-Qaeda became a household name throughout the United States. The confidence of a nation was shaken and we embarked on a path to a decade long "War on Terror". Thirteen years later, it is widely contended that al-Qaeda has been decimated by the counterterrorism efforts of the United States. The death of Osama bin Laden and the embattled position of the remaining senior al-Qaeda leaders lends credibility to this position. Al-Qaeda, however, still appears capable of threatening the interests of the United States. In August of 2013, 21 embassies and consulates across the Middle East and North Africa were closed due to an intercepted message between senior al-Qaeda leaders. Would a truly defeated organization be capable of inciting such panic?

This work seeks to answer the question of whether or not al-Qaeda has truly been defeated by the United States and her allies. To answer this question, it examines four terrorist plots carried out by al-Qaeda since 9/11. These plots are discussed by examining the ties between operatives responsible for carrying out the plot, as well as their ties to core al-Qaeda leaders. There is also a discussion of how U.S. counterterrorism efforts have affected the ability of al-Qaeda leaders to direct terrorist operations.

This thesis argues that though early United States efforts proved successful in dispersing al-Qaeda operatives, the organization is still very much capable of threatening the United States and her interests abroad. Al-Qaeda largely maintains this ability through its coordination of several franchise groups and a continuing ability to adapt to the circumstances forced upon it.

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I. Introduction

Following the attacks of September 11th, the name al-Qaeda became known to just about everyone in the United States. The damage that this clandestine organization inflicted upon the world's superpower sparked a wave of research into the field of terrorism studies, and specifically on al-Qaeda. More and more information about the organization became available as the United States and its allies undertook various strategies to weaken, and hopefully disband al-Qaeda. Following the death of Osama bin Laden (UBL), the infamous leader of al-Qaeda, in 2011, the common narrative proclaimed that al-Qaeda was on its knees and no longer possessed the ability to do severe damage to the United States.

The discussion of al-Qaeda's demise, however, proved to be premature. In August 2013, nineteen U.S. embassies around the Middle East and North Africa were shut down due to safety concerns. It was revealed by various news outlets that the closures were a result of intercepted al-Qaeda communications indicating that the group was planning attacks against United States interests abroad. This visible effect of the ongoing threat that al-Qaeda posed caused people to question whether or not there was any truth to the assertion that the United States had struck a fatal blow to the group's operational capacity. Was it possible that al-Qaeda had been able to re-organize despite the damage inflicted upon it?

This work will attempt to answer the question of if, and how, al-Qaeda has changed since 2001. This will either affirm or negate whether al-Qaeda that exists today is fundamentally different than the organization that planned and carried out the devastating attacks of 9/11. Inherently linked to this question is whether or not counterterrorism measures have forced a change in al-Qaeda. The possibility exists that my work will affirm the official narrative that counterterrorism measures have caused a severe decentralization within al-Qaeda's ranks. Alternatively, perhaps al-Qaeda's organizational structure has remained the same in spite of the work of U.S.

military and intelligence forces. A third option is that al-Qaeda has changed not as a direct effect

of counterterrorism actions but as a pre-emptive measure. This work will attempt to discern

whether U.S. counterterrorism efforts have played a role in the changes in al-Qaeda's organiza-

tional structure. Implicit in this discussion is whether or not al-Qaeda still poses a threat to the

security of the United States. The organization of a terrorist group plays a role in determining

the scope and type of attacks they are able to carry out, making al-Qaeda's current structure an

important factor in assessing the threat it still poses.

II. Literature Review

There are numerous ways in which a researcher could approach the study of terrorism

and terrorist organizations. Choosing to classify an organization through the use of a typology is

just one of those methods. The usefulness of a typology-oriented method is that typologies allow

researchers to compress a great deal of information into a single set of terms (Schmid and Jong-

man 1988). Terrorist typologies and classifications are based on a number of principles of dis-

tinction, indicating that a vast array of typologies exists. Principles of distinction range from be-

ing cause-based to target-based.

A highly popular classification among researchers is to distinguish terrorist groups based

upon the organization's motives for resorting to terrorism. This generally allows organizations

to be divided into the following categories: revolutionary organizations, national liberation orga-

nizations, social organizations, separatist organizations, radical ideological organizations, and

religious organizations (Ganor 2008). Discerning an organization's motives is relatively

straightforward, as it mostly requires examining manifestos and other documents directly pub-

lished by the organization. As an exploratory typology, this method would be useful in further

examining networks on which there has not been much scholarly research completed. Beyond

that, counterterrorism officials can use this typology in order to help determine what sort of measures would best neutralize a group's motives, and therefore decrease their likelihood to act.

Similar to the classification of terrorist groups based upon motives is the classification of groups based upon the characteristics of their demands. This typology would take into the account the extent of dogmatism and the extent of pragmatism present (Ganor 2008). While the Palestinian liberation organizations Fatah and Hamas may be classified in the same group in terms of demands, the two would be separated based on the fact that Fatah is more likely to be willing to negotiate and soften its rhetoric, as opposed to the hard-line Hamas. This approach takes the examination of a terrorist organization one step further as opposed to merely examining manifestos and proclaimed goals. This also allows for policy makers and state actors to better determine which groups are worth engaging and how it is best to engage.

The ability of a terrorist organization to exert control over autonomous territory has a number of effects on the organizations characteristics, thus making it another frequently used typology. The ability to control an autonomous area without interference from state actors, or with the compliance of state officials, affords terrorist groups certain advantages over their counterparts that do not have that privilege. These groups will be able to establish training bases, military infrastructure, and the ability to recruit from various parts of the world while at the same time organizing all members of the organization around one focal point. On the other hand, an organization's ability to control an autonomous area means that the bulk of that organization's resources and personnel will be focused in that area. Should circumstances change, a terrorist organization may find itself more vulnerable from being removed from that autonomous area and thus might loose a large part of its operational capacity, because it was so centralized in that area (Ganor 2008).

Finally, a typology also exists based upon the internal structures and dynamics that are prevalent in terrorist groups. While the typology of internal organizational structure has frequently been used to understand al-Qaeda there is, however, surprisingly little consensus among scholars regarding how al-Qaeda has changed in structure. Understanding the structure of the organization and the degree of influence exerted by that organization's leader is purported to be extremely helpful in understanding the usefulness of certain counterterrorism measures. For example, the "kingpin" strategy, or the tactic of taking out an organization's leader, or leadership, in an effort to destabilize a group has been used for years in fighting organized crime and in combating terrorism (Rowlands and Kilberg 2011). However, knowing when and if to deploy this kind of strategy is reliant upon knowing the organizational structure of a group, as such an effort would bear little fruit in an organization where the leader does not serve any operational purpose. This would come to bear in an organization in which authority and capacity are decentralized. An instance in which the "kingpin" strategy has not worked is in the targeting of Mexican drug cartels. Following the elimination of Pablo Escobar, and the following disintegration of the Medellín cartel, Mexican authorities sought to implement the decapitation strategy to their own cartels (Felbab-Brown 2012). Notwithstanding the false assumptions under which Mexican authorities undertook this strategy, the "kingpin" strategy has not proved successful in Mexico due to the fact that Mexican cartels are more loosely organized than the Medellin cartel was. The Mexican cartels are comprised of a host of equally violent leaders who do not rely on a kingpin for their power and operations. Rather, the death of the kingpin is likely to lead to smaller, still powerful cartels that engage in a war of succession (Cote-Munoz 2012).

Organizational structure is also an important method for classification of terrorist groups because a plausible link exists between organizational structure and the types of attacks a group

is able to carry out. Hierarchical organizations are better equipped to carry out distant, resource-intensive attacks, such as that of September 11th. Groups based on looser ties, such as the varying types of networks, are more nimble and therefore better able to carry out more frequent, small-scale attacks within their area of operation. Knowing the organizational structure of a terrorist organization can aid academics and security professionals in predicting the types of attacks to prepare for and the likely magnitude of these attacks.

The highest form of social organization is that of a *hierarchy*. The key aspect of a hierarchical network is that of unified control. The question stands, is there a leadership that possesses the ability to control the operations and the resources of the organization? A hierarchical organization can be defined as such when the leadership is in control of resources and is able to delegate tasks and directives to subordinates with the expectation that these directives will be followed. At the same time, the leader of a hierarchical organization is able to maintain a credible ability to monitor operations and withhold resources if operations are not carried out to their liking. Another permutation would be that the leadership controls operations while delegating resources procurement, but can credibly engage in violence against factions that would otherwise seek to divert resource procurement (Shapiro 2005). Communication amongst the members of a hierarchical organization take place within the framework of accepted authority. Information flows up from the bottom to the top of the organization while decisions flow down from the top to the bottom (Tucker 2008).

The second type of internal organizational structure described by researchers is that of a *network*. A network structure is said to have a number of basic features: there is not an established horizontal and vertical chain of communication and/or command when it comes to planning actions. Rather, the chain will change depending on the task that is undertaken. Relation-

ships among actors are informal and are marked by different degrees of strength depending on the needs of the organization; the internal links of the organization are expanded through relationships with individuals outside of the organization, and even those outside of the geographic area in which the organization is operating. These external organizations are formed and disbanded according to the needs of the organization at a particular point in time; and the internal operation of the organization is such that the majority of the work is done by self-managing teams as opposed to direct command and control by the head of the organization. The prevalence of network terrorist groups has increased and been facilitated by the advent of new communications technologies such as internet forums and text messaging. Groups that once consolidated and organized in order to decrease communication costs can now operate at a much more decentralized level due to the ability to easily communicate over long distances (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001).

The categorization of a group as a *network* organization encompasses a number of different sub-categories of the network structure. The main types of *networks* are the network-chain, the network-hub, and the network-multichannel. A network-chain type of organization does not operate based upon a strict command and control structure but has a very strict and organized sequence of communication. In a *chain* network, communication from one end of the chain to the other must go through all of the intermediary channels. A *hub* network is usually representative of a franchise or cartel. In this model, all of the actors are tied to a central, but not necessarily hierarchical, actor. To communicate with one another, the different cells must go through the central node. Finally, the *multichannel* network is the most decentralized form of network. In this group, all of the nodes are connected to one another. Of all three forms of network, the *multichannel* networks is the most difficult to organize and sustain because of the dense lines of

communication (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001). Inherent in the multichannel network is that all of the nodes involved are considered equal to each other and so directives do not flow from one central or hub, nor are communications processed through one central group or one central actor. A benefit of this structure is that because there are redundant communication pathways, the organization is better capable of withstanding damage to one of its nodes. Furthermore, because all nodes are perceived as equal, it is easier to conceal the operational importance of an actor or set of actors (Sullivan and Bunker 2008).

The loosest form of social organization is that of a *market*. The market system of organization exemplifies "individually, self-interested, noncooperative, unconstrained social interaction" that occurs among individuals. The interaction and agreements among these individuals is purely self-enforced as there is no overarching body to coordinate actions among them (Jung and Lake 2011). Interaction among individuals in a market system is risky in that the actors are not familiar with one another and therefore have no previous bonds of trust on which to rely. As such, purely market forms of organization are unlikely to be found within terrorist groups, as markets cannot necessarily ensure the secrecy of those who subscribe to a certain ideology, making the risk of identification or capture too high.

What is distinct regarding terrorist organizations is that many groups do not seem to fall strictly into one of the aforementioned organizational models. Rather, terrorist organizations combine features of hierarchical structures and of network structures. The vast majority of terrorist organizations take on the hierarchical features of having a clearly defined leadership, vertical communication, and vertical and horizontal differentiation. Groups will also incorporate network aspects of organization by operating without detailed central planning, allowing them to react quickly to threats by changing plans and altering the role of individual members (or units

and branches) within the organization. Individuals will be allowed to have varying degrees of commitment to the organization and cells are constantly being created and dissolved (Mayntz 2004). The combination of these aspects seems to be common in vastly different terrorist groups, indicating that perhaps groups tend to gravitate towards a *hybrid* model of organization.

In addition to the aforementioned traditional typologies that have been widely used within the literature, I will be including the concept of a *dune* organization in my analysis. A *dune* organization is characterized by a lack of a specific, static territorial location and an ability to disappear, as opposed to the maintenance of a fixed institutional presence. The chain of command in a *dune* organization is fluid and changing and there is no specific territory in which the organization operates; rather, it makes itself known in one location before disappearing and finding another area that will fulfill its needs. The key distinction between a *dune* organization and a network structure is the temporary nature of the connections in a dune. The links among different nodes in a dune are temporary, constantly shifting to serve the changing needs of the organization (Mishal and Rosenthal 2005). Thus far, the classification of a *dune* organization has only been attributed to al-Qaeda and has not been used to classify any other terrorist group.

Beyond seeking to identify the structural classification of al-Qaeda at various points in its history, my research also aims to identify whether counterterrorism policies are behind these changes in structure. The study of other terrorist organizations has shown that counterterrorism efforts have a direct result on the structure of terrorist organizations. For example, many observers have argued that the organizational structure of Hamas was altered in response to Israel's crackdown on the organization. When Israel first began to outlaw and arrest Hamas leaders the group moved from a hierarchical leadership style to operating through a compartmentalized leadership structure. This means that each individual cell operated independently of each other,

thus if one cell was compromised the other cells would remain safe. The cells remained part of the same organization because they all reported to a local leadership, binding them together (Enders and Su 2007).

One classification of counterterrorism measures distinguishes between offensive and defensive strategies. Defensive strategies are those that largely work to improve security policies in the homeland, such as enhancing airport security measures, embassy fortification, and the inspection of containers at ports of entry. Offensive measures are those that seek to bring the war directly to the enemy. These measures include launching direct attacks on terrorist cells, disrupting their sources of funding and other material resources, and targeting those individuals or entities that support terrorist operations through targeted strikes (Enders and Su 2007).

Another method of grouping counterterrorism measures is to distinguish between those that are a display of "hard power" and those measures that utilize "soft power". Hard power methods take the direct, enemy-centric approach to combating terrorism. The use of Predator drones to target individual terrorists is an example of hard power. As such, hard power can be likened to offensive counterterrorism policies. Soft power, on the other hand, is an indirect approach to combating terrorism that focuses on targeting the underlying causes of terror. Economic development, capacity building, and counter-radicalization education are all examples of soft power counterterrorism methods (Rineheart 2010).

A more nuanced approach to classifying counterterrorism measures is to clarify counterterrorism measures as conforming with a 'war', 'criminal justice', and/or 'intelligence' model. The models distinguish among counterterrorism policies based upon who plays the leading role in carrying out the measures. The war model encompasses those counterterrorism policies that rely on the use of military strikes against a state or its population as a result of its support for, or

inaction against, terrorist activity. The criminal justice model treats terrorism as a crime, and the primary method of combating terrorism is through the prosecution and punishment of the actors within the framework of the rule of law. Finally, the intelligence model uses the intelligence agencies and structures of a state to combat terrorism. In the intelligence model, the primary focus is on collecting information that will allow the state to prevent the terrorist attack from being carried out. The intelligence model encompasses such actions as acquiring confessions, the holding of secret tribunals, the use of deadly force against specific targets, and the expansion of investigatory powers for intelligence agencies (Bhoumik 2004).

Finally, counterterrorism methods can also be classified according to whether they aim to 'prevent, protect, pursue, or respond'. Prevent, protect, pursue and respond are the four strands of the EU counterterrorism strategy. The prevent strand seeks to tackle the root factors behind why people are radicalized to terrorism, aiming to keep people from turning towards extremism. The protect measure implies the improved security of borders, transport, and critical infrastructure, in an attempt to stop a terrorist attack in its tracks. The 'pursue' strategy of counterterrorism efforts includes the investigation of terrorists across borders, but also seeks to impede the planning, travel, communication, and support networks of terrorist groups. Finally, the respond aspect of the EU counterterrorism strategy is aimed at managing and minimizing the effects of a successful terrorist attack. This includes tactics such as coordinating the response to terrorism across agencies and responding to the needs of the victims (COT Institute for Safety, Security, and Crisis Management 2008).

The four strands of the EU Counterterrorism policy have been applied to study the counterterrorism strategies of the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Poland, Spain, Germany, Italy, the Czech Republic and Sweden. The counterterrorism policies of the aforemen-

tioned countries were categorized into the four strands of the EU counterterrorism strategy and then a matrix was created to analyze which strand was the most heavily relied upon by the individual country. Those countries that equally covered all aspects of counterterrorism were deemed to be operating under a *maximalist approach*, such as the UK, the Czech Republic, Denmark, and Germany. *The human-agent approach* was the categorization given to those countries, the Netherlands and Italy, that put more of an emphasis on the prevent and pursue strands. France and Portugal were classified as operating under the *confrontational approach*, as the bulk of their counterterrorism strategies focused on the pursuit of terrorist actors. Finally, Spain and Poland were classified as the *antagonistic* approach, having placed a high emphasis on all four strands of counterterrorism policy, except for the prevent strand. Sweden was not classified as its counterterrorism measures have been so minuscule that there was not enough data to warrant a classification (COT Institute For Safety, Security, and Crisis Management 2008).

The model used by the EU of '*prevent, protect, pursue*, and *respond*' seems to be the most nuanced and encompassing classification of counterterrorism methods. The four strands use the motivation of the state to classify counterterrorism measures, making it an easy to use means of classification, even for something that may not have the most open source material, such as the counterterrorism work of the United States. I would, however, add the fifth strand of *repression* to the grouping used by the EU. Repression would include such actions as drone strikes, and extra-legal interrogation methods. While none of the four strands employed by the EU describe such methods, they certainly are part of US counterterrorism strategy. Otherwise, the other four strands can be applied to the various counterterrorism strategies the U.S. has applied to al-Qaeda. Though the repressive strategies of U.S. counterterrorism policy have gained the most media attention, intelligence officials have certainly made efforts to disrupt sources of

terror funding, intercept communications and improve security measures for mass transportation in line with the 'protect' and 'puruse' strands. Much has been made of the U.S. government attempting to improve emergency responses through the 'respond' strand, and the U.S. government has partnered with friendly governments in the Middle East in an attempt to create alternate opportunities for young people in order to 'prevent' them from turning to extremism as a last resort.

For the purpose of my research, I seek to discover whether or not there is a causal link between counterterrorism policies and shifts in the internal organizational structure of al-Qaeda. Prior literature on the matter proposes that terrorist groups will alter their structure as counterterrorism strategies expand. The counterterrorism strategies that seem to have the greatest effect on a group's structure are those that target communication links because they force actors to go through alternate channels in order to communicate with key actors. These strategies either attempt to infiltrate or compromise specific nodes of a group, whether they are individuals or cells, or attempt to interfere with communication methods. As links of communication become less secure, or are expected to become less secure, terrorist groups will attempt to limit the number of links between different actors. Limiting the degrees of communication within a group decreases the likelihood of there being wide-ranging effects should a particular node be compromised. In order to decrease the links of communication, groups will change the internal structure of their organization by moving from a hierarchical, top down structure to a more horizontal, network structure. The network structure decreases the number of nodes that are connected to the leadership, decreasing the probability of the leadership being compromised should a node be infiltrated. Changing its internal organizational structure is just one way in which a terrorist group will respond to counterterrorism pressures. This shift in structure will necessitate a change in the types of attacks a group carries out. The decentralized nature of a network structure decreases

the ability of a terrorist organization to carry out highly coordinated, logistically complex attacks. Instead, groups will carry out simpler attacks, such as suicide bombings of soft, civilian targets (Enders and Su 2007).

As previously mentioned, counterterrorism operations may also seek to eliminate the head of an organization in what is known as the "kingpin" strategy. This implies that the organization is a strict hierarchy and decapitating the organization will lead to its eventual demise. Another permutation of the "kingpin" strategy takes the decapitation method and applies it more broadly to all senior leaders in an organization.

III. Hypothesis

Much of the literature disagrees on how to characterize al-Qaeda's current organization structure. On one end of the spectrum, al-Qaeda is described as having survived as a formal, hierarchical organization, while on the other end, it is characterized as having morphed into being merely an idea that inspires lone wolf terrorists. It is my contention that present day al-Qaeda falls between the two extremes, in the middle of the spectrum. The group still operates under the structure of a network organization and maintains features of a formal organization. Al-Qaeda has not devolved so far as to qualify as being simply an inspiring ideology.

Hypothesis I: Al-Qaeda has devolved from a hierarchical network to a network organization.

Moving beyond the question of al-Qaeda's internal structure is the effect that counterterrorism measures have had on that structure.

Hypothesis II: Counterterrorism efforts have directly contributed to al-Qaeda's transformation into a network organization.

Contrary to my hypotheses is the possibility that al-Qaeda has not significantly altered its internal organizational structure since the 9/11 attacks. Should this be the case, it would call into

question the theory that counterterrorism measures are capable of bringing about changes in the internal dynamics of terrorist organizations. Furthermore, should al-Qaeda's internal structure prove to be resistant to counterterrorism methods, future research could devote itself to examining what exactly about al-Qaeda's structure has allowed it to withstand the full force of United States armed power.

Hypothesis III: As a network organization, al-Qaeda continues to pose a vital threat to U.S. citizens and strategic interests.

Despite the official U.S. government narrative that al-Qaeda has been decimated, I contend in this work that the organization has not been destroyed. Instead, the change in structure has allowed al-Qaeda to pose a different type of threat to the U.S. and its interests.

IV. Research Design and Methods

The unit of analysis for my study will be individual terrorist attacks between 2001 and 2013. During this twelve-year period, hundreds of terrorist attacks have been attributed to al-Qaeda. To do a thorough analysis of each individual attack is not feasible for this project. I will therefore select four attacks at critical junctures since 2001.

The dependent variable for my project is the internal organizational structure of al-Qaeda at the time of each terrorist attack. The structure will be classified based upon the aforementioned typologies of hierarchy, network, market, and dune. The independent variable is the U.S. counterterrorism measure employed against al-Qaeda. The independent variable will be classified either as a 'prevent', 'protect', 'pursue', 'respond', or 'repress' policy.

In order to determine the internal organizational structure of al-Qaeda at various points in time, I will be using Social Network Analysis (SNA) to determine the structure of the cells that carried out the attacks and their ties to central leadership. Individual actors will be represented

by nodes in a graphical representation of the social network while the lines connecting individual

actors represent relations or interactions between the different actors.

SNA has long been used to map out the structures of licit companies and illicit criminal

networks, such as fraud schemes. SNA was first used in a social psychology study in the 1930s

to map the creation of small friendship groups and the structures of informal interactions (Scott).

SNA will, once a group has been uncovered, map out the individuals and the connections by way

of degree, the number of direct contacts a person has within the organization, by 'betweeness',

the extent to which a person is located as a bridge between different actors, and closeness, or the

sum of the shortest path to all of the actors (Baker and Faulkner 1993). Information is usually

obtained through court documents and other public records. The use of public information

means that SNA can be conducted even by those researchers who lack substantial funds or con-

nections to classified information and security clearances. However, the use of public records is

also a limiting aspect of SNA. In the realm of terror studies there is a dearth of human intelli-

gence, and that pool of information is further limited by what is considered classified by various

agencies. SNA has only recently been applied to mapping the links in terrorist cells due to the

relative dearth of useful information. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent efforts to

understand the al-Qaeda network, far more information became available to researchers.

Through the use of court documents and newspaper articles, SNA was applied to the 9/11 hijack-

ers by various newspapers and researchers. Through SNA, connections of various degrees of

strength could be drawn between the different hijackers, varying from those individuals who had

known each other in school to those who had only met each other a few times before the plot was

carried out. The SNA method indicates that while the terrorist cells responsible for the 9/11 at-

tacks were decentralized and often unfamiliar with one another, they were this way by design

and not as a failure of organization. The fewer people connected in an illicit network, the less damage inflicted to the organization as a whole if one individual is compromised in any way (Krebbs 2002). The open source methods used in SNA are highly accessible and easily lend themselves to being replicated by other researchers. At the same time, the application of SNA to the study of al-Qaeda has only been applied in tracing the connections among the foot soldiers and does not say anything about their connections to the leadership. The methods used by SNA ought to be integrated with other research methods in order to map out the degrees between those who put a plan into operation and those in a position of command. A useful contribution of the SNA method for all future research regarding the internal structure of terrorist organizations is the observation that, generally speaking, ties within cells are built upon strong ties such as familial relations or ties built during training. These ties may not be considered strong before the occurrence of a terrorist attack due to the fact that they remain dormant so as to preserve the secrecy of the organization. However, previous terrorist attacks have taught researchers not to take for granted the ties between family members and friends, as they may be integral to the operations of a terrorist organization (Carley and Tsvetovat 2002).

The two methodological decisions to be made when using SNA are which actors to include and how to categorize the ties between them (Perlinger and Pedahuzur 2011). The issue of mapping boundaries is solved by the fact that I am using SNA to establish how close the connection is between a specific cell that carried out an attack and central al-Qaeda leadership. The cell will be mapped out by drawing connections between the individuals involved in the specific terrorist plot. I will only map as much of the organization as it takes me to get a connection from the cell to central leadership. In this way, I am bound by the purpose of my research. Previous

work on al-Qaeda using SNA has only largely focused on ties between individuals, and largely those individuals affiliated with the 9/11 attacks.

When mapping out the structure, however, I will have to find a way to classify the ties among those cell members, both to each other and to the leadership. Methods of classifying connections among actors have ranged from classifying ties as either weak or strong based on whether the connections are among acquaintances or among family members (Granovetter 1973) to classifying ties as weak, medium, or strong, based on the amount of time cell members have spent together (Krebbs 2002). While both methods are valid ways of classifying ties among network members, in order to understand cell connections to central leadership I will classify ties based on the flow of information and the operational influence members have on one another. In this case, operational influence is meant to represent the idea that an actor can give directives, relating to the execution of a plot, to another member of the cell with the reasonable expectation that they will be carried out. This information will largely be collected from newspaper reports and biographies of the actors, as well as from Department of Justice briefs and declassified intelligence documents.

Graphing relations according to influence turns an undirected map into a directed representation of a terrorist group. In order to do this, the researcher must make assumptions about the relative importance of specific actors. In this case, an actor is more important than another if it has more ties to other points on the map (Brams, Mutlu, and Ramirez 2006). An assumption has to be made that importance will then equate to influence on another actor. These assumptions will be based on the manner in which cell members were recruited into the cell. A cell member is likely to be subordinate to the operative who recruited him.

Once I have classified my dependent variable, I will determine the counterterrorism measure that took place after the attack, and before the next terrorist operation. Individual counterterrorism operations will not qualify as a counterterrorism measure. Rather, I will be using changes in counterterrorism strategy as my determinant.

The main contribution of this work to the existing body of literature comes in the application of SNA, as well as in some of the conclusions drawn from the examination of al-Qaeda at four critical junctures. The application of SNA to the examination of al-Qaeda has, thus far, been limited to the examination of the ties among the terrorists that carried out the 9/11 attack. This is largely due to the fact that 9/11 remains the plot on which we have the most information available. This work applies SNA to three other terrorist attacks and moves beyond the immediate cell to trace the connections between the foot soldiers and core al-Qaeda leaders. This application can be used in the future should there be another terrorist attack carried out against allied interests. Furthermore, the application of SNA in this manner has allowed me to find ties between foot soldiers and the leaders of al-Qaeda. This has allowed me to conclude that al-Qaeda leaders remained involved in the operations of the organization past 9/11 and up to the present day. Such a finding mitigates the widespread belief that al-Qaeda no longer poses a serious threat to the United States. Awareness that al-Qaeda is still a dangerous organization is key to maintaining preparedness and developing more appropriate counterterrorism measures.

V. The 9/11 Groups

The 9/11 terrorist attacks originally involved twenty-three operatives. Nineteen out of the twenty-three perpetrators died on September 11th; the remaining operatives had been working behind the scenes to coordinate the operation. The twenty-two individuals involved in carrying out the 9/11 attacks can be divided into two main groups, the Hamburg Cell and the "muscle" group. There are, however, three individuals who do not fall into either of the groupings. Nawaf al-Hazmi, Hani Hanjur, and Khalid al-Mihdhar were all connected to al-Qaeda through other routes. The most infamous individuals are those that came from the Hamburg Cell. The Hamburg Cell consisted of eight men of varying Arab origin who had immigrated to Germany over the years. The individuals of the Hamburg Cell were well acquainted with one another and had been become interested in jihad before they established a connection to al-Qaeda leaders. Even before their recruitment into al-Qaeda, the Hamburg Cell was already determined to launch an attack against the United States, though they were far too small of a group to acquire the necessary resources. It is, however, their connection to al-Qaeda that gave them the opportunity to carry out their fantasies. The remaining individuals who partook in the 9/11 attacks are collectively known as "the muscle". Each individual that made up the "muscle" group was specifically selected for the 9/11 mission by Osama bin Laden and by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (KSM). The two groups were not connected to each other prior to their recruitment for the 9/11 attacks and their interaction leading up to the attacks was limited.

A. The Hamburg Cell

The undisputed leader of the Hamburg Cell was Mohamed Atta. As will be shown later, Atta had been the one to draw the majority of the members into the fold. Furthermore, his domi-

neering personality led the other cell members to view him as their leader. Atta was of Egyptian

origin and was an active member of the Muslim Brotherhood prior to his emigration. In October

1992, Atta enrolled at the Technical University of Hamburg. During his time as a student in

Germany Atta attended the al-Quds mosque, a known center of radicalization that has since been

closed by the German authorities. Atta had been a devote Muslim from a young age, his father

noting that he had begun praying at the age of 12 or 13. However, it appears that Atta was radi-

calized at al-Quds. Before its closing, al-Quds had long attracted extremists from all over the

world and often hosted radical guest speakers who urged the congregants to take up jihad. The

mosque doubled as a bookshop and was full of extremist material bemoaning the power of the

Jews in the world and painting Muslims as victims of endless discrimination (Johnson 2010). It

is at the al-Quds mosque, in 1998, that Atta became acquainted with Mohammed Haydar Zam-

mar. Zammar is a German citizen of Syrian origin who moved to Germany with his family at the

age of ten. Zammar decided to participate in the Afghan jihad against the Soviet Union during

the 1980s, making Zammar the only Hamburg cell member to have previously engaged in armed

struggle (Davidsson 2014). Zammar officially pledged his allegiance to al-Qaeda in 1996 and

was highly valued by Atta for his connections to the international jihadist movement (Finn

2002). During the jihad against the Soviet Union, Zammar trained in a camp led by Gulbuddin

Hekmatyar and is said to have been known to UBL personally (Davidsson 2014). It was Zam-

mar who, in 1998, encouraged the group to become engaged with the global jihad (9/11 Com-

mission 2004).

It is also through the al-Quds mosque that Atta recruited Ramzi Bin al-Shibh from

Yemen, Mounir Mostassadeq, a Moroccan citizen, and Marwan al-Shehhi of the UAE. Mostas-

sadeq further recruited Said Bahaji and Zakariya Essabar into the group. Bahaji was a national-

ized German citizen of Moroccan origin while Essabar was a Moroccan citizen. Atta later became roommates with al-Shibh and Bahaji. The trio's apartment in Hamburg became the meeting place for the cell and Atta dubbed the apartment *Dar al-Ansar*. *Dar* is the Arabic word for house, while *Ansar* means "supporters" or "followers" but refers specifically to those citizens of Medina who assisted the prophet Muhammad following his arrival in Medina from Mecca, and waged war in the name of Islam. Essabar recruited the final member of the cell, Ziad Jarrah, a Lebanese citizen. Both Jarrah and al-Shehhi became radicalized only after they began attending al-Quds and had made the acquaintance of Atta. Atta often chastised Jarrah and al-Shehhi for their penchant for "music, alcohol, and cigarettes" (Finn 2002).

In 1999 Atta, al-Shibh, al-Shehhi, and Jarrah made their first trip to Afghanistan. They had originally planned to travel to Chechnya to fight the Russians. However, al-Shibh and al-Shehhi had a chance encounter with a man named Khalid al-Masri as they traveled by train from Hamburg to Bonn to begin their journey. Al-Masri provided them with the contact information of Mohamedou Ould Salahi (Abu Musab), as someone who could facilitate their travel into Chechnya. Abu Musab is a former al-Qaeda operative of Mauritanian origin who immigrated to Germany for his studies. Abu Musab traveled to Afghanistan in 1990 and swore allegiance to UBL. After completing his training, he returned to Germany with the primary purpose of acting as a recruiter for al-Qaeda (U.S. Department of Defense 2006). The group was told by Abu Musab that they would have difficulty traveling to Chechnya through Georgia because of their Arab appearance and that they should seek to enter Chechnya through Afghanistan instead. The group was to enter Afghanistan through Pakistan. The members of the Hamburg Cell traveled to Pakistan separately, and then on to Afghanistan to receive combat training at an al-Qaeda training camp. At least one member of the cell, Zacarias Moussaoui, received training at the Khalden

Camp, one of al-Qaeda's thousands of camps in Afghanistan pre-9/11 (U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia 2001). There is no evidence to suggest that the hijackers were separated in receiving their training. By the time the last member had arrived in Kandahar it was believed that al-Shehhi had already sworn allegiance to al-Qaeda (9/11 Commission 2004).

According to the 9/11 Commission Report, UBL personally chose Atta to lead the cell and met with him on several occasions in order to give him instructions in preparation for the hijacking mission. Atta, Binalshibh, Shehhi and Jarrah all became core members of al-Qaeda even before meeting with KSM, the mastermind behind 9/11, indicating that they were specifically chosen for the mission by UBL, who had recognized the benefits of using agents who spoke English and were far better educated than the original, established al-Qaeda members who were originally being considered (9/11 Commission Report 2004).

The Hamburg Cell
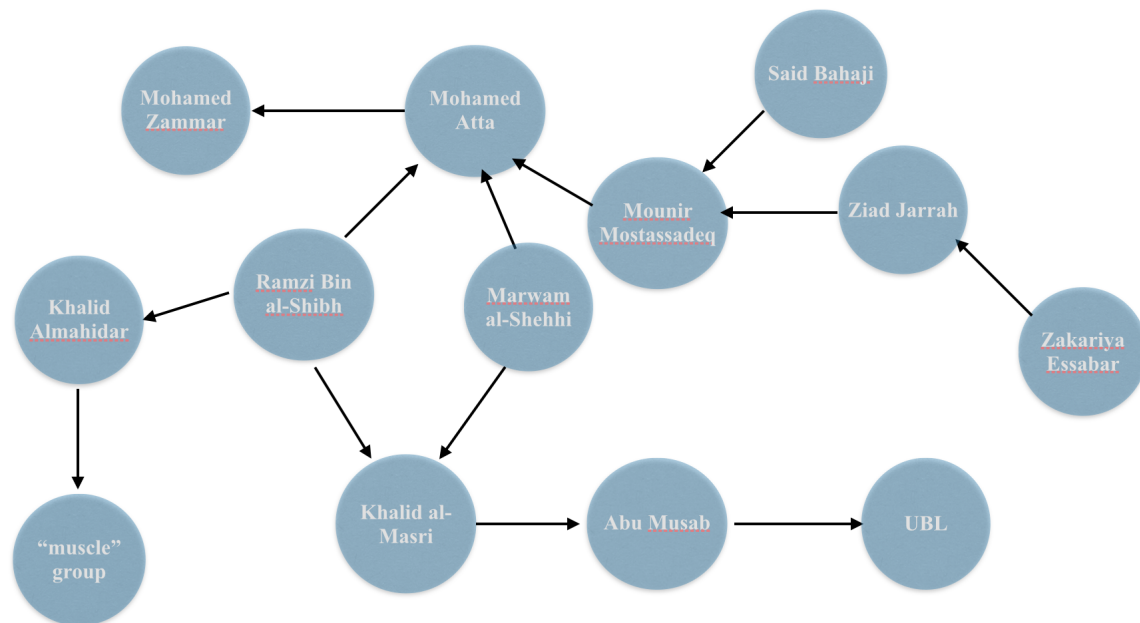
The direction of the arrows in the graph above indicate the actors to which each individual reported. While Zammar had fought in the Afghan jihad and had previously met UBL, he is not connected to al-Qaeda's leader in this graph because there is no indication that he communicated with core al-Qaeda with regards to the 9/11 attack.

B. The Muscle

The hijackers referred to as "the muscle" were the operatives selected to storm the cockpits of the hijacked airplanes and control the passengers and crew. Twelve of the thirteen "mus-

cle" hijackers were originally from Saudi Arabia: Satam al-Suqami, Wail al- Shehri, Waleed al-Shehri, Abdul Aziz al-Omari, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, Hamza al-Ghamdi, Mohand al-Shehri, Majed Moqed, Salem al-Hazmi, Saeed al-Ghamdi, Ahmad al-Haznawi, and Ahmed al-Nami. The final hijacker, Fayez Banihammad, was from the United Arab Emirates (9/11 Commission Report 2004). The individuals that made up "the muscle" did not comprise a previously organized cell before their recruitment to the hijacking plot.

Four of the hijackers, Ahmed al-Ghamdi, Saeed al-Ghamdi, Hamza al-Ghamdi, and Ahmad al-Haznawi, lived in a close cluster of villages in the south of Saudi Arabia in the al-Bahah region. There is evidence to suggest that these four hijackers were in contact with one another as early as 1999. All four of the aforementioned hijackers came from the same tribe (9/11 Commission Report 2004). Al-Haznawi left his home in Saudi Arabia in 2000 to train in a jihadist camp in Afghanistan with the eventual goal of joining the jihad in Chechnya. Al-Haznawi is said to have convinced his relatives, the two brothers Ahmed al-Ghamdi and Hamza al-Ghamdi to join the 9/11 attack (Borger 2002). Saeed transferred to a University in the al-Qassim province of Saudi Arabia, an area known as a radical hotbed. He soon broke contact with his family after the move. Prior to having cut off contact with his family, Saeed expressed an interest in traveling to Chechnya in order to join the jihad. Travel documents provide evidence suggesting travel to the area (9/11 Commission Report 2004).

Another five hijackers, Wail al-Shehri, Waleed al-Shehri, Abdul Aziz al-Omari, Mohand al-Shehri, and Ahmed al-Nami, were from the Asir province in Southwestern Saudi Arabia. Together, the Asir region and the al-Bahah region produced nine of the "muscle" hijackers. In addition, Hani Hanjur, the pilot of American Airlines flight 77, also came from this stretch of desert. These two regions are connected by the two lane Highway 15 which, in a twist of fate, was

engineered by UBL's father, Mohammed bin Laden. The area is known for its deep tribal affiliation, economic disenfranchisement, and its long history of familiarity with Wahhabi fundamentalism. As a native of Saudi Arabia, bin Laden knew of these ties and was able to exploit them in his effort to put a Saudi face on the 9/11 attacks. It is speculated that the participation of Saudi nationals was meant to drive a wedge in the close relationship between Riyadh and Washington (Sennott 2002).

The two al-Shehri brothers, Wail and Waleed, were radicalized after a visit to a faith healer in Mecca. At the age of 25 Wail had fallen into a deep depression and was contemplating suicide. As a remedy, Wail and his brother visited a faith healer in Mecca. During their time in Mecca Wail and Waleed fell under the influence of an Islamic militant who advised that they read the Koran, to fast, and to take up jihad. After that, the two brothers traveled to Afghanistan to undergo jihadist training in the Spring of 2000. Ahmed al-Nami befriended the al-Shehri brothers through the Seqeley mosque, the local Asir mosque constructed by the father of the two brothers. Al-Nami became obsessively religious after spending a summer at a Saudi government sponsored religious camp. Upon returning home, al-Nami entered King Khalid University's school of Islamic Law, a long regarded center of fundamentalism. It is believed that this is where he became involved with militant circles (Sennott 2002). Very little is known about al-Omari's radicalization process. He graduated from Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, was married, and had a daughter. He is known to have often served as an imam at his mosque (9/11 Commission Report 2004).

The remaining three Saudis were Satam al-Suqami, Majed Moqed, and Salem al-Hazmi. Neither Satam al-Suqami nor Majed Moqed seem to have had any ties with each other, or any of the other hijackers, before becoming involved with al-Qaeda sometime in 1999. Salem al-

Hazmi, on the other hand, was the younger brother of one of the hijackers of American Airlines flight 77, Nawaf al-Hazmi. Nawaf al-Hazmi recommended his younger brother to UBL for participation in the 9/11 plot (9/11 Commission Report 2004). During the original investigation into the planning of 9/11, Nawaf was lumped in with "the muscle" group, though it was later revealed that his role in the attack was much more extensive. Due to his role in planning the terror attack, and his prior relationship with al-Qaeda leadership, Nawaf does not fall into either the Hamburg Cell, or into "the muscle" group. Nawaf first traveled to Afghanistan from Saudi Arabia in 1993 before traveling to fight in Bosnia in 1995. After the end of the war in Bosnia, Nawaf remained in Afghanistan until returning to Saudi Arabia in 1999 to obtain a visa for travel to the United States. During his time in the United States, Nawaf attended lectures given by Anwar al-Awalaki in a San Diego mosque (Thomson 2011).

The pilot of American Airlines flight 77, destined for the Pentagon, was Hani Hanjur. Like Nawar, Hanjur does not fall into either the Hamburg Cell or within "the muscle" group. Unlike the other hijackers, Hanjur had a long and sustained presence in the United States. In 1991, Hanjur traveled to the United States to study English at the University of Arizona. He made two additional trips to the United States in April 1996 and November 1997. It seems as if Hanjur became radicalized during his first stay in the United States. The exact way in which Hanjur was recruited by al-Qaeda remains a mystery but U.S. officials believe he was spotted at either a mosque or prayer meeting, assessed, and brought into the fold (Fainaru and Ibrahim 2002).

The final hijacker, Khalid al-Mihdhar also does not fall into either of the aforementioned groups. Al-Mihdhar, like Nawaf, had close ties to the Islamic Center of San Diego where he attended lectures held by cleric Anwar al-Awalaki. Awalaki would later go on to join AQAP and

become its most visible member thanks to the countless sermons he posted on Youtube. By the time al-Mihdar was selected for the 9/11 hijacking, he was already an experienced jihadist. Al-Mihdar had traveled to fight in Bosnia with Nawaf al-Hamzi in 1995 (9/11 Commission 2004).

According to KSM, all of the "muscle" hijackers were personally selected for the mission by UBL between the summer of 2000 and April 2001. UBL would select operatives for the mission on the basis of the responses trainees would give to a questionnaire KSM administered upon an individuals arrival to a training camp. The hijacker would then swear an oath of loyalty to UBL and be sent to KSM to film his martyrdom video. UBL was also responsible for choosing, out of the hijackers selected for the mission, those that would be candidates for pilot training.

Beyond choosing the hijackers, there is credible evidence to suggest that UBL was also involved in choosing the targets for the attacks. After his arrest in Pakistan and during his subsequent interrogation at the hands of U.S. authorities, KSM revealed that UBL provided Atta with a list of targets for the 9/11 mission. During the planning stages, KSM and other senior al-Qaeda officials were advocating for an attack with far more targets, including nuclear reactors, and bridges on both coasts of the county. These plans, however, were rejected by UBL because he did not believe there to be enough time to adequately prepare for such a mission (Lichtblau 2003). The original idea for attacking high value targets with hijacked airplanes did, in fact, come from KSM. The mass murderer sought out UBL for the purpose of obtaining the funds necessary to carry out what he called "the planes operation". Once KSM joined al-Qaeda in late 1998 or early 1999, the plot became an official organization undertaking. According to KSM, UBL personally put the White House and the Pentagon on list of targets, the capitol was a joint decision, and KSM advocated for attacking the World Trade Center (9/11 Commission 2004).

C. Organizational Structure

The planning of the 9/11 attacks demonstrates the extensive involvement UBL had in the operations of al-Qaeda prior to the U.S. - led invasion of Afghanistan. Prior to the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda was organized as a *hierarchical* organization. Prior to selecting KSM's proposal of attacking U.S. targets with hijacked airliners, UBL had vetted a number of proposals for attacking the U.S. KSM's "plane operation" was the one that appealed to UBL the most, and that was why it was chosen as al-Qaeda's grandiose mission (9/11 Commission 2004). KSM had proposed the 9/11 "planes operation" to UBL as an entrepreneur seeking funds for his plans. At the time KSM proposed the operation he had no intention of formally joining al-Qaeda. However, it soon became clear that he would not be able to gain the necessary funds otherwise and KSM eventually joined al-Qaeda as a means to acquire funds that the group had access to. At this point in time, UBL had full control over al-Qaeda's resources and could dole them out as he saw fit (9/11 Commission 2004). Access to and control of resources is a key aspect in the operation of a hierarchical organization. While it was previously believed that UBL financed al-Qaeda through his own personal wealth, this has since been disproved. Al-Qaeda's estimated yearly operating cost prior to 9/11 was $30 million dollars and UBL only received $1 million from his family a year, and this source of funding was cut off in 1994 (CNN). Rather, al-Qaeda relied on an intricate fund-raising network developed over several years. Almost all funds were raised through donations from patrons in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. Other funds were collected from charities. Money from charities would find their way into al-Qaeda pockets either through charity employees who sympathized with al-Qaeda and diverted the funds, or the charities knowingly contributed to the jihadist cause (9/11 Commission 2004).

While UBL did not play a hand in recruiting the Hamburg cell or the "muscle" group into the organization, he did select each of them for their roles in the 9/11 attacks. Atta, specifically,

was chosen to lead the attack by UBL and met with the al-Qaeda leader during his time in Afghanistan on several occasions to iron out details of the attack. Furthermore, UBL also played a hand in selecting the targets for the attacks. KSM, the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks, had wanted to expand the event to include more targets. However, this plan was scrapped by UBL (9/11 Commission 2004).

There is an argument to be made that the manner in which the 9/11 terrorists were recruited into al-Qaeda demonstrates a *network* aspect to the terrorist group. The Hamburg Cell was recruited into al-Qaeda by Abu Musab, who had been dispatched to Europe by al-Qaeda, specifically to act as a recruiter. In this role, Abu Musab was operating under orders from central al-Qaeda leadership. His role can be likened to that of an HR recruiter for a major corporation. The recruiter has some discretion in his or her choices but ultimately their choices will be subject to review by management. The "muscle" group largely found their way to al-Qaeda through Saudi religious leaders and their ties to one another. This demonstrates the most disjointed aspect of the al-Qaeda organization at the time. Though the "muscle" found their way to al-Qaeda largely of their own volition, this does not represent a violation of the traits of a hierarchical organization. Rather, it demonstrates the far reach and influence al-Qaeda had already acquired at this point in time. This vast recruitment network would later allow the organization to thrive despite the measures taken against it by the United States and its allies in the War on Terror.

D. U.S. Led Invasion of Afghanistan

Following the devastation of 9/11, it was inevitable that the United States would react to such a brazen attack with a show of force. Ten days after the 9/11 attacks, President Bush delivered an ultimatum to the Taliban government. The President demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden or the government would "share in their [the terrorists] fate". The ultima-

tum was one of a string of demands that the United States put on the Taliban government, including closing down all terrorist training camps, and releasing all foreign nationals 'unjustly imprisoned' in Afghanistan (CNN 2001). The Taliban had provided al-Qaeda with a safe haven ever since UBL returned to Afghanistan from Sudan in May 1996. Due to international pressure placed on Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, Bashir was forced to ask UBL to leave the country. UBL decided to return to Afghanistan due to his connections with leaders of the *mujahedin* fighters. Upon his return to Afghanistan, UBL established a good working relationship with Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban. UBL even directed some of his operatives to fight alongside Mullah Omar against the defiant Northern Alliance (Atwan 2006). Mullah Omar agreed to provide al-Qaeda with a safe haven so long as UBL did not take steps to antagonize the United States (Laub 2014). This was a promise that UBL clearly soon broke.

Despite the threat implicit in Bush's speech, the Taliban government refused to hand over bin Laden without evidence that he had, in fact, been the mastermind behind the terrorist attacks. The Taliban regime was adamant that there was no evidence tying the al-Qaeda leader to the attacks. On October 7, 2001 the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan began with U.S. and British airstrikes. U.S. forces recruited the help of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance to provide the majority of ground troops. Two months later, the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar fell to allied forces and Bin Laden and the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, fled into Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas (FATA) (CBS News 2009).

The invasion of Afghanistan had the immediate effect of removing the Taliban from power and thus depriving al-Qaeda of its sanctuary within the country. The top al-Qaeda leadership was forced to flee in order to avoid capture. Many of the members of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan were, in fact, captured. This in and of itself meant that al-Qaeda no longer had a safe space

in which all actors could coordinate their actions and easily plot attacks in absolute secrecy. Different actors would now have to rely on remote methods of communication, whether they be satellite communications or couriers, to transmit information. Furthermore, the senior leadership could no longer devote all of its time to coordinating the organization's activities. Now, significant energy would have to be devoted to maintaining the secrecy of their location. Removing the Taliban from power made al-Qaeda more susceptible to intelligence gathering efforts because the organization was no longer afforded a state sanctuary and could more readily be targeted and attacked. The need to communicate through technological means now also meant that communications could be intercepted by intelligence services. Putting the senior al-Qaeda leaders into a state of constant paranoia over avoiding capture also made it harder for them to obtain sources of funding. Part of the early, and continued, U.S. campaign against al-Qaeda was aimed at depriving the terrorist group of financial resources. The U.S. and 100+ of its allies moved to freeze the funds of known terrorists. The freezing out of al-Qaeda through legitimate banking sources means that al-Qaeda no longer had access to the vast sums it once did. Now, a large part of al-Qaeda's reduced budget comes from corrupt facilitators diverting money to al-Qaeda from unwitting donors (Roth, Greenberg, Wille; 2004). The effect of these measures can be seen in the fact that al-Qaeda's regrouping immediately following the invasion did not occur at a noticeable rate (Acharya 2003).

U.S. troops also made destroying al-Qaeda training camps a priority. Previously, the training camps were used to teach inexperienced jihadists military tactics and to prepare large numbers of recruits for the realities of carrying out an operation. Without the training camps, the recruits would have far less experience in using weapons, constructing bombs, and hand to hand combat. Furthermore, the dismantling of training camps also meant that they could not be used

for further religious indoctrination. Continued religious instruction, especially if provided by someone as well-known as UBL, would have the effect of solidifying extremist sentiments and drive recruits to action (Acharya 2003). The combat training and ideological indoctrination of the al-Qaeda training camps were enjoyed by the 9/11 hijackers, but future terrorists would not have access to the same resources. This implies less experienced operatives in the future. Furthermore, the training camps had previously been used to forge connections between terrorists from different parts of the world. Investigations of future plots would find that, often, operatives were familiar with each because they had spent time together in an al-Qaeda training camp. The links forged at the centralized training camps would remain for years to come as the connections remained well past the invasion. However, future jihadists would be deprived of this resource.

The U.S. - led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was a classic *repress* counterterrorism tactic, and was a clear existential threat to al-Qaeda. The U.S. removed its sanctuary, turned its leaders into fugitives, and decimated its capabilities. The devastation heaped onto al-Qaeda is not surprising considering the military power of the United States. For years thereafter, al-Qaeda spent its time regrouping and found itself incapable of carrying out large scale attacks. This is why we see fairly small al-Qaeda activities leading into the end of 2003 and the summer of 2004. The devastating effect of the 2001 invasion was magnified by the fact that al-Qaeda did not anticipate this type of reaction from the United States. The United States had failed to respond to al-Qaeda's bombing of the *USS Cole* in 2000, and UBL predicated similar inaction. UBL also did not fully grasp the resources available to the United States military, thus sorely underestimating the type of response of which the U.S. would be capable (McCabe 2010). However, slowly the organization was able to adapt to its new situation and created alternative operational strategies that would allow it to continue inciting terror in the world.

VI. The Emergence of al-Qaeda Franchises

Following the U.S. - led invasion of Afghanistan we begin to see the emergence of prominent al-Qaeda franchise groups. Though there are more than a dozen Islamist groups that maintain ties with al-Qaeda, there have only ever been five full-fledged franchise groups that have been publicly recognized by either UBL or the present day leader of al-Qaeda, Ayman Al-Zawahiri. These five groups are al-Qaeda in in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), al-Shabaab and most recently, the al-Nusrah front. It is important to note that for a group to be considered a full-fledged franchise group the group must have pledged its loyalty to al-Qaeda and this pledge but have then been recognized by the top core al-Qaeda leader. Unless the pledge of loyalty is recognized by core al-Qaeda, either through a statement, or through a video announcement, the group is not considered an al-Qaeda affiliate. Al-Shabaab had pledged its loyalty to al-Qaeda several times before they were accepted as an affiliate (Joscelyn and Roggio 2012).

Four out of the five al-Qaeda franchises either currently have, or have had, leaders with ties to either UBL, al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, or both. The one exception to this is the leader of the al-Nusrah front, al-Qaeda's most recent franchise group. Very little is known about the current leader of the Nusrah front, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, and it is thus impossible to say for sure whether or not he has any of the aforementioned ties. The fact that four out of five leaders can be directly traced back to UBL or the Afghan jihad indicates that while a franchise may include local recruits, the group began as a result of core al-Qaeda's influence and likely would not exist where it not for the local *emir's* ties to core al-Qaeda. These franchises did not arise independently of core al-Qaeda and do not act independently of core al-Qaeda. The ties that franchise leaders have to al-Qaeda and the Afghan jihad instill within them a sense of ongoing loyalty to the core.

The first official al-Qaeda franchise was al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). AQI was originally established in Iraq as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2004 by long time Islamist militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Zarqawi pledged his allegiance to UBL and core al-Qaeda later that same year (The National Counterterrorism Center). Zarqawi was of Jordanian-Palestinian origin. He joined the Afghan jihad against the USSR at the young age of fifteen, fighting alongside his father, Sheikh Abdullah Azzam, who served as a spiritual mentor to UBL. Years later, Zarqawi's online postings would catch the attention of UBL (Weaver 2006). Zarqawi was later killed in a drone strike in 2006. In February 2014, Zawahiri publicly disowned AQI saying that it was "not an affiliate with the al-Qaeda group and has no organizational relation with it". Zawahiri disowned AQI after a long battle between the groups leader and the Nusrah front with relation to Islamist goals in the ongoing Syrian conflict (Joscelyn 2014).

The next group to formally join al-Qaeda was al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). AQIM officially pledged its allegiance to core al-Qaeda in September 2006. AQIM operates in what is known as the *maghreb*, which constitutes the Western most part of the Arab world, defined as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania (Jacinto 2010). AQIM developed out of the remnants of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), an armed Islamist group operating in Algeria (The National Counterterrorism Center). The *emir* of AQIM, Abu Musab Abdul Wadoud, fought in the Afghan jihad against the USSR (Jacinto 2010). It is not known if he met UBL during his time in Afghanistan.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) officially became an al-Qaeda franchise group in 2009, following the merger of al-Qaeda in Yemen (AQY) and with the remnants of Saudi al-Qaeda operatives. The leader of AQAP, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, was also the leader of AQY prior to the merger. AQY was established following Wuhayshi's escape from a Yemeni

prison. Out of all of the franchise leaders, Wuhayshi has the most detailed history with UBL and core al-Qaeda leaders. Wuhayshi served as UBL's personal secretary prior to the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan. Today, Wuhayshi serves as the general operations manager for all of al-Qaeda. A more detailed discussion of the establishment of AQAP and Wuhayshi's history with core al-Qaeda follows later in this work.

The *Harakat Shabaab al-Mujahidin*, or al-Shabaab for short, was recognized as an official al-Qaeda franchise in February 2012. The group is the militant offshoot of the Somali Islamist political movement Somali Council of Islamic Courts. Al-Shabaab remains engaged in guerrilla warfare against the internationally recognized Somali Federal Government. Al-Shabaab's *emir* from from 2006 until his death in 2008 was Aden Hashi Ayro. Ayro was trained by al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the late 1990s (Bell 2006). Ayro later fought alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance before returning to Somalia in 2003 (Perry 2008). Following Ayro's death, Ahmed Abdi Godane (Mukhtar Abu Zubair) became the *emir* of al-Shabaab. Zubair was awarded a Saudi scholarship to study accountancy in Pakistan. While in Pakistan, Zubair used that opportunity to travel to Afghanistan and train at al-Qaeda training camps before returning to Somalia in late 2001 (Dettmer 2013).

The most recent addition to al-Qaeda's web is the al-Nusrah front. The Nusrah front is the principal Islamist fighting group currently engaged in the ongoing Syrian civil war. Nusrah currently controls large areas in Syria and has even begun doling out services to Syrians living in the Eastern part of the country. In April 2013, the leader of AQI announced the absorption of al-Nusrah into his organization. Al-Nusrah quickly denied this claim, instead choosing to pledge allegiance directly to Zawahiri (Agence France-Presse 2013). The choice of the Nusrah front to align themselves with Zawahiri, instead of with AQI, speaks to the preeminence of core al-Qaeda

leaders over franchise leaders amongst Islamists. The Nusrah front saw Zawahiri as the true

leader of the Islamist jihad movement, not AQI.

Each al-Qaeda franchise operates within its own sphere of influence and enjoys a degree

of autonomy. Each group, however, has pledged its allegiance to core al-Qaeda and retains both

symbolic and practical ties to the central leadership. The establishment of franchises speaks to

the decentralization of al-Qaeda since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. The establishment of

franchises does not seem to have been an active decision on the part of al-Qaeda, so it cannot be

said to have been a planned response to U.S. counterterrorism measures. On the other hand, the

allegiance given to core al-Qaeda by these franchises and the subsequent use of these franchises

by al-Qaeda to execute attacks speaks to the leaderships ability to adapt to the hand they have

been dealt.

While al-Qaeda currently only has four official franchises, it does have a number of af-

filiates. Affiliates are those groups who, though they have not officially pledged their allegiance

to al-Qaeda, maintain close ideological and operational ties to core al-Qaeda or to its franchises.

Affiliates will often coordinate with al-Qaeda to carry out attacks or kidnappings. It is thought

that the 2003 Casablanca bombings were carried out by the al-Qaeda affiliate, the Moroccan Is-

lamic Combatant Group (GICM) in conjunction with al-Qaeda (UN Security Council).

VII. 2004 Madrid Bombings

On March 11, 2004 the Western world experienced the worst terror attack since 9/11. At

7:37 am, 10 bombs exploded in coordinated attacks on four Spanish commuter trains in Madrid

at three different stations. 191 people were killed in the attacks and a further 2,000 were injured

(CNN 2013). Initial government comments put the blame on the Basque separatist group ETA

for the mass killings. The attacks, however, did not fit the ETA *mondus operandi*. In previous

attacks, ETA operatives would warn officials of the location and timing of the attacks. Further-

more, attacks were generally aimed at politicians, journalists, and security officials. These attacks, however, largely affected students and workers using the commuter trains during rush hour. The attacks did, however fit the high-visibility, high-casualty, covert attack MO of al-Qaeda. Security officials soon began to go on record saying that the Islamist extremist group could not be ruled out as the perpetrator of the attack. Two days later, on March 13, al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack via a video tape left at the doorstep of a Spanish media outlet. The man speaking Arabic in the video had a noticeable Moroccan accent (CNN 2013).

Despite the fact that al-Qaeda had taken responsibility for the attack, the initial two-year investigation into the attacks concluded that the perpetrators did not have any links to the global jihadist organization. The terrorists and the plot were described as being "homegrown". Al-Qaeda's claim of responsibility was attributed to the organizations recognition that the plot was inspired by their ideology and their desire to remain relevant (Associated Press 2006). In 2006, the attacks were said to have been the handiwork of Jamal Ahmidan, a former Moroccan petty criminal, and his associates. Ahmidan was radicalized while in a Moroccan prison and was said to be the mastermind and ringleader of the cell. The story went that Ahmidan did not have any connections to the larger international jihad.

Further examinations, however, reveal that the cell was far from a homegrown terrorist group acting in isolation. Rather, Ahmidan was just the leader of one the group's four nodes. Ahmidan and his criminal associates were brought into the fold to assist in the attack's operations and finances. The real planning and ideology behind the attack can be linked back directly to senior al-Qaeda officials and other al-Qaeda operatives (Reinares 2012).

The story of the 2004 Madrid bombings goes back to 1994 and the establishment of the al-Qaeda cell active in Spain. The cell was founded by Mustafa Setmarian Nasar, a Spanish citi-

zen of Syrian origin and Anwar Adnan Mohamed Saleh, a Palestinian. Syrian-born Imad Yar-

kas, also known as Abu Dahdah, took over as the leader of the cell in 1995 once Saleh moved to

Peshwar, Pakistan to assist al-Qaeda in the reception of recruited Arabs and routing them to Af-

ghanistan. Al-Suri moved to London to assist in editing al-Ansar, the magazine published by the

Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA). Abu Dahdah not only led the Spanish al-Qaeda cell, but

was also considered a close confidant of senior al-Qaeda members and was aware of the organi-

zation's international plans. Abu Dahdah was considered important enough that he was aware of

and involved in the planning of the 9/11 attacks. Mohamed Atta visited Spain twice in 2001 be-

fore the 9/11 attacks, the second time being in July for a meeting in the Spanish resort town of

Salou. This meeting in Salou was organized by Abu Dahdah and his associate Amer Azizi. This

meeting appears to have been arranged to give the final go-ahead for the attacks (Wright 2004).

This meeting has become known as the Tarragona Meeting after the nearest large town. It is at

the Tarragona meeting that Atta met with Binshalshibh and discussed the final approved targets

and the pilots. Binalshibh informed Atta that UBL wanted the attacks to be carried out as soon

as possible (9/11 Commission Report). Azizi's phone number was later found in the phone book

of Zacarias Moussaoui, a self-admitted al-Qaeda operative and one of the members of the 9/11

Hamburg Cell (The Wall Street Journal 2004).

   After the 9/11 attacks, the Spanish National Police (SNP) cracked down on Abu

Dahdah's cell in Operation Datil due to evidence that Abu Dahdah had prior knowledge of the

9/11 attacks. On November 13, 2001, the SNP took Abu Dahdah and ten of his associates into

custody. Documents, computers, videos, propaganda and various firearms were collected in the

raid (Department of Justice 2006). The crackdown by SNP decimated the cell and brought about

its end, in that form. Abu Dahdah himself was sentenced to a total of 27 years, 15 years on

charges of conspiracy to commit the 9/11 attacks and 12 years for being a leader of a terrorist group. He was cleared of being an accomplice to murder in connection to the deaths of the victims of the 9/11 attacks.

Though the immediate cell led by Abu Dahdah was decimated, the Spanish connections to al-Qaeda leadership persisted through those who Abu Dahdah had indoctrinated. Amer Azizi, the Abu Dahdah follower who had helped to organize the Tarragona meetings, was out of the country at the time of the SNP arrests. Amer Azizi was recruited into the Abu Dahdah cell by 1995 and was dispatched by Abu Dahdad to a jihadist facility in Zenica, Bosnia. By 2000, Azizi had also received training in Afghanistan in camps managed by al-Qaeda and its North African affiliates, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). Upon his return, Azizi became a well-respected member of the Abu Dahdah cell and was considered a leading recruiter. At this point, while Azizi was an al-Qaeda operative he was not considered to be a senior figure. In November 2001, when the SNP dismantled the Abu Dahdah cell, Azizi was in Iran and thus escaped arrest. From Iran, Azizi made his way to Pakistan. Once in Pakistan he consolidated his position in al-Qaeda and worked his way up the ranks. Azizi became the deputy to Hamza Rabia, the head of external operations for al-Qaeda. In this position he served as the intermediary between al-Qaeda leadership and the operatives in Spain.

The initial groundwork for the 2004 bombings was set up in December 2001 when Azizi met with Abdelatif Mourafik, a LIFG operative. The two men had met previously when Azizi was receiving military training at an LIFG operated camp. Mourafik was later accused of participating in the 2003 Casablanca bombings in May 2003 that killed 45 people. In 2002, Mourafik suggested Mustafa Maymouni initiate the organization of a local Spanish cell to carry

out the bombings. Maymouni was a former member of the Abu Dahdah cell, recruited into the cell by Azizi himself. Maymouni rented a rural house in Chinchon that would become the base of operations for the bombers.   In May of 2003, however, Maymouni was arrested in Morocco for his involvement in the 2003 Casablanca attacks. Once Maymouni was arrested Serhane Ben Abdelmajd Fakhet and Driss Chebli came to lead the cell jointly. Chebli, however, was also arrested in Spain a few months later, accused of being a member of the Abu Dahdah cell. This left Fakhet as the sole leader of the cell (Reinares 2012).

Fakhet was also a former member of the Abu Dahdah cell. He had been radicalized and recruited by Azizi in the 1990s. The two met in person frequently throughout 2001 and then communicated electronically, presumably about the impending attack, throughout 2002 and 2003. In 2003, Azizi travelled to Spain to convey the final go ahead and blessing for the bombings to the cell from senior al-Qaeda leadership. It is likely that Jamal Zougam came into the cell through his connection to Azizi. Azizi had met Zougam in 2001 whilst in Pakistan. Zougam had also previously been investigated by the SNP for belonging to the Abu Dahdah cell. Despite the various connections that existed amongst the actors, it is Amer Azizi in his role as an al-Qaeda senior operative, who brought the main actors together. The main actors were, in addition, largely all members of Abu Dahdah or another one of al-Qaeda's North African affiliates. This should make it clear enough that the 2004 Madrid bombings were not the product of home-grown, al-Qaeda "inspired" jihadists (Reinares 2012).

Not only were the Madrid bombers connected to senior al-Qaeda leaders, but the group involved two of al-Qaeda's North African affiliates. Operatives for the LIFG and the GICM were also involved. Both Youssef Belhadj and Hassan el-Haski were members of the GICM. Belhadj is suspected of having been the operative that set the date for the attacks and assisted in

last minute preparation. He also took on the alias of Abu Dujana al-Afghani, the name of the robed man who went on tape to claim that al-Qaeda had been behind the bombings. Haski, also a member of the GICM, was thought to be acting as the head of the GICM in Europe at the time of the attacks. Though it is not known how he came to have such connections, Asir Rifaat Anouar was also a member of the GICM and likely came to join the Madrid cell as a result of this connection.

The initial investigation pegged Jamal Ahmidan, a criminal and drug trafficker, as being one of the cell leaders and masterminds of the operation. Jamal Ahmidan did play a critical role in the operation, though he was not a central figure. Ahmidan financed the operation through his possession of 70 pounds of hashish. He was a friend of Serhane Fakhet and was thus brought into the operation. With him, Ahmidan brought a number of individuals he had met through his criminal endeavors. Among these associates was Rafa Zouhier. Zouhier would serve as the link between the terrorist cell and the Spaniards who would eventually supply the explosives for the operation. Zouhier had previously spent time in prison with a Spaniard by the name of Antonio Toro Castro. Castro introduced Zouhier to his brother in law, Emilio Trashorras, who was eventually sentenced to 39,000 years in prison for his involvement. Trashorras organized a group of Spaniards to steal and transport explosive material for Ahmidan. Trashorras provided his services in exchange for drugs from Ahmidan.

In total, 116 people were arrested in relation to the Madrid bombings. Of those 116 people, 28 individuals actually went to trial. In October 2007, a Spanish judge found 21 people guilty and acquitted 7. Below is a chart detailing the connections and outcomes of those actors directly involved in the bombings.

Name	Nationality	Connection	Outcome
Emilio Trashorras	Spanish	Provided Dynamite to the cell in exchange for drugs	Murder conviction carrying a sentence of 35,000 years
Jamal Zougam	Moroccan	Accused of placing one of the packs containing dynamite	Murder conviction carrying a sentence of 43,000 years
Othman al - Gnaoui	Moroccan	Deputy to Jamal Ahmidan	Murder conviction carrying a sentence of 39,000 years
Youssef Belhadj	Moroccan	Set the date for the attacks and assisted in last minute preparations	Convicted of the lesser charge of belonging to a terrorist organization, sentenced to 12 years
Hassan el-Haski	Moroccan	Allegedly acted as the head of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM) in Spain. Accused of being aware of and instigating the attack	Convicted of the lesser charge of belonging to a terrorist organization, sentenced to 12 years
Abdulmajid Bouchar	Moroccan	Had ties to the cell ringleaders and met with them before they committed suicide.	Acquitted of murder but was convicted for possessing explosives and belonging to a terrorist organization; sentenced to 18 years
Rafa Zouhier	Moroccan	Alleged middleman between the Spanish cell and Emilio Trashorras	Convicted of obtaining explosives, sentenced to 10 years
Hamid Ahmidan	Moroccan	Cousin of Jamal Ahmidan; described as the "military planner", took part in drug trafficking	Convicted of drug trafficking and collaborating with a terrorist organization, sentenced to 23 years
Rachid Aglif	Moroccan, raised in Spain since the age of 10	Alleged lieutenant of Jamal Ahmidan	Convicted of supplying explosives and of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 18 years

Name	Nationality	Connection	Outcome
Mohamed Bouharrat	Moroccan	In charge of terrorist recruitment and gathering information on the targets	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years
Fouad el-Morabit	Moroccan	Connections to Rabei Osman "The Egyptian"	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years
Mouhannad Almallan Dabas	Syrian	In charge of logistics and recruitment	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years; In 2008 his conviction was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court
Saed el-Harrak	Moroccan	Active cell member; his phone number was found in the debris of the Leganes apartment where cell leaders committed suicide	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years
Mohamed Larbi Ben Sallam	Moroccan	Messenger to Rabei Osman "The Egyptian"; allegedly in charge of bringing propaganda material to cell meetings	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years
Basel Ghalyoun	Syrian	Had ties to Rabei Osman and Serhan Fakhet, the ideological mastermind	Convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, sentenced to 12 years; In 2008, his conviction was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court
Abdelilah el-Fadual el-Akil	Moroccan	Associate of Jamal Ahmidan; worked at the house where some of the bombs were assembled	Convicted of collaborating with a terrorist cell, sentenced to 9 years; In 2008, his conviction was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court
Raul Gonzalez Pelaez	Spanish	Worker at the mine from which the explosives used in the bombings were stolen; accused of accompanying cell members to steal the explosives	Convicted of trafficking explosives, was originally sentenced to 5 years; In 2008 his conviction was overturned by the Spanish Supreme Court

Name	Nationality	Connection	Outcome
Sergio Alvarez Sanchez	Spanish	Participated in two of three trips to transport the explosives and detonators to Madrid for Jamal Ahmidan	Convicted of supplying explosives, sentenced to three years
Antonio Ivan Reis Palacio	Spanish	Admitted that he participated in the transportation of explosives in exchange for canceling a drug debt he owed to Antonio Toro	Convicted of supplying explosives, sentenced to 3 years
Nasreddine Bousbaa	Algerian	Received numerous phone calls from those involved in the attacks starting in January 2004; the documents he allegedly forged were found in the rubble of the Leganes apartment	Convicted of document forgery, sentenced to 3 years
Mahmoud Slimane Aoun	Lebanese	Allegedly forged documents for Jamal Ahmidan	Convicted of document forgery, sentenced to 3 years
Antonio Toro Castro	Spanish	Introduced his brother in law Emilio Trashorras to Zouhier, with whom he had been in jail; accused of exchanging explosives for drugs	Originally acquitted in 2007; In 2008 the Spanish Supreme Court overturned his acquittal and sentenced him to 4 years
Rabei Osman Sayed Ahmed, "The Egyptian"	Egyptian	Was described by prosecutors as one of the masterminds of the operation	Acquitted; In 2008 the Spanish Supreme Court upheld the acquittal
Carmen Maria Toro Castro	Spanish	Wife of Emilio Trashorras, is said to have accompanied her husband to negotiations relating to the explosives	Acquitted
Emilio Llano Alvarez	Spanish	The security guard in charge of the explosives at the mine from where they were stolen	Acquitted

Name	Nationality	Connection	Outcome
Serhane Ben Abdelma-jid	Tunisian	Suspected cell ring-leader and ideological mastermind	Committed suicide in a group suicide apartment in the Madrid suburb of Leganes
Jamal Ahmidan	Moroccan	Originally thought to be the ringleader; petty criminal radicalized in a Moroccan prison;	Committed suicide in a group suicide in an apartment in the Madrid suburb of Leganes
Abdennabi Kounjaa	Moroccan	Helped to acquire the last shipment of explo-sives, placed one of the bombs	Committed suicide in a group suicide in an apartment in the Madrid suburb of Leganes
Asri Rifat Anouar	Moroccan	Connected to the GICM	Committed suicide in a group suicide in an apartment in the Madrid suburb of Leganes
Said Berraj	Moroccan	Considered a key insti-gator; had met with three al-Qaeda opera-tives in Istanbul in 2000	Escaped authorities; whereabouts unknown
Mohammed Oulad Akcha	Moroccan	Acquired the final shipment of explosives alongside Abdennabi Kounjaa	Escaped authorities; whereabouts unknown
Rachid Oulad Akcha	Moroccan	Brother of Mohammed Oulad Akcha	Escaped authorities; whereabouts unknown

B. Organizational Structure

Al-Qaeda clearly had a hand in plotting the 2004 Madrid bombings. The Spanish cell

that planned and carried out the attacks were largely members of the Abu Dahdah cell and the

main plotters were connected through their participation in this al-Qaeda cell. Though located in

Spain, the Abu Dahdah cell was a full fledged core al-Qaeda cell. Abu Dahdah was considered

important enough to assist in the plotting of 9/11, cell members had undergone jihadist training

in Afghanistan, and the cell was connected to other cells in Germany and France (Schweitzer and

Shay 2008). The Abu Dahdah cell was also responsible for obtaining and laundering funds for

other al-Qaeda networks around the world. Syrian born Muhammmad Galeb Kalaje (Abu Talha), a member of the Abu Dahdah cell, laundered at least 700,000 Euros to al-Qaeda actors in Europe, the United States and the Middle East through front construction companies in Madrid. Abu Dahdah kept well informed of the changing European immigration laws, allowing his network to obtain visas for Islamic activists and militants in other countries.

The other Islamist actors, not the Spanish operatives who acted out of greed, were recruited into the plot through al-Qaeda's ties to other North African terrorist organizations. The main intermediary between the Spanish operatives and al-Qaeda leaders was Amer Azizi. Himself once a member of the Abu Dahdah cell, Azizi rose through al-Qaeda's ranks to become the deputy assistant the Hamza Rabia, al-Qaeda's general manager for operations at the time. The position of operations manager is often considered to be the number 3 position within the al-Qaeda hierarchy. Azizi was the one to come up with the plan for the Madrid 2004 bombings. He then coordinated between the Spanish cell and the two other North African Islamist groups, LIFG and GICM to lay the groundwork for the operations. The Spanish Cell relied on Azizi to transmit al-Qaeda leaders blessings for the mission to the members of the cell. While the Spanish cell did ask Azizi to provide them with additional manpower from the training camps, Azizi declined the request by saying that, due to security reasons, it was not possible for the group to send any more operatives to Spain. Though this request for additional support was denied, Azizi remained involved in the plot until the event, helping to iron out final preparations (Reinares 2012).

Approval for the operation seems to extend as high up as Hamza Rabia in his role as head of al-Qaeda's external operations. Though UBL does mention the Madrid bombings in an audio recording in 2006, there is no evidence to suggest that UBL had any role in planning the attack,

or even that he had extensive prior knowledge of the attack. There is the distinct possibility that, because Hamza Rabia reported to UBL in his role as operations manager, that UBL had prior knowledge and some strategic input in the planning of the Madrid bombings. Even if this were the case, all evidence points that operations planning was done by Amer Azizi and the terrorists on the ground in Spain. UBL did not contribute ideas to this attack in the same way that he planned 9/11.

The way in which the Madrid bombings were planned points to an adaptation in al-Qaeda's strategy. Where al-Qaeda during 9/11 was highly centralized and hierarchical, al-Qaeda in 2004 shows more decentralization and a greater willingness to give its franchises greater autonomy in the planning of operations. In the years between 2001 and 2004, al-Qaeda had moved from being a hierarchical organization to resembling more of a network group. A distinct shift in organization can be seen through the procurement of resources for the attack. In the planning of 9/11, UBL provided all financial resources for the plot. Three years later, however, the cell leaders were expected to procure the resources necessary for themselves, which explains the cells connections to criminal elements without jihadist ties. UBL no longer seems to have had a monopoly on the distribution of resources. The network arrangement of al-Qaeda in 2004 can best be described as a network-hub model. In this model, different franchises are all con-nected to one central actor, in this case UBL and core al-Qaeda leaders based in Pakistan. In a traditional network, including a network-hub, there is no chain of command. Al-Qaeda's form of a network-hub, however, does include a chain of command. The chain of command exists in the organization as whole, in the sense that UBL and core al-Qaeda are still viewed as the senior leaders. Though UBL may not have planned the Madrid 2004 bombings, his blessing, and the blessings of his closest associates, were still needed in order for the attack to move forward. It is

unclear whether the plotters sought out the blessing of al-Qaeda's leaders of their own volition or whether this was a constraint placed upon them by the organization. Seeing as how Azizi was one of the masterminds of the operation, it is likely that approval was sought because Azizi reported directly to Hamza Rabia, a member of core al-Qaeda leadership. However, this tradition of seeking the blessing of the leadership for large-scale plots has continued. In 2010, former al-Qaeda number three Ahmad Sidiqi revealed that UBL had approved a Mumbai - style attack in France and Britain (Der Spiegel 2010).

The other nodes of the network, or cells such as the Spanish cell, do not have any sort of hierarchy amongst themselves. The nodes can be considered equal. Within the nodes, however, we see a loose hierarchy. The leader of the Spanish cell was Serhane Ben Abdelmajid. He was the mastermind of the operation and was viewed as the leader of the cell, in part due to his close ties to Amer Azizi. Other actors, such as Jamal Zougam, Emilio Trashorras and Said Berraj are viewed as more central figures due to their access to resources and connections to other actors. Other than the central figures, however, there does not appear to be any strict sense of hierarchy or predetermined flow of communication/information amongst the rest of the actors. Al-Qaeda is seemingly following a *hybrid* model during this time - a modified network-hub amongst the different nodes of the organization and a loose hierarchical model within the nodes itself.

Al-Qaeda's shift away from a purely hierarchical model of organization was largely a result of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. Now that al-Qaeda had been uprooted and was no longer centralized in one land area, U.S. counterterrorism strategy was forced to adapt away from a warfare, respond model to meet the challenges of a more dispersed enemy. The adaptation came in the shape of targeted drone killings.

C. Targeted Killings

In the months following the Madrid bombings, the United States began its covert drone program in the tribal regions of Pakistan. The covert C.I.A. program is different from the U.S. military's drone program. The United States military ran its own drone programs in Afghanistan and Iraq as an extension of the conventional war in those countries. This drone program was publicly acknowledged and talked about by the U.S. government. The drone program operated by the C.I.A. conducts its operations outside of combat zones and is not formally acknowledged by the U.S. government (Mayer 2009). The C.I.A. has been tasked with the drone strikes carried out in Pakistan, Yemen, and other countries because they are not official war zones and the missions are therefore classified (Kaplan 2013). The drones in the C.I.A. program are "flown" by civilians, either C.I.A. intelligence officers or private contractors hired by the Agency. The teams that control the drones are dispersed throughout the world, with a team abroad near airfields in Afghanistan and Pakistan largely responsible for takeoffs and landings of the drones. While in the air, the drones may be controlled by another team working in Langley. The stream from the drone's camera's are fed back to officers at the National Security Agency (NSA) to confirm that a target has been correctly identified. The C.I.A. has final authority of whether or not to terminate a target (Mayer 2009).

The first lethal drone strike of the program was executed in June 2004, and resulted in the death of Nek Muhammed. Nek Muhammed was not, in fact an al-Qaeda operative. Mr. Muhammed was a member of the Pakistani Taliban and a declared enemy of the state of Pakistan. The C.I.A carried out the drone strike as part of a deal with the Pakistani military that, in exchange for that cooperation, the United States would now be allowed to use Pakistani airspace for drone operations against al-Qaeda operatives and other individuals the U.S. deemed national security risks (Mazzetti 2013). From 2004 to 2008 the strikes were constrained to eliminating

high profile targets. In 2009, President Obama expanded the program and the drones carried out a total of 53 strikes, in comparison to the 35 executed in 2008. 117 strikes were carried out in 2010, and since then the numbers have started to taper off (Foundation for the Defense of Democracies 2012). One of these high profile targets eliminated during the period between 2004 and 2008 was Hamza Rabia himself, the operations manager to whom Amer Azizi reported. Hamza Rabia was killed by a missile fired from a drone on December 03, 2005. A long line of Hamza Rabia's successors would also be taken out by drone strikes. In addition, from 2004 to 2009 half of the high-value targets were taken out, including; Nazimuddin Zalalov, a former lieutenant of UBL; Ilyas Kashmiri, al-Qaeda's chief of paramilitary operations in Pakistan; Saad bin Laden, UBL's eldest son; Abu Sulayman al-Jazairi, an Algerian al-Qaeda planner believed to have helped train operatives for attacks in Europe and the United States; and Osama al-Kini and Sheikh Ahmed Salim Swedan, al-Qaeda operatives who are thought to have played central roles in the 1998 bombings of American embassies in East Africa (Mayer 2009).

The drone strikes have been successful in keeping operatives on the run and in hiding. This often diverts the leader's attention away from planning attacks and keeps them focused on their own survival. The reliance of drone strikes on local informants also created a culture of suspicion amongst al-Qaeda operatives. Four Europeans arrested on charges of trying to join al-Qaeda in Pakistan in 2008 spoke to how militants had become suspicious of one another and were forced to take extreme measures to protect their communications, having developed a habit of only leaving their hideouts under the cover of darkness (Mayer 2009). This has certainly hampered al-Qaeda's operational capacity. As communications take longer, there is a greater chance of them being intercepted. As tensions among militants increase the possibility of discord amongst the group arises, which reaps benefits for intelligence gathering for the United

States, not to mention the fact that planning large scale attacks becomes more problematic when militants do not know who among their ranks they can trust to keep secrets. This speaks to al-Qaeda growing more decentralized and compartmentalized as a result of the drone attacks. With central leaders less visible as a result of target killings, individual actors are more likely to coalesce into small groups. This speaks to the decrease in large scale attacks, but leads to the possibility of smaller groups carrying out a multitude of small, localized attacks. These attacks may not be able to cause the widespread damage that we witnessed on 9/11 but will still cost lives, create terror, and result in increased security expenditure.

A further problem with drone strikes is that they have only ever managed to eliminate those targets viewed as the al-Qaeda number three and below. As operations manager, the third ranking al-Qaeda official is far more exposed and vulnerable to targeting as a result of his activities. Both UBL and Zawahiri were never successfully targeted in a drone strike because their positions allowed them to remain hidden. The al-Qaeda number three position of operations manager requires the operative to communicate with franchises and cells regularly in order to maintain abreast of developments and in order to assist in the plotting of operations. Both UBL and Zawahiri were able to communicate through couriers rather than through telecommunications, and did not have to exit their hiding places. While efforts have been made to go after al-Qaeda's number 1 and 2, they have been far less successful. After all, it took the United States ten years to track down and eliminate UBL. Now that Zawahiri has taken over as al-Qaeda's number one, the U.S. is making efforts to locate him. It is believed that Zawahiri is hiding in Pakistan, though even this has yet to be confirmed. Even though the post of operations manager is a high-ranking, important role, al-Qaeda has also never had an issue replacing a dead or captured operative. The killing of al-Qaeda's number three has become something of a joke in the

media, as the incident seems to occur so often as to be largely irrelevant. The easily replaceable nature of the dead al-Qaeda operatives calls into question the usefulness of predator drone strikes and the claim made by the U.S. government in 2009 that al-Qaeda's leadership was "decimated" (Gjelten 2009). After all, after Hamza Rabia was killed in 2005, he was quickly replaced by Abu Laith al-Libi. Al-Libi was then killed in a 2008 air strike, only to be replaced by Mustafa Abu al-Yazid. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, al-Yazid was also killed in a drone strike, in 2010, but was replaced by Abu Yahya al-Libi (Agence France-Presse 2013). Al-Qaeda seems to have a constant stream of militants willing to replace those operatives that are killed or captured. Decapitation of the organization does not seem to be a viable strategy. Drone strikes may serve as tactic, but most certainly are not a strategy.

Drone strikes demonstrate a shift from the earlier *respond* strategy of the United States, to one of *repress*. Drone strikes show a more active effort on the part of the United States to pursue al-Qaeda operatives and terminate their ability to plot against the United States. Drone strikes, however, cannot be classified as *pursue* because the *pursue* strategy implies investigative or purely intelligence measures. Drone strikes combine intelligence efforts with violent tactics.

The effectiveness of drone strikes as a counterterrorism measure is also called into question because of the collateral damage that results from the drones. Often times, bystanders are killed in the targeted attacks. These bystanders are often women and children. These deaths tend to incite anti-American sentiments in protests within Pakistan. Beyond angering the urban population in Pakistan, the drone strikes are said to fuel an increase in insurgent recruitment that comes from a desire to exact revenge on the United States for the death of a loved one (Mothana 2012). A Yemeni lawyer tweeted "Dear Obama, when a US drone missile kills a child in Yemen, the father will go to war with you, guaranteed. Nothing to do with Al Qaeda"

(@BaFana3, Twitter). While drone strikes may eliminate present al-Qaeda leaders, they also create a new generation of tribesmen that have suffered loss at the hand of the United States and are positioning themselves to become the al-Qaeda leaders of tomorrow. The U.S. drone strikes against operatives in Yemen are cited as a key reason for the rising power of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the Saudi and Yemeni branch of the terrorist organization (Mothana 2012).

IX. 2007 London Car Bombs

London suffered a terrible attack in July, 2005 that took the lives of 52 civilians and injured hundreds of others. Two years later, the city was once again threatened with the specter of terrorism. Luckily, this time around, the attack did not succeed and only the plotters were injured. Unlike the 7/7 bombings, the plotters connection to al-Qaeda was soon apparent. In the 7/7 attacks the link to al-Qaeda was not discovered until 2011 and continues to be investigated to this day. There is not yet enough public information regarding the link between the 7/7 bombers and al-Qaeda to create a thorough SNA chart. Once the 2007 bombers were arrested, their ties to al-Qaeda were quickly discovered thanks to their travel records and communications records.

On Friday, June 29, 2007, police officers discovered two cars in London's theater district filled with bombs fashioned from gasoline, gas cylinders, and nails. The first bomb was discovered by accident when an ambulance responding to a call from a nearby nightclub noticed smoke emanating from one of the parked cars. When police arrived they discovered a cellphone in the car that was supposed to serve as the bomb's trigger. The second car bomb was also discovered largely by accident. The second car, a blue Mercedes, was impounded after being ticketed. After the first car bomb was discovered, the parking enforcers notified police that the car they had recently impounded smelled strongly of gasoline. Unlike in the Madrid 2004 bombings, a possible link to al-Qaeda was immediately brought into the conversation. The composi-

tion of the car bombs closely resembled plans recovered from the computer of a British citizen, Dhiren Barot, in Pakistan in July 2004. Dhiren Barot was the leader of a cell of seven other Islamists in London who were plotting to bomb several prominent financial buildings in the United States. Barot and his group received directions from KSM to "case economic and 'Jewish' targets in New York City' (Mueller 2011). The plans were dubbed the "Gas Limos Project" and intended to blow up three limousines in an underground parking garage. The limousines were to be filled with 12 or 13 cylinders of propane, acetylene or liquid oxygen. The limousines were also to be filled with nails that would act as shrapnel to inflict more damage (Jordan and Whitlock 2007). The structure of the bombs was also similar to those roadside bombs used in Iraq against allied troops (Dodd et al., 2007).

The following day on June 30, 2007, a car plowed into Glasgow International Airport and caught fire. The car was doused in gasoline and it was reported that one of the two men in the car had a suicide belt around his waist. Though it could not be immediately confirmed, police did go on record saying that they believed the two incidents were connected (Armitage 2007).

The two men who plowed the Jeep Cherokee into Glasgow Airport were immediately arrested. The driver of the vehicle, Kafeel Ahmed, had to be taken to the hospital to be treated for burns covering 90% of his body. Kafeel had caught on fire after dousing himself with gasoline and then attempted to attack the bystanders who tried to subdue him and his passenger. The passenger of the jeep was Dr. Bilal Talal Abdulla. He was immediately arrested and taken into police custody. Two days later, it was confirmed that the London car bombs were the work of the same two men who had plowed their car into Glasgow airport. Another four people were then arrested in connection with the attacks, those four being Dr. Mohammed Asha and his wife,

Sabeel Ahmed, the brother of Kafeel Ahmed, and in Australia, police arrested Dr. Mohammed Haneef, a cousin of the Ahmed brothers.

The apparent mastermind and leader behind the attacks was Dr. Bilal Talal Abdulla. According to security sources, Abdulla chose the targets, identified tactics, and obtained funding (The Mirror 2008). Abdulla had been born in Britain, though his family moved back to Iraq when he was three years old. Abdulla returned to Britain in late 2004 after graduating from the University of Baghdad to practice medicine (Gardham et al., 2007). It is during his time as a student at university in Baghdad that Abdulla likely began his association with Iraqi insurgents and even volunteered himself for a suicide mission within the country. The insurgents, however, thought that it would be a waste of a British passport to employ Abdulla in a suicide mission within Iraq. Instead, he would better serve the cause by returning to Britain and becoming a "sleeper" until the time was right to initiate an attack (Alderson et al., 2008). A document recovered from Abdulla's computer after his arrest was a letter addressed to the insurgent group, *Soldiers of the Islamic State of Iraq*, in which he expressed the sentiment that "God knows that the days I spent with you were the best and most rewarding days of my life" (The Sunday Telegraph). At first glance, the document could be addressed to either of two groups who share a similar name but have differing agendas. The first group, Islamic Army of Iraq, was founded following the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and combines Islamist and nationalist sentiments. The group was actually involved in an internal struggle with al-Qaeda in 2007 and a number of its members defected to join the U.S. - backed "awakening" groups that fought against al-Qaeda. The second group, Islamic State in Iraq, or otherwise known as al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) or Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (The National Counterterrorism Center). It was later revealed that Abdulla was in fact referencing AQI. According to security forces, Abdulla had previously

met with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of AQI before his death. Abdulla detailed his time

spent with al-Qaeda in a personal diary and in his will he mentions being sent back to fight Brit-

ain by the "emir" in Iraq (Gardham et al., 2007). Zarqawi was killed later that year when U.S.

warplanes dropped two 500-pound bombs on a house where he was meeting with other insur-

gents (Knickermeyer and Finer 2006).

Kafeel Ahmed was recruited for the mission by Abdulla. Ahmed was born in Bangalore,

India to parents who were both doctors. He completed his masters in Belfast at Queens Univer-

sity. Following his hospitalization, police learned that during his time in Ireland, Ahmed made

the acquaintance of Abbas Boutrab, an Algerian man who was arrested in 2003 for possessing

blueprints from an extremist Islamist website that detailed how to build bombs that could be

smuggled aboard airplanes. It was after he left Queens University that Ahmed seemed to shift

from being perceived as a religious moderate to an extremist (Burns 2008). While studying for

his PhD in Cambridge, Ahmed shared an apartment with members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir,* an Islamist

militant group dedicated to the reestablishment of the caliphate of which Abdulla was also a

member. Through this living arrangement he met Abdulla. As a trained aeronautical engineer,

Ahmed was given the task of building the car bombs and the cellphone detonators (The Mirror

2008). When the initial London bombing failed, Ahmed called his parents and asked them to

pray for him as a "presentation" he had attempted had failed and he was going to make another

attempt (Gardham et al., 2007). This second attempt was to be the attack on the Glasgow Air-

port. Ahmed would die one month after the attack from the burns he received during the attack.

Kafeel Ahmed's brother, Sabeel, was also arrested and later convicted in connection to

the plot. Like Abdulla, Sabeel was a doctor in Britain's NHS system. Sabeel was arrested on

June 30th, the same day that Kafeel and Abdulla rammed their jeep into the Glasgow airport

terminal (Chicago Tribune 2007). Sabeel pleaded guilty to withholding information about a ter-

rorist attack that would have been of "considerable assistance" to investigators (Daiji World

2008). During the proceedings, it was revealed that Sabeel had received a text message from his

brother right before Kafeel plowed his jeep into the Glasgow airport, instructing him to read an

email he had sent. Sabeel did in fact read the email later that day. The email read "This is the

project that I was working on for some time now. Everything else was a lie" and instructed Sa-

beel to maintain a cover story that he was working on a global warming project in Iceland. On

April 11, 2008 Sabeel was sentenced to eighteen months of jail time for failing to reveal this in-

formation to the police (Siddique 2008). However, he was released and deported to India less

than a month later as a consequence of the amount of time he had served in jail following his ar-

rest and prior to his arrest. On May 8th, 2008, Sabeel arrived in Bangalore (The Times of India

2008).

The fourth and final man charged with participating in the terrorist plot was Dr. Mo-

hamed Asha, a Jordanian doctor of Palestinian origin. Asha was arrested with his wife, though

she was later released without being charged. Once charged, prosecutors argued that Asha pro-

vided Abdulla with the financial resources to carry out the plot (Daily Mail). During his trial,

Asha admitted to being friends with Abdulla and having known Kafeel Ahmed through his

friendship with Abdulla. Asha further admitted to having provided Abdulla with a mobile phone

and £1,300 (about $2,145 at today's exchange rate). According to Asha, he did not know what

the money was for and saw the use as a betrayal (Daily Mail). On December 16, 2008, Dr. Asha

was found not guilty of conspiracy to murder and to cause explosions (The Sentinel). Though he

was cleared of all charges, the British Home Office still viewed Asha as a national security threat

and wanted to deport him back to Jordan. However, after a special commission ruled he was not

a national security threat, the government dropped its deportation application and Dr. Asha was allowed to return to work (Daily Mail 2009).

B. Organizational Structure

The culprits behind the 2007 London bombings are different from the Madrid bombers in that they were not sought out or recruited by any particular al-Qaeda cell. The Madrid bombers had either been members of a previous al-Qaeda cell, affiliate, or recruited directly by al-Qaeda members. Rather, it appears as if Abdulla and Ahmed were both radicalized prior to their engagement with al-Qaeda and then sought out al-Qaeda as a means through which they could fulfill their desires for revenge and for jihad. This seems to be similar to the way in which the Hamburg cell found their way into al-Qaeda. A key difference is, however, that the Hamburg cell was directed into al-Qaeda by an al-Qaeda recruiter in Europe as they were looking for a way to join the global jihad. Furthermore, Atta and his comrades had a connection to the global jihad through Mohammed Zammar, the Syrian who had served in the Afghan jihad. Abdulla and his comrades, on the other hand, actively sought out al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). This may signify that al-Qaeda operatives began having more difficulty in moving around at this point in time. Or, this could simply mean that Abdulla was not quite lucky enough to come across an al-Qaeda recruiter in the way the Hamburg cell had. The fact that Abdulla watched Zarqawi's videos and used Islamist forums to seek out al-Qaeda shows the organization's increased media competence and its ability to use the internet to their advantage. While this may also signify a reliance on the internet as a result of a decline in capabilities, the ability to adapt to the situation and find a way around the constraint demonstrates the adaptability of the organization. The group could have easily fallen off the map once its was pushed underground, but it did not.

There is no evidence that UBL or other high ranking core al-Qaeda officials played a role in organizing the 2007 bombings. Rather, this seems to be a purely AQI plot. There is a possi-

bility that Zarqawi ran the plot through core al-Qaeda leaders but, even so, they would not have done anything more than give it their blessing. The lack of total involvement in planning from core al-Qaeda is a devolution from the Madrid 2004 bombings that saw core al-Qaeda members Amer Azizi and Hamza Rabia take an active role in the plot. This signifies a shift in responsibility for attacks from core al-Qaeda leadership to its franchises across the Middle East. The increased significance of al-Qaeda's franchises shows that, in fact, the organization has decentralized over the years. The pressures put upon core al-Qaeda by counterterrorism measures are largely responsible for this. The leaders were pushed out of Afghanistan and can no longer freely meet with one another, directly recruit militants, run training camps, or engage in public behavior. The constraints placed upon core al-Qaeda leaders are a product of counterterrorism measures and so its devolution in structure is also a product of these counterterrorism measures. Though drone strikes are highly unpopular, the effect they have had on al-Qaeda leaders is demonstrated here in the lack of participation from core al-Qaeda in a plot aimed at such a high value target as London. The viability and actions of the franchises, however, show the adaptability of the organization. At this point in time, al-Qaeda has lost almost all properties of a *hierarchy* and can be considered to be a *network* organization with very little command and control structure. This, however, cannot simply be written off as a weakness.

A hierarchical organization is efficient and highly effective. As evidence by 9/11 and even by Madrid 2004, hierarchical organizations are capable of coordinating large numbers of actors across thousands of miles. A hierarchy, however, is also rigid and does not always adapt quickly to situations that arise over short periods of time. Hierarchies are also not as quick or capable of taking advantage of opportunities when they present themselves. The introduction of a *network* level of organization, however, better allows organizations to adapt, grab big opportu-

nities, and maintain a sense of urgency (Kotter 2011). However, the introduction of a *network* aspect of organization into al-Qaeda does not appear to have been a conscious decision on the part of the leadership. Rather, the increased autonomy enjoyed by its affiliates seems to be a product of circumstance. With the pressure put on core al-Qaeda by the U.S. and its allies, the ability of core leaders to monitor and control all of the activities of its affiliates seems to have decreased. The mere fact that al-Qaeda affiliates, with their own internal power dynamics, exist, speaks to the fact that core al-Qaeda was no longer capable of controlling every single day to day detail of its operations. Though al-Qaeda was forced into adopting certain *network* aspects, the organization seems to have made good use of the freedoms afforded to it.

While these distinctions are spoken about in the context of a corporation, they also easily apply to al-Qaeda. Leaders of different franchise cells are more in tune with the sentiments in the region in which they operate, meaning they know from where to recruit, what local security forces are planning, and how to get around possible road blocks to carrying out plots. A network organization also allows al-Qaeda to bring in militants that have sought them out and to employ them in small-scale attacks. Al-Qaeda's shift form a hybrid hierarchy model to a largely network organization may signify a weakening of the position of core al-Qaeda leaders but does not signify an overall weakening of the organization.

D. Counterterrorism

Generally speaking, there does not appear to be a major shift in the counterterrorism strategy of the United States in the period immediately following the 2007 London bombings. The United States maintained its presence in both Afghanistan and Iraq during this time, and continued targeting terrorists through unmanned drone flights. The use of drones would remain constant until 2009, when there was a dramatic uptick in the number of targeted killings. The fact that the United States continued to use the same tactics against al-Qaeda may indicate a per-

ception on the part of policy makers in the United States that current efforts were proving to be effective against al-Qaeda. During this time period Reuters quoted several U.S. and Pakistani intelligence sources as having said that the Predator drone campaign against al-Qaeda in northwest Pakistan was beginning to pay dividends. An unnamed U.S. intelligence official was quoted as saying that it was now possible to foresee a "complete al-Qaeda defeat" (Miglani, Reuters). Such an attitude would explain why we do not see the introduction of a new counterterrorism strategy during this time.

Though al-Qaeda now resembled a *network* model far more closely than it represents a *hybrid* model, the U.S. reliance on drone strikes is still relevant. The targeted killing of franchise and affiliate leaders can still serve to destabilize the group. However, as al-Qaeda now operates as a network, the killing of one of these franchise leaders would have little, if any, effect on core al-Qaeda or any other of the franchise nodes. Targeted killings do not represent the best way to approach a *network* organization.

X. The Underwear Bomber

The infamous 'underwear bomber', Nigerian-born Umar Farouk Abd al-Mutallab, inspired countless jokes and a number of new TSA measures. Luckily, the plot did not succeed and the subsequent trial revealed new information regarding al-Qaeda's revised recruiting tactics and their adapted leadership style.

Mutallab attempted to detonate his explosive device as Northwest flight 253 began to descend into Detroit. The flight had originated in Amsterdam and was carrying 278 passengers, some who, like Mutallab, had begun their journey in Nigeria. When Mutallab attempted to detonate the explosive, the bomb malfunctioned and ignited. Mutallab was subdued by passengers and crew members. Though Mutallab immediately proclaimed his affiliation with al-Qaeda to the law enforcement officials who detained him at the airport, initial news reports did not con-

firm whether or not he was actually affiliated with al-Qaeda or whether he was a lone wolf. An unidentified counterterrorism official was quoted as saying that it appeared Mutallab had been working alone (O'Conner and Schmitt 2009).

Later interviews with Mutallab confirmed that he had, in fact, been working under the direction of al-Qaeda. Like other post 9/11 al-Qaeda operatives, Mutallab was radicalized long before he made the acquaintance of al-Qaeda members. Much like the 2007 London bombers, Mutallab personally sought ought membership within the terrorist organization. It was after he was brought into the fold and vetted that he was allowed to partake in a martyrdom mission. This serves as an indication that al-Qaeda has continued to rely on its brand and the communication of its message to attract recruits at a time when it is very difficult for the organization to do its own recruiting.

Mutallab is the son of the former chairman of Nigeria's oldest bank, First Bank, a man who has been described by Forbes as one of the richest and most respected men in Nigeria. As a consequence, Mutallab enjoyed all of the trappings of a privileged education, including being privately educated in a highly regarded British-run boarding school. Though none of his previous associates could have imagined Mutallab committing a terrorist attack, they admit that he expressed radical religious views as a teenager.

It is during his time in boarding school that Mutallab began to post on *The Islamic Forum* website under the screen name 'Farouk1986'. His first post on the website calls on his Muslim brothers and sisters for guidance. After going into his background, Matallub details the personal issues that have brought him to the forum. He found himself unable to make friends among his classmates because the majority of the students at his boarding school engaged in activities, such as partying, in which he had no interest and viewed as a "bad thing". He also found that, as a

result of his loneliness, his sexual drive was stimulated and, consequently, he does not lower his gaze when in the presence of women. He ends his post with an invocation of God's blessings upon those who take the time to read his post and respond to him. Mutallab's posts inspired a number of responses, mostly sympathetic, with people offering to speak to him personally and counsel him through his hard time. At first, the exchanges consist of Mutallab's expressions of gratitude for the outpouring of support and detailing the success he had experienced with fasting. About three weeks into the conversation, however, Mutallab reveals that he has been indulging in fantasies and day dreams. When prompted to reveal what these fantasies are, Mutallab reveals "…i wont go into too much details about m[y]e fantasy, but basically they are jihad fantasies [*sic*]. I imagine how the great jihad will take place, how the muslims will win *insha'Allah* and rule the whole world, and establish the greatest empire once again!!!". When asked whether or not these fantasies will remain just fantasies, or whether they are "plans", Mutallab replies, "*in-shaAllah* i will realize [*sic*] my goals and dreams, by the power and might of Allah, out of his mercy, if it is best. I agree there is no point of thinking about something if there's no chance of realizing [*sic*]".

Mutallab's postings on *The Islamic Forum* came four years before his attempt at bombing the Detroit bound flight. At this point, he was still a student at the prestigious, liberal - minded British School of Lome in Tongo. There is no evidence to suggest that he was exposed to any radical or extremist Islamist thinking. However, the teenage Mutallab already seemed to display jihadist tendencies. It is unclear what exactly prompted the privileged teenager to take the path of radicalism in the first place.

After completing his high school education, Mutallab earned a place at the University College of London. In London he lived in a luxury apartment rented by his father and sur-

rounded himself with other elite Nigerian youths. In London it appears Mutallab made the jump

from merely having jihadist fantasies to seeking means through which to carry them out. Mutal-

lab arrived in London at a tumultuous time for the city's Muslim community, immediately fol-

lowing the 2005 London underground bombings. London's universities and mosques have long

been decried as places in which radicalization has become rampant. Great Britain has often been

accused of being unable to integrate its Muslim immigrants into British society.

Following his graduation from UCL in 2009, Mutallab enrolled in a master's degree pro-

gram at the Dubai campus of the University of Wollongong, an Australian university. After

about two and a half months of study, Mutallab left the University and never returned to the

UAE (Coker 2009). In fact, in August 2009, Mutallab left the UAE to travel to Yemen in an at-

tempt to make contact with the preacher whose online sermons had so deeply inspired him to-

wards jihad, Anwar al-Awlaki (Finn 2012). This is a clear indication of the power of online

preaching and online discussions of jihad. They give those with extremist tendencies a vehicle

through which they can solidify their views and seek out the methods to make their thoughts re-

ality.

Mutallab had been following the words of Awlaki for years and once in Yemen he visited

different mosques, asking people if they knew how he could make contact with Awlaki (United

States District Court Easter District of Michigan Souther Division 2012). At one of the mosques,

Mutallab was introduced to an al-Qaeda operative named Abu Tarek, who became his principal

handler (Cruickshank 2011). Either Abu Tarek, or another unnamed operative, informed Awlaki

of Mutallab's desire to meet with him. Mutallab later received a text message from Awlaki, in-

structing Mutallab to call him. During the phone conversation it was established that Mutallab

would provide Awlaki with a written explanation for why he wanted to become involved in the

jihad. After receiving Mutallab's written explanation, Awlaki agreed to meet with him and to find a way for him to become involved in the jihad. Mutallab was later taken to meet Awlaki and stayed with the cleric for three days, during which they discussed martyrdom and jihad. At the end of these three days, Awlaki had accepted Mutallab for a martyrdom mission (United States District Court Easter District of Michigan Souther Division 2012).

After his meeting with Awlaki, Mutallab was taken to meet the infamous bomb maker Ibrahim al-Asiri. Asiri is a Saudi militant who previously served prison time in the Kingdom for attempting to enter Iraq to join the insurgency in the war torn country (BBC 2012).   Asiri re-mains at large despite efforts by both the U.S. and Yemeni governments to apprehend him and is considered to be the most dangerous member of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) by the intelligence community. After his meeting with Asiri, Mutallab trained in al-Qaeda camp in Yemen for two weeks while Asiri constructed a bomb for the mission. Awlaki afforded Mutal-lab considerable operational flexibility over the terrorist attack, specifying only that the attack be on a U.S. airliner and that the attack take place while the plan was over U.S. soil (United States District Court Easter District of Michigan Souther Division 2012). It is reported that Mutallab targeted the Detroit-bound flight because it was the cheapest ticket he could find (Caulfield 2011).

In the days following the attempted bombing the Malahim Foundation, the media wing of AQAP, claimed responsibility for guiding Mutallab to commit the attack. The message claims that Mutallab attempted the attack "in coordination with the mujahidin in the Arabian Peninsula" and claims that Mutallab's success in boarding the airplane proves al-Qaeda's continued ability to perpetrate attacks against the United States. Unlike previous attacks, it does not look like cen-

tral al-Qaeda leadership played a part in coordinating the attack. As such, this requires a more in-depth discussion of AQAP, al-Qaeda's most prominent franchise group.

At the time of the underwear bombing, AQAP had just been formed through the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi al-Qaeda cells. The merger was prompted by the 2008 crackdown on al-Qaeda operatives in Saudi Arabia by the Saudi government. As a consequence, the remaining Saudi al-Qaeda operatives fled across the border to Yemen and joined the Yemeni terrorists who had coalesced around former UBL aid Nasir al-Wahayshi (Masters and Laub 2013).

The 2009 attack was the first terror attack against the U.S. homeland that was carried out by an al-Qaeda franchise group. Since then, AQAP has carried out other attacks against the U.S. and its interests, mostly abroad, and has maintained strong ties with other al-Qaeda associated groups. In particular, AQAP has facilitated communication between core al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab, the Somali Islamist militant group that currently controls large swaths of land in Somalia. The merger between al-Shabaab and al-Qaeda was announced in February 2012 by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda (The National Counterterrorism Center). AQAP also supported the establishment of an Egyptian branch of al-Qaeda in the Sinai following the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak by supplying funds and fighters (Joscelyn 2011). In a letter recovered in Mali, Wahayshi tells the leader of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) of his communications with core al-Qaeda (U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Homeland Security 2013 hereafter USCHS). Today, AQAP is considered to be the most immediate threat to the U.S. homeland. First and foremost, AQAP enjoys vast territorial freedom due the embattled position of the Yemeni government. Thanks to its ability to take control of territory, AQAP has been able to establish a number of jihadist training camps, replacing the al-Qaeda camps that were lost with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. AQAP has become particularly entrenched in the Al Mahfad

area of the Abyan province despite several Yemeni military operations that attempted to remove the group from the area (Roggio and Adaki 2014). The territorial control achieved by AQAP allows the group to draw recruits from the local population that would otherwise be hesitant to travel abroad for jihadist training. With the ability to recruit locally comes an almost endless supply of new recruits, as Yemen's high unemployment rate, limited natural resources, and fragmented political culture have created a plethora of disaffected youth (Pramanik 2013).

When Mutallab decided to seek out al-Qaeda and volunteer himself for a martyrdom mission, he sought out AQAP's cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki. He did not seek out a member of core al-Qaeda residing in Pakistan, nor did he try to make contact with the head of AQAP, Nasir al-Wuhayshi. Though Awlaki has received a high profile in the press due to having been a U.S. citizen and his internet savvy, he was never operationally key to AQAP. Instead, he inspired others through his online sermons and produced AQAP's glossy, online magazine *Inspire.* Awlaki's greatest contribution to AQAP, and to al-Qaeda as a whole, was his high visibility and ability to speak to a younger generation of jihadists. Before his role in inspiring Mutallab came to light, it was already known that Awlaki had communicated with Major Nidal Hasan via e-mail and spurred him to action in the Fort Hood shooting in November 2009 (Frieden 2012). Though much was made of Awlaki's role in AQAP when he was killed in a drone strike in 2011, various outlets reported on the rather minor effect this would have on AQAP's operational ability. Awlaki acted as AQAP's preacher and spokesman, and while this may decrease AQAP's future visibility to potential English-speaking recruits, this will not hurt their ability to plan attacks against the West. The Western media made a lot more of Awlaki's prominence and danger than AQAP has.

Mutallab's mission was not directly planned by the leader of AQAP, though the operation was probably approved by al-Wuhayshi as Awlaki would not have had operational authority at this time. The actual planning of the attack however, seems to have been undertaken by Awlaki and the bomb maker Asiri in the span of only two to three months (Frieden 2012).

B. Organizational Structure

As with the 2007 London bombings, core al-Qaeda did not play a role in organizing or coordinating this attack. AQAP had capability, resources, and authority to plan the attack without the assistance of either UBL or Zawahiri. The prominence of AQAP speaks to the importance and emphasis that core al-Qaeda is placing on its franchises. Due to security reasons, operatives are no longer able to travel to Afghanistan or to the FATA region of Pakistan with the ease of previous years. This means that core al-Qaeda leaders are no longer able to play a primary role in recruiting and training members to the cause. This job, instead, has been rolled on to the franchise groups operating in other parts of the world. AQAP is strategically situated for this role because of the freedom it enjoys as a result of Yemen's precarious political situation. At the time of Awlaki's killing, intelligence officials were estimating that AQAP was capable of operating with impunity in about half of Yemen (CNN 2012). AQAP's prominence, and the concern it inspires amongst security officials, gives credence to the argument that al-Qaeda has become highly decentralized and core al-Qaeda no longer plays the role it did in 2001.

This, has been mistaken for a weakness in the organization. As early as 2008, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was quoted as saying that al-Qaeda was "on its heels" (Israel News 2008). Then, in October 2012, President Barack Obama also declared that al-Qaeda was "on its heels" while speaking at a fundraiser in California (Halper 2012). While it is true that al-Qaeda no longer seems capable of pulling off another 9/11, for various reasons, this doesn't mean the organization is weak and incapable of action. AQAP's rise to prominence

within the organization is a matter of circumstance and shows the flexibility and willingness of al-Qaeda to adapt. Senior al-Qaeda leaders have recognized the strategic positioning of AQAP and have allowed the organization great operational flexibility. AQAP may not be able to carry out a mass plane hijacking but it has demonstrated its willingness and ability to carry out small scale attacks that, nonetheless, strike terror into the civilian population and run up the United States' national security costs.

At this point in time, al-Qaeda has definitely stepped away from operating as a hierarchical organization and now operates almost as a full network organization. Individual franchises are largely free to do as they please, though ideological decisions must still be vetted and approved by central al-Qaeda leaders. These leaders, however, act more as supervisors than as operations managers. Again, this does not signify a weakness but rather an effective adaptation to changing circumstances.

C. Counterterrorism Strategy

With President Obama's accession to the Oval Office, United States counterterrorism strategy saw an increased reliance on the use of drone strikes. While drone strikes would increase over the next two years, we also see an increase in the use of targeted, covert raids to eliminate high-value targets. The most famous of these raids would occur on May 2, 2011, when SEAL Team 6 went after UBL in Abbottabad. Raids are different than drone strikes for while drone strikes rely on unmanned vehicles operated from an office in Florida, raids are conducted by trained Special Forces personnel. In addition, raids often rely on a U.S. partnership with local troops in order to boost public support for the raids. While the night time raids can be classified as a *repress* tactic, I would rather classify it as a *pursue* strategy. Night time raids are distinct from drone strikes in that they are not conducted for the sole purpose of eliminating an operative. Rather, raids are used to capture terrorists, bomb makers, money launderers, and all other terror-

ist facilitators. Raids are also meant to weed out safe havens and prevent communities from harboring terrorists in the future.

There was an uptick in the number of raids reported by the press beginning in late 2008. 2009 saw the U.S. orchestrate a number of counterterrorism raids in different countries. In September 2009, the U.S. Special Forces attacked an al-Qaeda operative in Southern Somalia, an area controlled by al-Shabab (DeYoung 2009). The next month, U.S. forces provided intelligence support, firepower, and boots to a series of Yemeni raids on AQAP hideouts. According to news reports, the support was given at the request of the Yemeni government. In December 2010, the United States began to consider upping the number of raids conducted into the tribal areas of Pakistan. American forces had made a few raids into Pakistani territory by that point, already inspiring the ire of Pakistani forces. C.I.A. - backed Afghan militias had also made a number of intelligence gathering forays into Pakistani territory. According to American officials, the increase in raids was being considered as a means to capture al-Qaeda officials hiding in North Waziristan. The focus was beginning to shift towards capturing those individuals, rather than simply killing them, in order to garner further intelligence.

By September 2011, it was reported that U.S. forces were making, on average, 40 raids every night in Afghanistan. Like in Yemen, U.S. raids in Afghanistan are partner missions with Afghan military forces. In these instances, the partnership is meant to provide experience and training to the Afghan forces so that they may, one day, take over the duties for themselves. More importantly, however, partnerships with local forces serve as a mechanism to give the operations legitimacy. Raids, and other counterterrorism measures, will be viewed upon with resentment should they be conducted solely by U.S. forces. The partnership is meant to show the local people that *their* forces are behind the operations and, as such, they should be as well. Tar-

geted night raids are also viewed as a more palatable alternative to done strikes. Because night raids rely on human action, there is a smaller possibility of a hellfire missile accidentally killing a dozen children in an attempt to eliminate one senior al-Qaeda official. Furthermore, military actors are quick to defend night time raids as being highly successful and leaving a light footprint (Thomas 2011). Officials say that night raids are successful in capturing their target 80 percent of the time, have only a 1 percent rate of civilian casualties, and 85 percent of the raids are conducted without a single shot being fired (Peter 2011). This would signify a much smaller footprint than the highly visible devastation caused by drone strikes.

Night time raids have not, however, been without criticism from human rights activists and from foreign governments. The critique of night time raids is very similar to that of drone strikes. Night raids, critics opine, strike fear into Afghan civilians and breed resentment of U.S. forces. After all, no one enjoys having their door kicked in while they are sleeping. Night raids impose on civilians privacy and violate the norms of conservative Afghan culture. The practice is said to have worn out its welcome in Afghanistan. Some studies have shown that night time raids have done little to decrease insurgent attacks (Peter 2011).

XI. 2013 Embassy Closings

The impetus for this project was the surprise expressed by the media and certain pundits regarding the widespread embassy closures that occurred in August 2013. On August 1st, the United States Department of State announced that it was closing 21 embassies and consulates across the Middle East and North Africa on Sunday, August 4th. Typically, embassies and consulates in predominantly Muslim countries are open for business on Sunday, as Sunday is considered to be a part of the work week. The following day, on August 2nd, the State Department issued a global travel warning to all American citizens and expatriates, stating that the potential of a terrorist attack existed in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), possibly emanating

from the Arabian peninsula. Leading up to that summer, it was a widely held belief that al-Qaeda had been so badly damaged by Western counterterrorism efforts that it was no longer capable of threatening U.S. interests. Furthermore, al-Qaeda was said to have become highly decentralized. It was widely alleged that, the group now represented more of an ideology for individual radicals to follow than an actual organization. The events of this past summer seemed to repudiate the aforementioned assumptions.

The State Department announced that it was closing embassies and consulates across the MENA region "out of an abundance of caution and care for our employees and others who may be visiting our installations," (Mazzetti 2013). The following embassies were closed on Sunday August 4th: Abu Dhabi, UAE; Algiers, Algeria; Amman, Jordan; Baghdad, Iraq; Cairo, Egypt; Djibouti, Djibouti; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Doha, Qatar; Kabul, Afghanistan; Khartoum, Sudan; Kuwait City, Kuwait; Manama, Bahrain; Muscat, Oman; Nouakchott, Mauritania; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; Sana'a Yemen; Tripoli, Libya. In addition, the following consulates were also closed that Sunday: Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; Dubai, UAE, Erbil, Iraq; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (The Wall Street Journal 2013). Nineteen embassies and consulates would remain closed for the week of August 5th to August 10th. The following embassies remained closed for that week: Abu Dhabi, Amman, Cairo, Riyadh, Doha, Kuwait City, Manama, Muscat, Sana'a, and Tripoli. The following consulates remained closed for that week: Dhahran, Jeddah, and Dubai. Though not originally closed on August 4th, the U.S. Embassies in Antananarivo, Madagascar; Bujumbura, Burundi; Kigali, Rwanda, and Port Louis, Mauritius were also closed for the week of August 5th to the 10th. While the official line was that the closings were merely a precautionary measure, widespread embassy closings were unprecedented up to this point in time (Starr et al., 2013). All embassies, aside from the embassy in Sana'a reopened Sunday, August 11th. The embassy in

Sana'a, remained closed until August 18th (Benari 2013). The travel advisory for U.S. citizens remained in effect through the end of the month of August.

Many of the reports regarding the embassy closings originally included very few specifics, as media outlets were asked to suppress certain details as a matter of national security. It was reported, however, that the embassy closings were largely a product of an intercepted message between twenty senior al-Qaeda leaders (Starr et al., 2013). U.S. intelligence intercepted a communication that led them to believe that AQAP was in the final stages of planning an attack on an unspecified target. Information led the intelligence community to be particularly concerned about the U.S. Embassy in Sana'a. The communication that led to the embassy closings was initiated by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the current leader of al-Qaeda and was between Zawahiri and twenty other al-Qaeda operatives (Joscelyn and Roggio 2013). Originally, it was reported that the communication took place solely between Zawahiri and Nasir al-Wuhayshi, the leader of AQAP. It was later reported that, in fact, the communication took place between Zawahiri and Wuhayshi, while Wuhayshi was at a meeting with twenty other al-Qaeda operatives in Yemen (Israel National News 2013). In this communication, Zawahiri ordered Wuhayshi to carry out an attack. In response, Wuhayshi vowed to carry out an attack that would "change the face of history" (Israel National News 2013).

The plot seems to be connected to Wuhayshi's appointment as the general manager of operations for all of al-Qaeda. According to several sources, it is during this "conference call" between Zawihiri and other al-Qaeda operatives that Wuhayshi was elevated to the position of general manager. As general manager, Wuhayshi's duties would include coordinating military and media activities and communicating with al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, as well as unaffili-

ated allies such as the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban (Long War Journal). He was then asked to carry out an attack against U.S. interests.

During Wuhayshi's tenure as the head of AQAP, he has, on multiple occasions, consulted with core al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Most notably, he sought operational and ideological guidance from UBL on several occasions before the leaders death. Several documents recovered during the 2011 Abbottabad raid show correspondence between UBL and 'Atiyya Abdul Rahman, another senior al-Qaeda operative, and al-Wuhayshi. In one letter (SOCOM-2012-0000003-HT), UBL directs 'Atiyya to write to al-Wuhayshi regarding his request that Anwar 'Awlaki be appointed as the head of AQAP. Wuhayshi had made the request because he supposedly had his hopes set on obtaining a more senior position within the central al-Qaeda leadership and did not want to remain solely within the confines of AQAP leadership (Lake 2013). UBL declined Wuhayshi's request and urged Wuhayshi to remain in his position as head of AQAP "where he is qualified and capable of running the matter in Yemen". UBL also asks that Wuhayshi provide the leadership with more information regarding 'Awlaki's resume and qualifications. Wuhayshi was also to relay to 'Awlaki that he was to provide a written explanation of his vision for the jihad (Combating Terrorism Center). In a second communication (SOCOM-2012-0000016) either UBL or 'Atiyya responded to Wuhayshi's request for guidance regarding operations and ideology. Wuhayshi was advised not to undertake military operations in Yemen as al-Qaeda cannot yet establish an Islamic state in that country. Rather Wuhayshi is to continue targeting America and American activities in the region. Wuhayshi is also advised to avoid killing anyone from the tribes, and is not to attack military or police officers unless explicitly instructed to do so by the central leadership (Combating Terrorism Center).

Leading up to this intercepted communication and the subsequent embassy closings, a string of prison breaks occurred across the MENA region. Most notably, hundreds of al-Qaeda operatives were broken out of Iraq's infamous Abu Ghraib prison in July 2013. In this particular prison break, suicide bombers drove explosive-filled cars to the gates of the prison and then blasted their way into the compound. Simultaneously, gunmen attacked the prison guards with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. While the first wave of attackers swarmed the prison, another set of terrorists took up positions near the main road in order to fend off the security reinforcements sent from Baghdad. The most commonly cited number for the number of prison escapees is 500, among these being many senior al-Qaeda operatives who had been handed a death sentence for their operations. A simultaneous attack on another prison in Taji, 12 miles north of Baghdad, was carried out. The prison guards managed to prevented any inmates from escaping, and six militants were killed in the fight (Waltz and Long 2013). Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) quickly claimed responsibility for both prison attacks (Raheem and Sinjary 2013). The prison attacks in Iraq were followed by a mass jailbreak in Libya that freed 1,000 detainees and a jailbreak in Pakistan executed by the Taliban that freed upwards of 200 inmates (Ingersoll 2013). Though it was never confirmed, there was chatter that these prison breaks were part of the background noise that led to the embassy closings in August. Prison breaks are a known preferred strategy of Zawahiri and prison breaks have, in the past, strengthened terrorist cells. The prison breaks could have been coordinated in order to strengthen the main attack discussed by Zawahiri and Wuhayshi that led to the embassy closings and the travel advisory. Interpol, the international police agency, stated that various al-Qaeda franchises were in fact behind all four prison breaks. This would signal that the prison breaks were carried out with help from central al-Qaeda and were not randomly undertaken, but rather were part of a coordinated strategy (Starr

and Cohen 2013). This would lend more credence to the idea that the prison breaks were connected to the embassy plot discussed between Zawahiri and Wuhayshi.

X. Conclusion

Since 9/11, the vast majority of terrorist attacks have been planned and carried out by al-Qaeda franchises rather than core al-Qaeda. Core al-Qaeda's involvement has ranged from assisting in planning, providing a blessing, or only merely taking responsibility for the attack after its occurrence. These cases show the fluidity of the role played by core al-Qaeda leaders under the present structure of the organization. This speaks to the fact that the al-Qaeda we are dealing with today is not the same al-Qaeda that planned and carried out the 9/11 attacks. Al-Qaeda today has, in fact, decentralized and devolved from a *hierarchy* to a *network* organization. It has not however, devolved so far as to be considered a *market* organization. Though it most closely resembles a *network* organization, al-Qaeda still cannot be considered to be a *network* under the pure definition of the typology. This is because in a pure *network*, the centralized actor is central solely in terms of being the main hub of communication and does not wield any control over the other nodes. In al-Qaeda's current form, Zawahiri and other core al-Qaeda leaders maintain a degree of influence over the franchises and their approval is still necessary for a group to join the al-Qaeda network. As was demonstrated in February 2014 with the case of AQI, should an affiliate overstep its boundaries or disobey a direct order from core al-Qaeda, the leadership still has recourse in its ability to disown a franchise.

The devolution of al-Qaeda is due to the pressure put on the organization by U.S. counterterrorism measures. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 was the biggest blow to al-Qaeda's core and has severely damaged its ability to plan and execute large-scale attacks. The invasion of Afghanistan remains the watershed moment in the U.S. war against al-Qaeda. The invasion of Afghanistan deprived the organization of the territorial control required for centralization. In

doing so, it dispersed the al-Qaeda operatives that had been operating in the region, increased the cost of communication among actors, and destroyed al-Qaeda's ability to train and indoctrinate recruits. Since then, targeted drone strikes and night time raids carried out by special forces have forced al-Qaeda operatives to further compartmentalize out of fear of having their locations revealed to the C.I.A. by an informant. Drone strikes and raids have also forced senior leaders deeper into hiding, further hampering their ability to coordinate attacks. As franchises have grown in prominence drone strikes have also targeted franchise leaders, though eliminating the top leader of a franchise has proven to be just as difficult as eliminating core al-Qaeda number one and two. Franchise leaders are able to remain just as well hidden as core al-Qaeda leaders are. When a target is eliminated, there seems to be no shortage of operatives willing to take the place of their fallen comrade. As such, drone strikes and raids have proven to be an effective tactic in eliminating high-profile targets but they are not effective strategies for eliminating al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda has decentralized to the point where eliminating a few leaders will not severely damage the ability of the organization to operate. U.S. intelligence has identified al-Qaeda's franchises and has even gone so far as to say that AQAP is currently the most dangerous node in al-Qaeda. Even so, U.S. counterterrorism strategies have not caught up to the idea that efforts should largely be aimed at destroying the operational capacity of al-Qaeda franchises.

The decentralized nature of al-Qaeda means that the organization does not currently have the capability to carry out a 9/11 attack. Core al-Qaeda does not have the freedom of movement or operatives necessary to carry out the attacks, while the franchises lack sufficient experience with such a plot and are not currently thought of having the resources to pull off such a large attack. In that sense, U.S. counterterrorism measures have proven successful in keeping the United States safe from such an event. However, al-Qaeda as a whole is still capable of carrying out

smaller, yet still devastating attacks against the United States, its interests, and its allies. The nimble nature of a more decentralized al-Qaeda means that attacks can be quickly planned within the span of two to three months and, as is evidenced by the 2009 plot, some plots only require the attention of three or four actors at any given time. This means that an al-Qaeda franchise can be in the process of planning multiple attacks at any given time.

As previously discussed, AQAP currently poses the greatest threat to U.S. security and interests. Due to the lawlessness that abounds in large parts of Yemen, AQAP has taken control of towns and is able to operate training camps that resemble those in Afghanistan pre-9/11. Should the situation continue unabated, it is not inconceivable that AQAP could acquire the operatives, expertise and resources necessary to carry out a large scale, 9/11 style attack. The attack would likely require the collaboration of core al-Qaeda and other al-Qaeda franchises but is a possibility should AQAP's operational capacity not be targeted in the coming years.

The focus of U.S. counterterrorism measures following the invasion of Afghanistan have largely been focused on eliminating individual leaders. This is a symptom of the ongoing obsession the U.S. has with enacting revenge on the masterminds of plots that have led to the deaths of U.S. citizens. While there is value in eliminating well-connected, intelligence operatives, this is a tactic, not a useful strategy. Rather, the U.S. ought to invest more time in strategies that will lead to the capture of groups of mid-level al-Qaeda operatives. Eliminating mid-level operatives would make it harder for al-Qaeda to replace its top leaders as they die or are killed. Furthermore, capturing mid-level operatives allows the intelligence community to collect intelligence that could be useful in disrupting a future plot. The U.S. should also direct resources to stemming the flow of al-Qaeda recruits. This would require a concerted effort on the part of the U.S. to aid in the creation of good governance in the MENA region. In Yemen, in particular, AQAP

has experienced an uptick in recruitment in large part due to the turbulent political situation facing that country. This would be a long term undertaking on the part of the United States and would not have the same instant gratification of a successful drone strike.

X. Future Research

The main contribution of this work is the way in which it traces the connections among al-Qaeda operatives and leaders. In doing this, I have demonstrated that core al-Qaeda has played a much more active role in the organization's operations than purported by official government reports and some media outlets. My application of SNA to several al-Qaeda attacks shows that the method is useful beyond mapping out traditional illicit network such as drug cartels or mobs. As such, SNA can be applied to the study of terrorist organizations in general. Future researchers ought to apply SNA to terrorist groups such as Hizbullah or Hamas to demonstrate the effect Israeli counterterrorism operations have had on the organizations.

A large limitation that I faced while conducting this research, was that much of the information necessary to construct a thorough SNA graph remains classified or has been highly redacted. As such, there may be nodes or actors that have not been represented in my work. This investigation ought to be continued in the future by a researcher with greater access to classified information or informants. Knowing the extent to which core al-Qaeda participates in the planning of terrorist plots is key in understanding how al-Qaeda has evolved and what its capabilities are.

Access to different sources of information would also be useful in discerning the changes in U.S. counterterrorism measures. For the purpose of my work, I had to rely on official U.S. government statements and press reports regarding U.S. actions al-Qaeda. I am fully aware that these sources do not show the full picture when it comes to the actions of the U.S. military and intelligence community with regards to al-Qaeda.

Moving past the limitations in information, an area of this project that could be expanded upon is the varying ways in which the al-Qaeda operatives were recruited into the organization. The Hamburg Cell and the "muscle" group that carried out the 9/11 attacks were funneled into the organization by recruiters and by radical Saudi imams. The underwear bomber, on the other hand, actively sought out contact with Anwar al-Awlaki by traveling to Yemen. The changing nature of al-Qaeda's recruitment tactics could demonstrate an increased technological savvy, an inability to actively recruit its own members, or a combination of both.

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