



**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**FINDING THE LIMIT: THE STRATEGIC POTENTIAL  
OF THE NETWORK-BASED ACTOR**

by

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December 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
<b>1. AGENCY USE ONLY</b> (Leave blank)	<b>2. REPORT DATE</b> December 2016	<b>3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED</b> Master's thesis		
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> FINDING THE LIMIT: THE STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF THE NETWORK-BASED ACTOR			<b>5. FUNDING NUMBERS</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR</b> Sean M. Dixon				
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A			<b>10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ___N/A___.				
<b>12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			<b>12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE</b>	
<b>13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)</b>  Non-state, network-based threats are elusive and effective. There is an ongoing discussion about how the U.S. government can best counter these threats. What is lacking in this discussion is a clear understanding and general agreement concerning what these threats are capable of. The potential of these networks should be the primary driver of these discussions. Currently there is a split among researchers concerning the potential of network-based actors. The source of this division is a debate about whether and to what extent decentralized network-based actors can conduct strategic planning. This thesis contributes to the debate through qualitative analysis of two non-state, network-based actors, to show the capacity to plan strategically, evidenced by their ability to acquire and employ agents of influence.				
<b>14. SUBJECT TERMS</b> agents of influence, Soviet KGB, the Trust, Pierre-Charles Pathé, Al-Kifah Refugee Center, Al-Qaeda, Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development			<b>15. NUMBER OF PAGES</b> 63	
			<b>16. PRICE CODE</b>	
<b>17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT</b> Unclassified	<b>18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE</b> Unclassified	<b>19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT</b> Unclassified	<b>20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b> UU	

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18

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**FINDING THE LIMIT: THE STRATEGIC POTENTIAL OF THE NETWORK-  
BASED ACTOR**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Non-state, network-based threats are elusive and effective. There is an ongoing discussion about how the U.S. government can best counter these threats. What is lacking in this discussion is a clear understanding and general agreement concerning what these threats are capable of. The potential of these networks should be the primary driver of these discussions. Currently there is a split among researchers concerning the potential of network-based actors. The source of this division is a debate about whether and to what extent decentralized network-based actors can conduct strategic planning. This thesis contributes to the debate through qualitative analysis of two non-state, network-based actors, to show the capacity to plan strategically, evidenced by their ability to acquire and employ agents of influence.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Cheka	Soviet “Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage”
DST	Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HLF	Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development
ICP	Islamic Committee for Palestine
KGB	Soviet Committee for State Security, “Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti”
MAK	Office of Services for the Mujahedeen, “Maktab Khadamat al-Mujahidin”
MAYA	Muslim American Youth Academy
MOTSR	Monarchist Association of Central Russia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UASR	United Association for Studies & Research

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Dr. Kalev Sepp and Dr. Sean Everton for their support and guidance as advisors throughout this process. I also thank Dr. Craig Whiteside, Dr. Doug Borer, Dr. Anna Simons, and Dr. Jeff Appleget for their time and feedback. Great thanks to my peers, Brandon Daigle, Brian James, Mathew Lommel, David Quale, and Paul Hargrove for providing periodic and sound doses of reality. Finally, I thank my family: my father for acting as a sounding board and most importantly my wife, Crystal, for her overwhelming support and encouragement.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Non-state, network-based threats are elusive and effective.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, there is an ongoing discussion about how the U.S. government can best counter these threats. What is lacking in this discussion is a clear understanding and general agreement concerning what these threats are capable of. The potential of these networks should be the primary driver of these discussions. Currently there is a split among researchers concerning the potential of network-based actors. The heart of this division is a debate about whether network-based actors can conduct strategic planning. This thesis contributes to the debate through qualitative analysis, of non-state, network-based threats, to identify evidence of strategic planning capacities.

To accomplish this, research focused on proving, or disproving, that network-based actors can employ agents of influence; an act that requires a strategic planning capacity. The employment of agents of influence was chosen as a test because it requires a relatively low level of financial overhead to execute. Use of these agents does not require wildly expensive technology, nor does it require a massive volume of personnel to fill multi-tiered staffs. For this study, using agents of influence as an indicator of a strategic planning capability proved to be appropriate, working as an equalizer and creating a space where network-based actors might be able to compete with states.

### A. AGENTS OF INFLUENCE

Mao-Zedong, in his *On Guerrilla Warfare*, likens the population (of the state) to a body of water, and the guerrilla to the fish that swim in it.<sup>2</sup> To expand on this metaphor, the agent of influence is the current, guiding the direction and character of the water.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “network” is used in different ways. For this this thesis the term refers to decentralized, informal organizations over formal, centralized and bureaucratic organizations. For further discussion on this see Sean F. Everton, *Disrupting Dark Networks* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Mao Tse-tung, *Mao Tse-tung On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Washington, DC: United States Marine Corps, 1989), 92–92.

Agents of influence are a subversive threat that can have long-lasting effects on the targeted state. Marked by their status and position, they have the ability to bring about change. These agents may come from a wide cross-section of society and fill roles such as social leaders, religious figures or politicians. Most importantly they have an audience that is valuable to the subversive actor. The agent of influence becomes a conduit for the subversive actor, providing a platform to stream narratives, information, and ideas with the intent to influence the actions of the targeted audience.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW OF WESTERN THOUGHT ON NETWORKS**

This literature review gives insight as to how the thesis question was developed. This is done by broadly examining the evolution of western thought concerning networks, arriving at the current debate, about whether or not network-based actors can conduct strategic planning.

Western thought on networks largely stems from business and industry. In 1961 George Stalker and Tom Burns, who are renowned for their impact on organization theory, compared and contrasted an organic managerial system and mechanist managerial system, and identified them as poles in a spectrum of managerial approaches.<sup>3</sup> This idea of two poles, with centralized control or hierarchy at one end and decentralized control or network at the other, remains a useful heuristic today. Stalker and Burns demonstrated that authority within a network is determined by consensus. Whoever is most knowledgeable on an issue becomes the authority.<sup>4</sup> This reduces the time it takes to make and implement a decision, which makes networks able to deal with change faster than a hierarchy.<sup>5</sup> The ability to do this is dependent on all the individuals within the network working under shared principles or beliefs.<sup>6</sup> This sets the basis for the idea that networks have the advantage of speed and adaptability. Ideas can be realized and quickly implemented. However, this system has a weakness: bad ideas can also be implemented

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Burns and George Macpherson Stalker, *The Management of Innovation* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1966), 122.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



quickly.<sup>7</sup> These ideas are consistent with thoughts on networks today but they are very basic and do not account for how individual relations make up the network or how the network interacts with other networks.

The interaction of networks is addressed by Mark Granovetter, a Professor of Economic Sociology at Stanford University, in his article “The Strength of Weak Ties,” where he explains that information travels further and to a larger audience when passed between persons who have weak ties versus strong ties.<sup>8</sup> This happens because people who have strong ties with one another are similar, they share similar opinions and spend considerable time together; therefore, thoughts among a tight group are circular. But, when a person in a tight group has a weak tie with a person from another tight group, new ideas can stream between the two, creating a bridge.<sup>9</sup> Groups of strong bonds or nodes are connected with other nodes through weak ties creating a large network.

The overall network and its components can take many forms, primarily defined by the types of ties and forms of control exerted within. In “The Advent of Netwar” a RAND publication prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt identify three primary forms of networks: the all channel, star, and chain.<sup>10</sup> The all channel network allows for communication between all members. The star requires information to be sent to one focal point before being distributed out to the other members. The chain is a series of nodes that communicate in sequence; information is passed through the chain from one node to the next.<sup>11</sup> These different shapes provide advantages ranging from increased capability to increased security. The size of a network is also a factor. Network size is limited by the carrying capacity, or number of ties that

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<sup>7</sup> David Tucker, “Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong,” *Homeland Security Affairs* 4, no. 2 (June 2008): 4.

<sup>8</sup> Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973): 1363, doi:10.1086/225469.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> John Arquilla and David F. Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), 49.

<sup>11</sup> John Arquilla and David F. Ronfeldt, *The Advent of Netwar* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996), 49.

can be maintained.<sup>12</sup> Because of this, networks can reach a point where they become closed.<sup>13</sup>

Up until this point there has been wide agreement about network compositions, basic advantages and basic disadvantages but, there are differences in thought about what networks are capable of, especially concerning threat networks. One end of the spectrum is the concept of swarming. This is when a series of nodes can converge on a target at the same time.<sup>14</sup> Swarming is made possible by the speed at which networks can exchange information and adapt. The opposite end of the spectrum suggests that networks have a limit. Tucker states that because networks are transitory or shifting, they do not have the ability to conduct strategic planning.<sup>15</sup> This idea suggests that networks cannot hold a long-term course to produce political change. This coincides with the idea that networks, without centralized control, run the risk of individual nodes making decisions that are detrimental to the networks overall goals.<sup>16</sup> At the heart of these two arguments is the disagreement over the advantage networks enjoy from speed of information and adaptability with the tradeoff of control. One idea that deals with the tradeoff of control is that threat networks can morph. Depending on needs, goals and outside stimuli, networks and nodes can slide between centralized control and decentralized control. Sean Everton and Daniel Cunningham draw on social network analysis in order to show that dark networks become centralized just prior to an attack in order to effectively mobilize resources, and then become more decentralized after an attack to increase adaptability.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gautam Ahuja, Giuseppe Soda, and Akbar Zaheer, "The Genesis and Dynamics of Organizational Networks," *Organization Science* 23, no. 2 (2012): 435, doi:10.1287/orsc.1110.0695.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ian O. Lesser, John Arquilla, Bruce Hoffman, David F. Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, "Networks, Netwar, and Information - Age Terrorism," in *Countering the New Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1999), 53–55, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR989.html#db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=20493](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR989.html#db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=20493).

<sup>15</sup> David Tucker, "Terrorism, Networks, and Strategy Why the Conventional Wisdom Is Wrong," *Homeland Security Affairs* 4, no. 2 (June 2008): 53.

<sup>16</sup> W. Enders and P. Jindapon, "Network Externalities and the Structure of Terror Networks," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 54, no. 2 (2009): 263–264, doi:10.1177/0022002709355439.

<sup>17</sup> Sean F. Everton and Daniel Cunningham "Dark Network Resilience in a Hostile Environment: Optimizing Centralization and Density," *Criminology, Criminal Justice Law, and Society* 16, no. 1 (2015): 1–20, <https://scholasticahq.com/criminology-criminal-justice-law-society/>.

This ability to fluctuate does explain how networks can exert control but it only addresses short term control.

Information technologies have had a profound impact on society and in turn networks. Manuel Castells, a Spanish Sociologist and Holberg Prize recipient, in *The Rise of the Network Society* calls attention to paradox that occurs with the increase of information technology, as the world becomes more networked the drive for individualization increases and society becomes powerless in controlling its destiny.<sup>18</sup> This sparks images of individuals acting completely unbound searching for meaning, with the sum of their actions in mas constantly redefining society. Castell also describes another effect of information technology and that is the complete isolation of individuals, groups and entire countries that cannot keep up with these information systems.<sup>19</sup> Both of these ideas suggest that networks can have unplanned strategic effects.

By striking the correct balances between external ties and close ties, capability and security, centralized control and decentralized control, is a network truly capable of employing agents of influence? According to Tucker's theory that networks lack the ability to plan strategically the answer is no. These operations are long-term in nature and require considerable strategic planning. But, if the overarching ideology is unifying enough then that may be all that is needed.

### **C. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The overarching question that this thesis seeks to answer is; can non-state, network-based actors plan strategically? To scope this broad question, the research focused on determining if these actors can employ agents of influence. This yielded the following question: can non-state, network-based actors employ agents of influence?

To answer these questions, qualitative analysis was conducted in two areas, the employment of agents of influence by states and by non-state network-based actors. Analysis of state employment of agents of influence demonstrates the necessary strategic

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<sup>18</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

planning capacity to employ them and specific characteristics which are indicative of such agents. These characteristics are then used to identify and qualify employment of agents of influence by network-based actors.

#### **D. ORGANIZATION**

The body of this thesis is organized into three major chapters: “Agents of Influence,” “ Hamas Employment of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development as an Agent of Influence,” and “Al-Qaeda Employment of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center as an Agent of Influence.” Each of these chapters presents relevant background information followed by a qualitative analysis.

Chapter II presents two cases of states employing agents of influence, Pierre-Charles Pathé, an individual agent of influence and the Trust, an organization that acted as an agent of influence. This chapter demonstrates that the employment of agents of influence requires a strategic planning capacity and identifies specific characteristics of agents of influence.

Chapters III presents the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development as a Hamas agent of influence. Chapter IV presents the Al-Kifah Refugee Center as an Al-Qaeda agent of influence. Chapter V summarizes findings and presents areas for further research. The result is a contribution to academic debate, which argues that non-state, network-based actors can have a strategic planning capacity.

#### **E. CASE STUDY SELECTION AND PROCESS**

This thesis required case studies to serve as a baseline and case studies to test against the baseline. The result is two baseline case studies that demonstrate states employing agents of influence and two test cases that demonstrate networks employing agents of influence.

## **1. Selection of Baseline Case Studies: Pierre-Charles Pathé and the Trust**

To select the baseline cases, Pierre-Charles Pathé and the Trust, the author searched for instances of states employing individuals and organizations to influence target populations. The resulting pool was narrowed by looking for cases in which the states concealed their involvement.

Several case studies initially appeared to meet these criteria but upon further research did not. Two strong candidates that fell into this category are Radio Free Europe and the World Council of Peace. Both of these cases are examples of organizations sponsored by states to influence target audiences. Because the involvement of the sponsoring states, not just the sponsoring intelligence agencies, were not concealed they were not appropriate. Rather, they are better used as examples of propaganda, on par with the Kremlin-sponsored news organization *Russia Today*.

## **2. Selection of Test Case Studies**

Selection of the test case studies relied on two main criteria. The sponsor or employer must be a non-state, network-based actor and the agent must qualify as an agent of influence by demonstrating the characteristics presented in Chapter II. This resulted in two cases, Hamas employment of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development and Al-Qaeda employment of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center.

Selection of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) as a case study started as research focused on Hamas' use of charities and charitable organizations to obtain support. Several organizations surfaced as candidates for this case study such as, the Muslim American Youth Academy (MAYA), United Association for Studies & Research (UASR,) and Islamic Committee for Palestine (ICP.) All of these organizations showed strong potential to be case studies, but were not pursued because there was more factual information about the HLF. This large volume of information is a result of an extensive Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) investigation and the court case *US v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al.*, which made the FBI's information accessible.

Selection of Al-Kifah as the second network-based test case relied on the same criteria as mentioned earlier, but followed a different methodology. Research started by focusing on the actions of Ayman Zawahiri. Zawahiri, during his initial years in Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), showed a propensity for recruiting agents into clandestine relationships. Zawahiri used these agents to obtain information or materials and not to influence a population. Selection methodology then shifted and focused on significant influential Al-Qaeda affiliates. Two individuals surfaced as good candidates for further study, Anwar al-Awlaki and Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman. Anwar al-Awlaki proved to be unsuitable because there is no strong evidence of a clandestine relationship between him and al-Qaeda. Further research of Sheikh Rahman led to his involvement with the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, an organization which proved suitable for in-depth research.

## II. STATE EMPLOYMENT OF AGENTS OF INFLUENCE

The devil's finest trick is to persuade you that he does not exist.

—Charles Baudelaire<sup>20</sup>

He who influences the thought of his times influences the times that follow.

—Elbert Hubbard<sup>21</sup>

This chapter provides examples of two different types of agents of influence and how they were employed in an effort to achieve a strategic goal. The first example is Pierre-Charles Pathé, an individual whom the Soviet Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (KGB) employed as an agent of influence to subvert France, the United States (U.S.) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO.) The second is the Trust, an organization developed by the Russian Bolsheviks in the 1920s to subvert external and internal threats. These two examples serve to enhance the understanding of agents of influence.

### A. PIERRE-CHARLES PATHÉ: AN INDIVIDUAL AGENT OF INFLUENCE

Following WWII and during the Cold War, the Soviet Union pursued the goal of spreading communism throughout the world. The Soviets considered alliances such as NATO a direct threat to this goal. One Soviet strategy to remove or minimize this threat was the KGB's employment of Active Measures. Active Measures refers to Soviet and Soviet Bloc operations designed to influence the U.S. and other NATO governments. During the height of the Cold War, it is estimated the Kremlin dedicated \$3 billion to \$4

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Baudelaire and Louise Varèse, *Paris Spleen, 1869* (New York: New Directions Pub. Corp., 1970), 61.

<sup>21</sup> Elbert Hubbard, *Little Journeys to the Homes of Great Teachers* (New York: Roycrofters, 1908), 23.

billion a year to these efforts.<sup>22</sup> According to Ladislav Bittman, a former Deputy Commander of the Department of Active Measures, the Soviet Union viewed the United States as its main enemy and sought to split U.S. alliances. The following is a partial list of Active Measure goals provided by Bittman:

- Turning world public opinion against U.S. foreign policy;
- Creating favorable conditions for Soviet foreign policy by confusing the world public about the real nature of certain Soviet policies;
- Isolating the United States from its allies and friends in Western Europe by creating new rifts or exploiting current differences;
- Paralyzing NATO from within by convincing NATO countries that U.S military strategy is against their national interest<sup>23</sup>

The KGB used covert and overt means to accomplish these goals. The use of agents of influence accounted for one of several Active Measures methods.

Pierre-Charles Pathé acted as an agent of influence, working under KGB control for two decades to subvert the French government. At the height of his career as a KGB agent of influence, Pathé regularly streamed soviet propaganda and disinformation to the French elite through credible publications. The themes stressed in his writings were aligned with the overarching Active Measures guidance, as provided by Bittman. The exact effect of Pathé's influence is difficult to determine because he was but one of several hundred Soviet influence operations. However, it is significant that during his time as a KGB agent France underwent a nationalist movement and withdrew its military support from NATO.

### **1. Background: Pierre-Charles Pathé**

Pierre-Charles Pathé enjoyed a high social status as a member of French elite society. He was the son of a prominent film maker, brother in-law to a minister, a French

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<sup>22</sup> G. McK. Kinahan, "Exposing Soviet Active Measures in the 1980s: A Model for the Bush Administration?" *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies* 15, no. 3 (1990): 314, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1303764316?accountid=12702>.

<sup>23</sup> Ladislav Bittman, *The KGB and Soviet Disinformation: An Insider's View* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey, 1985), 46.



ambassador to the United States, and the president of the Renault auto firm.<sup>24</sup> Pathé also wrote political thought pieces for multiple French media outlets. Pathé's status gave him a unique audience that proved valuable to the KGB. In 1959, Pathé attracted the attention of the Soviet Ambassador to Paris, or Resident, by publishing a pro-Soviet essay titled "*Essai sur le phénomène soviétique*" (*Essays Concerning the Soviet Phenomenon*).<sup>25</sup> The Resident cultivated a relationship with Pathé that eventually led to his recruitment by the KGB.

In 1961, with the support of the KGB, Pathé created a news outlet titled, *Center d'Information Scientifique, Economique et Politique* (Center of Information for Science, Politics and Economics), codenamed OBZOR. Through the news outlet the KGB sought to weaken Franco-American relations, strengthen Franco-Russian relations, and influence France to move away from NATO.<sup>26</sup> This operation lasted for six years and ceased operations soon after the French military withdrawal from NATO.

Pathé continued to work with the KGB. In 1976 they started a bi-weekly publication titled *Synthesis*, codenamed CACTUS.<sup>27</sup> This publication marked the peak of Pathé's career as a KGB agent of influence, and lasted until his capture by French counter-intelligence in 1979. At its height, *Synthesis* possessed a list of subscribers comprising 139 senators, 299 deputies, 41 journalists, and 14 ambassadors.<sup>28</sup> The KGB, through Pathé, captured 47 percent of the French senate and 70 percent of the chamber of deputies,<sup>29</sup> as a direct audience for its propaganda and disinformation. *Synthesis* focused on fostering mistrust between NATO allies, by criticizing American economic policies towards Europe and defending Soviet foreign policy.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Richard Shultz, Roy Godson, *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, DC: Pergaman-Brassey, 1984), 135.

<sup>25</sup> Christopher M. Andrew, and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 464.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 471.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Shultz, Roy Godson. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, DC: Pergaman Brassey, 1984), 134.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 139-149.

Pathé continued to act as an agent of influence for the KGB until his capture in 1979. Pathé's downfall started with his handler Igor Aleksandrovich Sakharovsky, who became a person of interest to the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire (DST), the French counter intelligence. In 1978 Sakharovsky reported to his superiors that he suspected he was under surveillance, and he suspended meetings with Pathé for several months.<sup>31</sup> The meetings resumed in 1979, on 5 July of that year the DST caught Pathé and Sakharovsky together. The DST observed the two men meeting and exchanging envelopes containing documents and money. Pathé made a full confession and French courts sentenced him to five years in prison, of which he only served one year due to humanitarian concerns for his old age.<sup>32</sup>

## **2. Analysis**

The case of Pierre-Charles Pathé serves as an example of an individual agent of influence. It demonstrates the strategic planning capacity necessary to employ such an agent, requiring close alignment of the agent's actions with the employing entities strategic objectives. The case also highlights specific characteristics of agents of influence which are: their actions are aligned with the sponsor's objectives, they are employed through a clandestine relationship, and they target a population to influence on behalf of the sponsor.

### ***a. Strategic Alignment of Pathé's Synthesis with Soviet Active Measures***

Themes in *Synthesis* aligned with the Active Measures objectives described by Bittman. The publication focused on fostering mistrust between NATO allies, criticizing American economic policies towards Europe and defending Soviet foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> According to Shultz, in his book *Dezinformatsia* which includes the most in-depth analysis of *Synthesis* to date, *Synthesis* had two general themes "denigration of, and

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<sup>31</sup> Andrew, Christopher M., and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 471.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Richard H. Shultz, and Roy Godson. *Dezinformatsia: Active Measures in Soviet Strategy* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey, 1984),139-149.

attacks on, Western interests and policies; and the defense of the USSR and its allies.”<sup>34</sup> These two themes were aligned with several Active Measures objectives. The denigration of and attacks on Western interests attempted to turn world public opinion against U.S. foreign policy, isolate the United States from its allies, and paralyze NATO by casting doubt on U.S. military strategies. By defending the USSR and its allies, *Synthesis* sought to create favorable conditions for Soviet foreign policy. Collectively, the journal articles painted a picture of doom for France if it remained aligned with the United States and Western Europe, while it down played any Soviet threat.

***b. Clandestine Relationship***

The KGB maintained a clandestine relationship with Pierre-Charles Pathé through a series of KGB handlers, starting with the Soviet Resident in Paris and ending with KGB officer Igor Aleksandrovich Sakharovsky. The nature of this relationship not only served to protect Pathé from French authorities but it also preserved Pathé’s credibility. The KGB relied heavily on this credibility to stream themes, through Pathé, to French decision makers. This resulted in the appearance of a talented darling of the French elite, producing original thoughts and ideas for political consumption, void of any direct soviet influence.

***c. Influence***

The KGB used Pathé in an effort to influence French decision makers. This is evidenced by the fact that over 47 percent of the French senate and 70 percent of the chamber of deputies subscribed to Pathé and the KGB’s joint publication *Synthesis*.<sup>35</sup> Of significant note, almost no private citizens subscribed to *Synthesis*. Clearly the KGB primarily targeted French government officials.

Prior to *Synthesis*, at the behest of the KGB, Pathé created and ran the news outlet titled *Center d’Information Scientifique, Economique et Politique*. Through this outlet the KGB sought to influence French academics and thinkers. The news outlet produced

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 134.

essays with the purpose of encouraging strong Franco-Russian ties and weakening both Franco-American ties and French ties with rest of Europe.

## **B. THE TRUST: AN AGENT OF INFLUENCE IN THE FORM OF AN ORGANIZATION**

Entire organizations can be used as agents of influence to the same effect as individuals. An actor can infiltrate or create a new organization to influence target populations. Within the organizational agent of influence, there is likely a mixture of persons who are aware and unaware of the true subversive nature of the organization. This mixture can make the organization even more effective and the hand of the sponsor harder to detect. To effectively direct an organization to act as an agent of influence, a carefully planned strategy with clear objectives is necessary. The result is an organization working to influence target populations to the benefit of the sponsor. The development and employment of the Trust by the Bolsheviks demonstrates this. Through the Trust the Bolsheviks conducted multiple concurrent operations, including the employment of additional front organizations. This study is not focused on a full history of the Trust. Instead, this example illuminates the actions the Trust took against one anti-Bolshevik group known as the Combat Organization to demonstrate how an organization can be employed as an agent of influence.

### **1. Background: The Trust**

The Trust, a front organization developed at the behest of Lenin, subverted the efforts of anti-Bolshevik Russian émigrés and Western intelligence agencies in order to protect the Bolshevik Commissar party. The Trust effectively exposed key members of the anti-Bolshevik movements, stymied their efforts, and served as a platform to spread disinformation. The overarching theme for the disinformation stated that the use of force and terrorist actions against the Bolshevik party was unnecessary because the Bolsheviks were being supplanted by individuals who held anti-Bolshevik ideals; thus, Russia was on a path to peacefully rejoin the community of nations. This allowed the Bolshevik party to effectively define and dispose of a latent threat over the course of six years.

**a. *Identifying a Need***

In the 1920s, Lenin became increasingly concerned about a counter-revolutionary threat posed by groups of anti-Bolsheviks, known as White Russians, living abroad and in Russia.<sup>36</sup> The White Russians who lived outside of Russia were known as émigrés, who fled predominantly to Western countries after the Bolshevik take over. Émigré numbers were estimated to be between one million and two million.<sup>37</sup> Some prominent émigrés formed fledgling anti-Bolshevik groups and had aspirations of returning to Russia to overthrow the Bolsheviks. The internal White Russians, known as Monarchists who belonged to the Monarchist Association of Central Russia (MOTSR), were fairly isolated to Moscow and Petrograd and had little to no communication with the external groups. These organizations did not pose an immediate threat, however; Lenin believed that if the policies of the countries hosting the émigrés changed the internal and external White Russians could come together and mount a counter-revolution. This created a vulnerability that Lenin did not accept. On 1 December 1920, Lenin ordered the Cheka, the term for the first Bolshevik intelligence and security apparatus, to develop a way to neutralize the émigré threat.<sup>38</sup> Felix Dzerzhinsky, chief of the Cheka, directly presided over this operation.

**b. *The Trust Is Born***

The fledgling MOTSR served as the foundation to be penetrated for the development of the Trust. Once the Cheka penetrated the MOTSR the terms Trust and MOTSR became synonymous. Prior to December 1920 Dzerzhinsky reported on the MOTSR's anti-Bolshevik activity. His command directed him not to destroy it; instead, he was to leave it in place and find a way to infiltrate and control it.<sup>39</sup> The opportunity to infiltrate the MOTSR came in the form of an unfortunate Alexander Yakushev, a Russian

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<sup>36</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen A. Harris, "The Trust: The Classic Example of Soviet Manipulation" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985), 26, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/21593>.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

citizen, member of the MOTSR, and a high ranking employee of the Ministry of Waterways.

In November of 1921, Yakushev, while traveling on official business to Norway or Switzerland, stopped in Tallin Estonia to meet with Yuri Artomonov, a former Czarist Officer.<sup>40</sup> The exact reason for the visit is unknown; what is known is the dialogue that transpired which made Yakushev vulnerable to coercive manipulation by the Cheka. During their meeting Yakushev explained

that although he was serving the Bolshevik regime, he was opposed to it and that, in this, he was by no means alone. He said that many ex-Tsarist officials and officers remained strongly anti-Bolshevik at heart. So heavily were the government and the Red Army infiltrated by this element that the Bolshevik regime itself was undergoing a subtle change.<sup>41</sup>

Artomonov then relayed this message to the Monarchist Council in Berlin. The Cheka, by an unknown means, intercepted the message and ascertained Yakushev's connection to the Monarchists.

Dzerzhinsky staged an opportunity to confront and force Yakushev to turn on the MOTSR and work for the Cheka. Dzerzhinsky arranged for the Ministry of Waterways to send Yakushev on a business trip to Irkutsk. While traveling Yakushev was apprehended by two Cheka officers and diverted to Lubyanka for three weeks of interrogation. The Cheka provided a story to cover for Yakushev's absence, which stated that he had fallen ill with typhoid.<sup>42</sup> During interrogation Yakushev divulged all he knew about the MOTSR and his involvement. To his surprise, instead of being executed for treason, the Cheka sent him back to Moscow with instructions to assume his normal routine and report on further MOTSR activities. Eventually Dzerzhinsky recruited Yakushev into the Cheka.

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<sup>40</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 3.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen A. Harris, "The Trust: The Classic Example of Soviet Manipulation" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985), 27, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/21593>.

<sup>42</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 3.

During Yakushev's interrogation a concurrent Cheka operation laid the groundwork to build the Trust. The Cheka sent an agent, under the cover that he was a messenger for Yakushev, to meet with Artomonov. This agent vaguely outlined the structure of the MOTSR and emphasized the high level role that Yakushev held in it. The agent directed Artomonov that all MOTSR activity outside of Russia would be referred to as the Trust, under the pretense of a business organization. He also provided him with a detailed plan to communicate with the MOTSR leadership that included codes and a point of contact to serve as a go between. By doing this the Cheka established the framework for its penetration of the anti-Bolshevik Émigré.

This framework alone may have been sufficient to gain intelligence on the MOTSR and émigrés but Dzerzhinsky was much more ambitious, he wanted to take full control of the MOTSR and use it to subvert the émigrés. To do this the Cheka carefully directed Yakushev's activities to elevate his status with key émigré leaders. They also continued to penetrate the MOTSR leadership by turning individuals or planting Cheka agents and officers in the MOTSR. Eventually all the top leadership of the MOTSR fell under Dzerzhinsky's control and the anti-Bolsheviks held Yakushev in high regard as trusted member with means and connections.

*c. Neutralizing the Threat*

Through the Trust the Cheka identified the structure and character of multiple émigré groups and their relationships with one another. The three primary groups were the Monarchists (traditionalist that desired a return to czarist style rule), The Peoples Association for the Defense of the Motherland and Freedom lead by Boris Savinkov (an anti-Bolshevik and anti-Tsarist democratic leaning group), and the Eurasians. The Cheka developed and employed unique methods to counter the efforts of each of these organizations. They ranged from disseminating disinformation aimed at miss leading groups to targeting individuals to be captured or killed.

The Cheka identified a split amongst prominent émigré Monarchists. A disagreement about whether or not to use force within Russia to subvert Bolshevik rule caused the split. General Petr Nikolayevich Baron Wrangle, a talented officer with

political acumen, advocated for building a network of white Russians in Europe and “waiting-to-see” what happens.<sup>43</sup> General Kutepov, Wrangle’s former subordinate, advocated for terrorist action in Russia on a large scale to destabilize the Bolsheviks and usher in a new era.<sup>44</sup> Kutepov broke away and formed the Combat Organization. He poached the most daring and ruthless members from Wrangle’s outfit and trained them in clandestine operations and sabotage.

Through the Trust the Cheka learned of Kutepov’s splinter group and his intentions to create havoc in Russia. To counter this group the Cheka developed a plan to establish bona fides with Kutepov and co-opt his Combat Organization with the Trust. This allowed the Cheka to stymie the terrorist efforts of the Combat Organization and also led to the capture of one of the Bolshevik’s staunchest rivals, the British spymaster Sydney Reilly.

Kutepov had suspicions of the MOTSR from the beginning. To alleviate them he sent some of his most trusted agents to Russia to determine the authenticity of the movement. Maria and Radkovich Shults formed the core of this fact finding team. Trust members, who were actually Cheka officers, received the group and discussed the activities of the MOTSR. Yakushev even appointed Maria and her husband as members of his staff.<sup>45</sup> This effectively hooked the couple, and Maria’s messages back to Kutepov were positive. The fictitious staff roles also served to delay the couple’s terrorist intentions.

Maria not only communicated her findings of authenticity about the Trust to Kutepov but also to Sydney Reilly, who held a key role in a 1918 counter-revolutionary plot, and remained active within the anti-Bolshevik émigré community.<sup>46</sup> Because of this the Cheka deemed him a significant threat that warranted targeting to be captured. Yakushev arranged for a meeting with Reilly in Helsinki. Accompanied by the Shults

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<sup>43</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 2.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



couple, Yakushev convinced Reilly to come to Moscow in order to meet with members of the MOTSR Political Bureau. Reilly infiltrated into Russia through clandestine Trust corridors. He met with several Trust officials, who were undercover Cheka officers, to discuss topics such as funding and Western intelligence agency support to the anti-Bolsheviks. The agents eventually detained Reilly. The Cheka then staged a fake shootout at a Trust border corridor and falsified Reilly's death. Reilly was never seen again, and it is suspected that he revealed information that allowed the Bolsheviks to further penetrate British Intelligence.<sup>47</sup>

*d. Propagation of Disinformation*

To follow up the capture of Sydney Reilly and reestablish the Trust's reputation, the Cheka devised an ingenious plan involving a respected émigré journalist named V.V. Shulgin.<sup>48</sup> Shulgin was convinced to go to Russia to get a firsthand look at the Trust and the state of Russia under a supposed weakening Bolshevik regime. Shulgin was escorted by Maria Shults and her husband. The couple, who was unaware of the Cheka's involvement, convinced him of the Trust's authenticity and its role in ousting Bolshevism. Shulgin agreed to write a book titled *The Three Capitals: Travels in Red Russia*, which presented his findings and chronicled his travels. Under the pretense of operational security, he sent a draft to Yakushev to edit, to ensure the Trust was not endangered by information in the book. This resulted in a work that strongly supported the Bolshevik disinformation theme that, "Bolshevism was vanishing, so there was no sense in fighting it; everything was as it was before, only somewhat worse; Russia was on the way to recovery and any kind of outside interference would only retard the trend."<sup>49</sup>

The Cheka effectively neutralized the threat posed by Kutepov's Combat Organization and in the process further disseminated its disinformation theme to further dissuade other would be counter revolution threats. Sydney Reilly was permanently removed and the Shults couple was preoccupied with fake anti-Bolshevik activities,

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen A. Harris, "The Trust: The Classic Example of Soviet Manipulation" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985), 51, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/21593>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>49</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 11.

spoon fed to them by the Cheka.<sup>50</sup> Disinformation was propagated by Shulgin's book *The Three Capitals: Travels in Red Russia*, which at the date of its publication had no perceived connection to the Bolsheviks.

## 2. Analysis

The Trust serves as an example of an organizational agent of influence. This case demonstrates that the employment of an organizational agent of influence is an indicator that the sponsor has a strategic planning capability. This case also demonstrates that individual and organizational agents of influence share the same core characteristics.

### a. *Strategic Alignment of The Trust's Actions with Bolshevik Goals*

The development of the Trust was a deliberate effort, conceived to help secure Bolshevik control of Soviet Russia by stifling latent counter-revolution threats. The Bolsheviks followed a deliberate strategy and incorporated emergent strategies to achieve a desired outcome. The overarching strategy employed by the Cheka required it to penetrate and control the MOTSR, and subvert the efforts of the anti-Bolshevik émigrés and the fledgling MOTSR. This strategy can be seen in two early instances. The first is when Lenin ordered Dzerzhinsky to neutralize the émigré threat. The second is when Dzerzhinsky initially reported on the MOTSR as a threat, only to be ordered by the Soviet Central Committee not to destroy it, but rather to penetrate and control it.<sup>51</sup> This is important because it shows that a framework was set from the beginning that directed operations to collectively achieve a specific outcome.

The events that followed the decision to penetrate and control the MOTSR evidence the strategic planning capability within the Cheka and Bolshevik party. The acquisition of Yakushev as an agent, the capture of Reilly, the subversion of the Combat Organization and the penning of *The Three Capitals* are all examples of opportunities born from the process of pursuing a deliberate strategy. When the Cheka first acquired Yakushev, it is fair to assume that they did not foresee the exact series of successful

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<sup>50</sup> Pamela Simpkins, *The Trust* (Arlington, VA: The Security and Intelligence Foundation, 1989), 9.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen A. Harris, "The Trust: The Classic Example of Soviet Manipulation" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1985), 26, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/21593>.

operations that would follow. The fact that the organization consistently capitalized on these emergent opportunities further highlights its strategic planning capacity.

The consistent disinformation theme that the Cheka disseminated through the Trust is another example of strategic planning. Convincing certain émigré groups to do nothing because change was at hand was nothing short of ingenious. In 1920, the Bolsheviks' future of absolute rule was not secure. The country was recovering from WWI, and the Bolsheviks had narrowly put down a counter-revolutionary plot in 1918. Lenin did not possess the capability of addressing the latent émigré threat by attacking them on European soil, and he certainly did not have the ability to coerce European states to dispose of the émigrés for him. Through the Trust, the Bolsheviks developed a viable means of distributing believable disinformation to the correct audience, which influenced a large potential threat, the émigrés, to choose to never even become incipient.

***b. Clandestine Relationship***

The Cheka maintained a secret relationship with Alexander Yakushev and other MOTSR officers. This allowed the MOTSR, under Cheka control, to preserve its credibility as an anti-Bolshevik organization. By doing this the MOTSR maintained the bona fides required to interact with prominent émigrés. Without these clandestine or secret relationships the Trust could not have existed.

The Cheka laid the groundwork for its clandestine relationship with Yakushev from the very beginning. The Cheka hid the fact that they interrogated Yakushev by arranging for him to go on a business trip and then creating the story that he fell ill with typhoid. By doing this, Yakushev's disappearance never aroused suspicion among his MOTSR associates, allowing him to keep up the appearance of an anti-Bolshevik.

***c. Influence***

The Trust served most significantly as a platform for the Bolsheviks to convince émigré leaders not to take up arms against the Bolsheviks. The Cheka did this in two different ways. It directly employed Yakushev and other Cheka agents to interact with émigrés and spread the theme that Russia was on a natural path to return to its previous

condition; therefore, war was not necessary. The Cheka, through the Trust, also manipulated actual anti-Bolsheviks to spread this message. Maria and Radkovich Shults, who were true anti-Bolsheviks, served this purpose by sending reports back to Kutepov that reflected the Bolshevik theme. The Cheka even managed to indirectly convince V.V. Shulgin, the respected émigré journalist, to write a book which streamed the Bolshevik theme to his fellow émigrés.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

An agent of influence can be an individual or an entire organization. Pierre-Charles Pathé is an example of an individual acting as an agent of influence. The Trust shows an organization acting as an agent of influence. Both cases demonstrate that the agent of influences' actions are aligned with the subversive actors' strategic goals, a clandestine relationship exists between the sponsors and the agents, and that the agent influences a population for the benefit of the sponsor. The employment of an agent of influence by an organization indicates that the organization has a strategic planning capability. Use of agents of influence requires a strategy with objectives and an ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities.

### **III. HAMAS EMPLOYMENT OF THE HOLY LAND FOUNDATION FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT AS AN AGENT OF INFLUENCE**

Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else's music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him.

—Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*<sup>52</sup>

The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), a former U.S.-based charity, acted as an agent of influence for Hamas. The connection between Hamas and the HLF is already established by the court case *U.S. v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development, et al.*, which resulted in the conviction of several top HLF officials for providing material support to Hamas. The court also cited HLF as a front for Hamas.<sup>53</sup> This chapter goes one step further and argues that the HLF acted not only as a Hamas front organization but also as an agent of influence, employed to garner support for Hamas. This argument is justified by 1) the fact that Hamas leadership played a direct role in creating and guiding the HLF, 2) the deliberate concealment of the direct connection between Hamas and the HLF, 3) the use of events by the HLF to influence people to support Hamas' objectives and 4) the way HLF activities were aligned with an established Hamas strategy.

#### **A. BACKGROUND: THE HOLY LAND FOUNDATION FOR RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT**

To understand how Hamas employed the Holy Land Foundation as an agent of influence in the United States, it is necessary to understand Hamas' roots with the

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<sup>52</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Oxford University Press, UK, 2006), 47, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=430407>.

<sup>53</sup> *United States of America v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development et al.* District Court for the Northern District of Texas Dallas Division, 3:04-cr-00240-P (2008). The decision was later upheld in 2011 in *United States of America v. Holyland Foundation for Relief and Development et al.*, United States Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit, 09-10560 (2011).

Muslim Brotherhood, and the use of Dawah to further Hamas objectives. Hamas was founded as an offshoot of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, and it remains strongly influenced by its ideology. The influence is seen in the connections that key Hamas leaders have or had with the Muslim Brotherhood and in Hamas' use of Dawah to further its goals.

### **1. Sheik Yassin Cofounder of Hamas**

Sheik Ahmed Yassin cofounded Hamas and was responsible for establishing its system of Dawah. Dawah is a Hamas wing of social services that penetrates down to the neighborhood level, and provides Hamas with a foothold in Palestinian society. Yassin was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, and, as early as 1983, four years before Hamas was officially established, he organized and directed militant operations.<sup>54</sup> In 1987 Hamas was officially established and at this point Sheik Yassin assumed control of the Dawah networks. He maintained a close connection with militant and political Hamas activities and supported them through use of the Dawah networks until his assassination in 2004. In an interview with author Chehab Zaki, Sheik Yassin explained that Hamas had a four-phased strategy. "The first phase was to build institutions; the charities and social services."<sup>55</sup> The second phase focused on building popularity amongst the populations of the West Bank and Gaza and establishing its political credibility.<sup>56</sup> The third phase focused on developing Hamas' military capabilities.<sup>57</sup> The fourth phase focused on "moving beyond the Palestinian dimension and establish[ing] a dialogue with its Arab and Islamic neighbors."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 35.

<sup>55</sup> Zaki Chehab, *Inside Hamas: The Untold Story of the Militant Islamic Movement* (New York, NY: Nations Books, 2007), 21.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

## 2. Mousa Abu Marzook

Mousa Abu Marzook is another prominent Hamas leader with direct ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. In 1976, he was a prominent Muslim Brotherhood activist in Abu Dhabi.<sup>59</sup> In 1982 he moved to Louisiana to pursue his doctorate in engineering, and there he assumed a critical role in establishing three charity organizations in the United States, all of which played roles in supporting Hamas: (1) Islamic Association of Palestine, (2) The United Association for Studies and Research, and (3) The Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development.<sup>60</sup> Marzook assumed control of Hamas in 1989 and ran it from his residence in Virginia, after Israeli authorities arrested Sheik Yassin. He also exerted control over the Hamas front organizations that he previously established. FBI surveillance observed Marzook exerting this control during a Hamas meeting that took place in Mississippi in 1994. Surveillance overheard Marzook directing the attendees that the primary fund-raising entity for Hamas in the United States would be the Holy Land Foundation.<sup>61</sup>

Sheik Yassin and Marzook both used Dawah to further Hamas objectives. Yassin did this in the occupied territories by establishing networks to provide social services to Palestinians. According to Mathew Levitt, director of the Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, Dawah supports Hamas by radicalizing populations through its social programs, while its activities garner support from the population for Hamas.<sup>62</sup> Marzook sought to accomplish this in the United States by establishing charities and foundations as fronts to support Hamas.

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<sup>59</sup> Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven: Yale Press, 2006), 40.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> David E. Henifin, "What Took So Long? Closing the Holy Land Foundation: A Case Study in Counterterrorism," Homeland Security Digital Library, 2, last modified 2004, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=457675>.

<sup>62</sup> Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 6.

### 3. Rise and Fall of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development

Abu Marzook and his wife's family played a central role in establishing the Holy Land Foundation as a non-profit charity in the United States. This connection is documented by HLF tax records, which show multiple money transactions, going both ways, between Marzook and the HLF.<sup>63</sup> HLF was first established in 1989 in California, under the name "Occupied Land Fund." In 1992 the HLF moved to Richardson Texas. For a decade the HLF participated in events throughout the United States to garner support and raise funds for Hamas.

HLF-sponsored and -affiliated events usually occurred in the form of conferences. The conferences featured Islamic scholars, bands and even persons fresh from the frontlines of Gaza. At the events HLF and similar Hamas supporting charities maintained booths and distributed publications all aimed at supporting Hamas' position. Tax returns showed that its revenue in 2000 exceeded \$13 million, making it one of the largest and most successful Islamic charities in the US.<sup>64</sup> The U.S. government believes that the majority of the HLF's revenues were used to support Hamas.<sup>65</sup>

On December 4, 2001, the HLF was designated a material supporter to Hamas, a terrorist organization.<sup>66</sup> This essentially marked the end of HLF. The trials, retrials and appeals lasted for eight years eventually resulting in five HLF senior leaders being found guilty of conspiring to support a terrorist organization, and receiving sentences ranging from 10 to 65 years in prison.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 18.

<sup>64</sup> Matthew Levitt, *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad* (New Haven, CT: Yale Press, 2006), 146.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Protecting Charitable Organizations - E," U.S. Department of the Treasury, accessed November 3, 2016, [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-charities\\_execorder\\_13224-e.aspx](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/terrorist-illicit-finance/Pages/protecting-charities_execorder_13224-e.aspx).

<sup>67</sup> "Federal Judge Hands Downs Sentences in Holy Land Foundation Case," U.S. Department of Justice, accessed November 3, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/federal-judge-hands-downs-sentences-holy-land-foundation-case>.



## **B. ANALYSIS**

The Holy Land Foundation acted as an agent of influence for Hamas. Through the HLF Hamas targeted sympathetic populations to garner support. To do this the HLF deliberately concealed its relationship with Hamas, which allowed it to operate with less scrutiny. Most significantly, the HLF's activities aligned with Hamas strategy to help achieve Hamas aims.

### **1. HLF Influence Operations to Support Hamas**

The HLF is one of several fronts that raised funds for Hamas. The HLF worked closely with the United Association for Studies and Research and the Islamic Association of Palestinians to organize events with the purpose of garnering support for Hamas. As these organizations grew they became folded under another organization called the Palestinian Committee, established by the Muslim Brotherhood to manage Hamas fronts based in the United States.<sup>68</sup> This is detailed in an excerpt from the following 1992 Muslim Brotherhood memo titled "Islamic Action for the Palestinian Cause in North America" (the HLF is referred to as the Occupied Land Fund):

[w]hen . . . the Intifada started and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) was formed and the general apparatus for Palestine developed . . . a 'Palestine Committee' was formed under the supervision of the executive office [of the Muslim Brotherhood]. The Committee was then tasked with supervising all the organizations which serve the plan of the Movement domestically and internationally in addition to the Palestinian cause. Among these organizations were the 'Islamic Association' [the IAP], the 'Occupied Land Fund,' and the 'United Association' [the UASR]. Like other directors of the Movement's committees and sections, the director of Palestine Committee is to submit periodical reports and adheres to the directions and the guidance of the leadership of the Group.<sup>69</sup>

These front organizations held a series of successful fundraisers across the United States. The effects of their efforts can be seen in a memo from the Palestinian Committee

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<sup>68</sup> United States v. Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development et al., Document 1356, District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division, 3:04-cr-00240-P (2008), 16, [https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/1425.pdf](https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1425.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

reporting on the 1989–1990 year end accomplishments. The following is an excerpt from this memo:

Twenty-three Intifada festivals have been held this year . . . Al Sakhra band participated in over 25 festivals during activities of the Association and the Fund [HLF] . . . The sum of \$728,059.04 has been raised through the Occupied Land Fund to support the steadfastness of the people in the Inside. Most of the money has been transferred . . . Five books have been issued by the United Association for Studies & Research. They are currently being marketed to benefit the Intifada . . . The Studies office [UASR] has published 5 issues of Al Aqsa bulletins and 6 issues of the Striking Arms leaflets.<sup>70</sup>

The name of the band Al Sakhra, meaning The Rock, is a reference to the Dome of the Rock. The Dome of the Rock, located in Jerusalem, is an Islamic shrine, built in 691 over the top of a Roman Temple. The site is recognized by both Jews and Muslims as the location where Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son. The Crusaders captured the site in 1099; Saladin recaptured the site in 1187. The Dome has remained under Muslim control ever since. Because of this history the Rock of the Dome is very symbolic to Palestinians. The lead singer of the band is Mufid Abdulqader, the half-brother of Hamas' current leader Khaled Meshal.<sup>71</sup> The band had reputation for its anti-Israeli lyrics and calls for acts of violence against Israel. The band played at events to excite audiences and drive up donations.

The annual Islamic Conference, held in Kansas City, is one of the *Intifada festivals* referred in the Palestinian Committee memo. According to Nasser Hidmi, who was arrested in Israel in the early 1990s for attempting to detonate a bomb, Hamas used these conferences to recruit future Hamas operatives. Nasser claims that as a member of a Hamas wing, he actively recruited at the Islamic Conference.<sup>72</sup> He described one such incident to Israeli authorities in the following statement:

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Todd Bensman, "Hamas's Rock Star," *Weekly Standard*, February 13, 2006, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/hamass-rock-star/article/7870>.

<sup>72</sup> Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 15.

At the Islamic Conference there were five thousand invited guests that stayed at hotels surrounding the center.... At the conference at Kansas City [in 1989], Muhammad Salah [a.k.a. Abu Ahmed] gathered about twenty young men including myself, for a secret meeting of the activists of Hamas in a meeting hall at one of the hotels. At this meeting, Muhammad Salah and Ibrahim Al-Muzain [an officer of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF), another United States-based charity that provides funding for Hamas within Israel] lectured to us. They informed us that all the young men that were present and were chosen for the secret meetings were from the Occupied Territories and were selected according to forms they filled out in the [refugee] camps. This was done in order that they will take part in activities that will support and strengthen the Intifada within the framework of Hamas.<sup>73</sup>

The involvement of Al-Muzain, an HLF board member, with the direct recruitment of future Hamas militants during an HLF sponsored event shows that the HLF was used as a recruitment platform for Hamas.

## **2. Hamas and HLF Maintained a Clandestine Relationship**

Hamas and HLF maintained a clandestine relationship to avoid legal consequences from the United States government. The most concrete evidence of this comes from an infamous meeting dubbed the “Philly meeting.” Held in 1993, Abu Baker, the CEO of HLF, presided over the meeting. He held the meeting to determine how the U.S. based fronts would continue to support Hamas and how they could assist in derailing Palestinian Authority peace negotiations with Israel.

Abu Baker established a cover for the true nature of the Philly meeting to disguise it as a workshop between the IAP and HLF. He also instructed attendees that if questioned about the meetings nature to use the workshop cover story. He directed attendees to refer to Hamas during the meeting only as “sister Samah.”<sup>74</sup> Samah is Hamas spelled backwards. During the meeting Abu Baker also described the necessity of concealing HLF’s support to Hamas, and the need for a narrative that would be acceptable for domestic U.S. consumption. He explained that being upfront about

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<sup>73</sup> Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 15.

<sup>74</sup> “Government Exhibit Philly Meeting 1,” The Investigative Project on Terrorism, 49, accessed September 10, 2016, [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/2039.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2039.pdf).

opposing Arafat and peace negotiations with Israel would put them at risk of being labeled terrorists:<sup>75</sup>

[W]e don't want the American front to become a front for direct conflict. These things will put us in direct conflict, not only with the Palestinians, even with the official government circles. What is our benefit, what is our interest? As Palestinian action organizations in America, what is our benefit in creating more enemies than necessary?<sup>76</sup>

Abu Baker also explained that they must “behave as an American organization” by taking care of a diverse population, and not appear to support only a specific group. He then goes on to say that they can do this by giving \$100,000 to the Islamists and \$5,000 to the other groups.<sup>77</sup> When Marzook refers to Islamists he means Hamas. Essentially he explained how to hide HLF's support to Hamas by creating a smoke screen of contributions to other groups.

### **3. HLF's Alignment with Hamas Strategy**

The Philly meeting also shows how the activities of the HLF were aligned to execute Hamas' strategy “to move beyond the Palestinian dimension.” Hamas initially accomplished this by branding the Palestinian struggle as an Islamic struggle and then called on neighboring Muslim states for support. To accomplish this in the United States Hamas relied on its front organizations to garner support from U.S. populations. During the Philly conference the attendees formulated a plan to present Hamas' Ideology to the American people, by presenting it as a Palestinian concern, not a Hamas goal. The attendees believed that by avoiding a connection with Hamas, their sponsoring organization, they would be in a better position to influence a U.S. audience. The group devised a plan to bring Islamic scholars to the United States to discuss the Palestinian situation. The conference would then end with all the scholars backing a position that is

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Steven Emerson, *Jihad Incorporated: A Guide to Militant Islam in the U.S.* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 181.

similar to Hamas' and declare a fatwah to oppose the peace negotiations.<sup>78</sup> The group also discussed how the scholars would be secretly leveraged by Hamas' leadership to execute this plan. Publicly the attendance of the Scholars would be seen as the result of an invitation from U.S. based Islamic charities.

### **C. CONCLUSION**

The HLF acted as a Hamas agent of Influence with the purpose of furthering Hamas' goals. Hamas leaders established HLF and maintained a clandestine relationship with it to avoid scrutiny. HLF leadership and the leadership of affiliated organizations were very deliberate about this as evidenced by discussions at the "Philly" conference. The HLF conducted activities in the United States to influence people to support Hamas' ideology and closely coordinated to support Hamas strategy. One example of this was exposed by FBI wiretaps, showing HLF's CEO conspiring to sponsor an event to discredit Palestinian and Israeli negotiations in order to support Hamas' position. Over the course of a decade the HLF operated freely and successfully as a Hamas agent of influence.

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<sup>78</sup> "Government Exhibit Philly Meeting 1," The Investigative Project on Terrorism, 178, accessed September 10, 2016, [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/2039.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/2039.pdf). Hamas staunchly opposed Arafat's Fatah party because they engaged in negotiations with Israel. Negotiating with Israel was in conflict with Hamas' all in demand for the restoration of Palestine and the complete removal of Israel.

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#### **IV. AL-QAEDA EMPLOYMENT OF THE AL-KIFAH REFUGEE CENTER AS AN AGENT OF INFLUENCE**

“Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!”

—*The Wizard of Oz* (1939)<sup>79</sup>

The Al-Kifah (The Struggle) Refugee Center, under the control of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, acted as an agent of influence for Al-Qaeda. This chapter demonstrates that Rahman 1) aligned the direction of Al-Kifah to support Al-Qaeda’s vision, 2) maintained a clandestine relationship with Al-Qaeda, and 3) influenced a target audience on behalf of Al-Qaeda through Al-Kifah.

##### **A. BACKGROUND OF AL-KIFAH REFUGEE CENTER**

The history of the Al-Kifah Refugee Center is steeped in terror plots, murder, and scandal. In retrospect it may seem surprising that some of the events occurred or were even allowed to occur. When reviewing the background of Al-Kifah, and some of its affiliates, it must be kept in mind that during the 1980s and early 1990s the jihad effects of the Arab mujahedeen were not seen as a threat to the United States. These predecessors to Al-Qaeda were seen as freedom fighters and even allies to the United States, fighting against Soviet communist incursion.

##### **1. Established by Abdullah Azzam and Osama Bin Laden**

In 1984 Abdullah Azzam, a highly respected mujahedeen figure who played a central role in the Soviet-Afghan conflict, developed an international support network called the Maktab Khadamat al-Mujahidin (MAK) “Office of Services for the Mujahedeen.” The network provided funds and recruits for the Afghan mujahidin. Osama Bin Laden bolstered this network by providing direct funding. The MAK operated out of several countries to include the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Sweden and several Middle Eastern countries. In the United States Azzam and Bin Laden opened

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<sup>79</sup> *The Wizard of Oz*. Directed by Victor Fleming. 1939. Warner Brothers, Film.

offices and affiliates of the MAK in over 30 cities.<sup>80</sup> In the United States MAK offices went by the name Al-Kifah; the flag ship office operated out of Brooklyn New York. Mustafa al-Shalabi, appointed by Azzam, presided over all the Al-Kifah from the Brooklyn office.

Initially, Al-Kifah operated from an unassuming desk located in the al Faruq mosque, until it moved to a small apartment down the street. Despite its modest appearance, the Brooklyn Al-Kifah office acted as a hub for the greater MAK network and provided Assam's mujahedeen efforts with direct access to new recruits and funds.<sup>81</sup> The block on which Al-Kifah stood, between Third and Fourth Avenues on Atlantic Avenue, served as an initial stopping point for Middle Eastern and African immigrants. The Islamic bookstores and Arab restaurants, which teemed with notices that advertised in Arabic for jobs and apartments, drew the immigrants. The Al-Kifah Refugee Center, located in the center of this bustle, provided a conduit for volunteers to participate in the Soviet Afghan War. It became known to volunteers as the "service for Jihad" office.<sup>82</sup>

Al-Kifah's identity as a proponent of Afghan jihad stemmed not only from its actions but also from its affiliation with its founder Abdullah Azzam. This can be seen from a flyer distributed by Al-Kifah, which on its letter head states, "'al-Kifah Refugee Center is an organization founded by Sheikh Abdullah Azzam to serve the cause of jihad.'"<sup>83</sup> Abdullah Azzam served as the catalyzing force that held together the Arab mujahidin fighters in Afghanistan, which he coined as the "Afghan Arabs." Azzam derived his credibility from his status as an Islamic scholar and authority. In 1973 he

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<sup>80</sup> Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 130–131.

<sup>81</sup> Asaf Maliach, "Bin Ladin, Palestine and al-Qa'ida's Operational Strategy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (2008): 354, doi:10.1080/00263200802021426.

<sup>82</sup> Allison Mitchell, "After Blast, New Interest in Holy-War Recruits in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, April 11, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/11/nyregion/after-blast-new-interest-in-holy-war-recruits-in-brooklyn.html>.

<sup>83</sup> Mathew Levitt, "Prosecuting Terrorism Beyond Material Support," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, last modified January 14, 2008, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/prosecuting-terrorism-beyond-material-support>.



received a PHD in the Roots of Islamic Law from the Al-Ahzar University in Cairo.<sup>84</sup> This coupled with his success and exploits in Afghanistan gave Azzam significant bona fides amongst devout Muslims and in turn bolstered Al-Kifah's credibility. This credibility would later be coveted by Bin Laden.

## 2. Fractures Among the Afghan Arabs

In late 1988, the Soviet withdrawal in Afghanistan triggered a breakdown in unity among the Afghan Arabs. This breakdown soon led to conflict, the lines of which were largely defined by future visions for the jihad and by nationalities. Azzam's purpose for developing the Arab mujahedeen in Afghanistan stemmed from his identity as a Palestinian, and served a greater goal of defeating Israel. Azzam believed that war with the Soviets in Afghanistan served as a training ground for young Palestinians, to hone their capabilities and religious will to eventually fight against Israel.<sup>85</sup> Azzam believed victory against the Soviets to be the most pressing fight for Muslims, because the "war in Afghanistan was intended to bring forth an Islamic State."<sup>86</sup> The Egyptians, such as Ayman al-Zawahiri, had a different vision for the mujahedeen. They wanted to harness the existing infrastructure to defeat the Egyptian government, which they believed to be corrupt. Bin Laden's vision differed drastically from Azzam's and that of the Egyptian's. He did not wish to continue the jihad against Muslim entities such as the Egyptian government or in Israel where he could find himself in conflict with Muslim "secularist" Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. This marked the nascent stages of Bin Laden's strategy to target Western governments, which he later termed the "Far" enemy. Bin Laden believed that support from these governments was responsible for the continued reign of corrupt Muslim governments. During this period Bin Laden

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<sup>84</sup>Asaf Maliach, "Bin Ladin, Palestine and al-Qa'ida's Operational Strategy," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (2008): 354.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 102.

began consolidating power. He brought together a small group of Afghan Arabs to form the initial core of Al-Qaeda.<sup>87</sup>

The conflict amongst the Afghan Arabs came to a head on November 24, 1989, in Peshawar, Pakistan when Abdullah Azzam's vehicle hit a roadside bomb, killing him and his two sons. Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri are strongly suspected to have been behind Azzam's assassination.<sup>88</sup> Osama Bin Laden then assumed control of the MAK and supplanted it with his newly formed Al-Qaeda.

### **3. The Effects of Bin Laden's Takeover of the MAK are Felt in the United States**

The United States-based Al-Kifah offices soon felt the effects of leadership change in Afghanistan, ushered in by Sheikh Omar Adel Rahman, also called the Blind Sheikh, who moved from Egypt to Brooklyn in July of 1990. Rahman was a highly respected Islamic scholar with a large following of devout Muslims, drawn to his notoriety as an influencer behind the assassination of Egyptian President Sadat. Rahman, whose expenses were underwritten by Bin Laden, quickly assumed a position speaking at the Al-Farooq mosque and established himself as an authority within Al-Kifah.<sup>89</sup> Abdel al-Rahman Haggag, the Sheikh's speechwriter who became a government informant, stated that Bin Laden routinely funneled \$5,000 to Rahman, through a middleman named Abdul Rahman Alamoudi.<sup>90</sup> Mustafa Shalabi, Azzam's appointee, and Rahman quickly became rivals. They disagreed about Al-Kifah's role in supporting jihad. Shalabi remained loyal to Azzam's vision and insisted on supporting jihad in Afghanistan.

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<sup>87</sup> Andrew McGregor, "Jihad and the Rifle Alone: Abdullah Azzam and the Islamist Revolution," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (Fall 2003): <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/viewArticle/219/377>. Bin Laden first established Al-Qaeda without Azzam's knowledge. Later Bin Laden announced Al-Qaeda's formation during a meeting chaired by Azzam. Azzam agreed to the formation of the group but his vision of what Al-Qaeda would become differed drastically from Bin Laden's vision. For more information see: Rohan Gunaratna, "Al Qaeda's Ideology," *Current trends in Islamist Ideology* (2005): 61–62.

<sup>88</sup> Tom Quiggin, "Understanding al-Qaeda's Ideology for Counter-narrative Work," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, no. 2 (2010): 18–19.

<sup>89</sup> John Miller, Michael Stone, and Chris Mitchell, *The Cell: Inside the 9/11 Plot and Why the FBI and CIA Failed to Stop It* (New York: Hatchet, 2002), 137.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

Rahman wanted to leverage the office to export jihad to other countries. Shalabi sensed that his life was in danger and made arrangements to flee to Egypt. On February 25, 1991, one day before his scheduled departure, a gunman shot and killed him at his residence. Investigators never identified the gunman, but it is widely believed to be Mahmud Abouhalima, who acted at the behest of Sheikh Rahman.<sup>91</sup> This effectively ended Azzam's remaining influence over Al-Kifah, but the credibility Azzam built over the years amongst Muslims remained with it.

The direction of Al-Kifah quickly changed, and it became aligned with Al-Qaeda. The organization no longer focused just on Afghanistan. The scope of the office expanded to support and advocate for jihad in other countries. This new focus can be seen in a February 1993 publication of *Al-Hussam* (The Sword,) a biweekly newsletter produced by Al-Kifah. The first two pages of the three page publication are of an article titled "The Obligation to Fight the Infidels." This article provides a long and twisting argument to compel readers to actively seek out jihad. The third page of the publication is titled "News" and provides details of wrongful acts against Muslims in other countries. The publication, using the credibility built by Azzam, is a one stop advertisement for jihad; it provides not only the motivation but specific locations to take action.

On February 26, 1993, a group of terrorists led by Ramzi Yousef attacked the World Trade Center. Strikingly, Ramzi Yousef is the nephew of Khalid Sheik Mohamed, who would later be convicted of masterminding the 9/11 attacks. The Al-Kifah Refugee Center quickly became the subject of a federal investigation due to the fact that several of the bombing suspects were affiliated with the center. Authorities suspected that Sheikh Rahman acted as a spiritual guide for the attackers but brought no official charges against him. Ramzi Yousef escaped to Pakistan where he stayed in a guest house funded by Bin Laden.<sup>92</sup> Pakistani authorities eventually captured him in 1995. Several other scandals plagued the organization. In November of 1990, in Manhattan, El Sayyid A. Nosair,

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<sup>91</sup> Richard Behar, "The secret life of Mahmud the Red," *Time*, October 4, 1993, 55–61, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,162453,00.html>.

<sup>92</sup> Joint Inquiry Into the Intelligence Community Activities Before and After Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001, Senate Report No. 351, United States Congressional Serial Set number 14750, (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 2003), 128.

another center affiliate, murdered Israeli politician Rabbi Meir Kahane. Investigators later found that Bin Laden paid for Nosair's defense.<sup>93</sup> In June of 1993 the FBI arrested Sheik Rahman for his involvement with the New York City landmark bomb plot. The FBI foiled a plot to target six prominent locations in New York City as a follow-up to the 1993 World Trade Center Bombing. Sheikh Rahman is currently serving a life sentence in U.S. federal prison for his involvement.

#### **4. Al-Kifah Is Rebranded**

Due to increased scrutiny by the U.S. government Al-Kifah authority shifted from the Brooklyn office to an office in Boston. The production of *Al-Hussam* also moved to the Boston office. The Boston Al-Kifah office eventually rebranded itself as CARE International, a charity with tax exempt status. Despite the efforts of CARE International leadership to distance itself from Al-Kifah, Al-Qaeda and Sheikh Rahman, the U.S. government indicted CARE and several board members, some of the charges were related to conspiracy to cover its links to terrorism.<sup>94</sup> Three board members of CARE International were convicted of fraud and purposefully hiding its connection to Al-Kifah. Central to the prosecutions argument was CARE International's publication of *Al-Hussam*, which remained identical to its publication under Al-Kifah.<sup>95</sup>

#### **B. ANALYSIS**

Analysis of Al-Kifah and the actions of Sheik Rahman show that the Al-Kifah Refugee Center acted as an Al-Qaeda agent of influence. Sheik Rahman acted through and employed Al-Kifah in line with Al-Qaeda strategy. He also concealed his and the Center's ties to Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, Sheik Rahman streamed messages through Al-Kifah and used Al-Kifah's credibility to influence a target population.

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<sup>93</sup> Greg Smith, "Bin Laden Bankrolled Kahane Killer Defense," *New York Daily News*, October 9, 2002, <http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/news/bin-laden-bankrolled-kahane-killer-defense-article-1.499584>.

<sup>94</sup> Indictment, Document 218-1, United States of America v. Muhamed Mubayyid et al., U.S. District Court District of Massachusetts, Case 4:05-cr-40026-FDS. [http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/356.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/356.pdf).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid..

## 1. Strategy

Al-Kifah Refugee Center became aligned with Al-Qaeda's vision when Sheikh Rahman assumed control of the organization. This re-alignment is marked by the murder of Shalabi and evident in Al-Kifah's publication *Al-Hussam*, Sheikh Rahman's rhetoric, and by the terrorist actions under taken by affiliates of the Center. These aspects show a change in focus from Abdullah Azzam's original intent for Al-Kifah, to support jihad in Afghanistan, to attacking foreign governments or the "far enemy."

The murder of Shalabi is very important because it coincides with the assassination of Abdullah Azzam. Both acts opened the door for Osama Bin Laden to spread Al-Qaeda's influence. The split between Osama Bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam is credited to staunch differences in opinion about the future of the jihad. Azzam proved to be a direct obstacle to Bin Laden's desire to mobilize the existing jihad infrastructure, MAK, and the Afghan Arabs, in his direction. There is no hard evidence that proves Bin Laden orchestrated Azzam's assassination, but it is undeniable that he benefited from it by assuming control of MAK and bringing the rest of the Afghan Arabs under his control. This plays out very similarly to the murder of Mustafa Shalabi in Brooklyn, New York. Shalabi remained loyal to Azzam's vision for the organization, and this presented an obstacle to Sheikh Rahman's plans. Sheikh Rahman wanted to leverage the organization to participate in jihad beyond Afghanistan, specifically Western targets. This is evidenced by his involvement in the first World Trade Center bombing and the Land Marks terror plot. By removing Shalabi, Sheikh Rahman positioned himself to assume control of Al-Kifah and realign its direction with that of Al-Qaeda's.

The propaganda distributed by Al-Kifah and Sheikh Rahman while the center operated under his control shows alignment with Al-Qaeda strategy. The 5 February, 1993, publication of *Al-Hussam* shows the AL-Kifah center's focus on spreading jihad to areas outside of Afghanistan, specifically areas where Muslims are in direct conflict with non-Muslims.

Rahman's rhetoric, according to U.S. court documents, insisted that all Muslims must participate in violent jihad against the enemies of Islam and identifies the United States as one of those enemies:

Rahman, a blind Islamic scholar and cleric, was the leader of the seditious conspiracy, the purpose of which was "*jihad*," in the sense of a struggle against the enemies of Islam. Indicative of this purpose, in a speech to his followers Rahman instructed that they were to "do *jihad* with the sword, with the cannon, with the grenades, with the missile . . . against God's enemies."<sup>96</sup>

In January 1993, Rahman appeared at a conference in Brooklyn, and voiced his beliefs in violent jihad. He further stated that being called "terrorists was fine, so long as they were terrorizing the enemies of Islam, the foremost of which was the United States and its allies."

## **2. Clandestine Relationship**

The evidence of a secret relationship between Sheikh Rahman and Al-Qaeda is rooted in the fact that Bin Laden paid for Rahman's living expenses and is reinforced by a series of relationships that connect Sheikh Rahman and Al-Kifah to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. Because Al-Qaeda is a network there is not always a clear trail of orders being given and followed. Rather, there is evidence of approval. In Bin Laden's case this approval is shown through funding.<sup>97</sup> The fact that he funded Sheikh Rahman shows that he supported Rahman's actions. Another connection is El Sayyid A. Nosair, the Al-Kifah affiliate that murdered Rabbi Meir Kahane. Nosair acted with the approval of Sheikh Rahman and later Bin Laden contributed to Nosair's defense which further shows the connection between Rahman and Bin Laden.

Sheik Rahman concealed his relationship with Al-Qaeda by using a middle man to receive funds from Bin Laden. This establishes a hidden or clandestine relationship

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<sup>96</sup> U.S. v. Omar Ahmad Ali Abdel Rahman, et al., 52 Fed. 425 (1998,) 4.  
[http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case\\_docs/1940.pdf](http://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/case_docs/1940.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> Bin Laden showed disapproval of Zawahiri's actions in 1997 by drastically reducing funds for Zawahiri's group, Egyptian Islamic Jihad. For more information see: Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 46.

between Bin Laden and Sheikh Rahman. Furthermore, he has publicly denied any affiliation with Al-Qaeda.

### **3. Influence**

Rahman and Al-Kifah combined together created a significant influential force. The Al-Kifah center had an enormous amount of credibility with militant Muslims, which attracted individuals who were keen on action. Sheik Rahman's status as a premier Islamic scholar made his statements close to infallible amongst some groups. Together they made for a dangerous concoction that influenced individuals to commit acts of violence against the United States.

Al-Kifah provided a venue with credibility amongst Muslims and a degree of deference from authorities, making it well suited to recruit and employ terrorists. The local Muslim community referred to Al-Kifah as the jihad-center; this shows that the center garnered a reputation for action. This is not unfounded; some estimates credit Al-Kifah with sending up to 200 individuals to Afghanistan over the course of two years.<sup>98</sup> The Al-Kifah office proved a prime stop for individuals seeking to fulfill what they saw as an obligation to participate in jihad. The office operated for approximately two years under the guidance of Abdullah Azzam; it focused on supporting the mujahedeen in the Soviet-Afghan war. In general the United States government, most Americans and most Muslims considered this a good thing. Because of this the recruiting, fund raising and propaganda efforts conducted from the Al-Kifah office did not raise suspicion. The center acted as a functioning piece of infrastructure, from which terrorist actions were applied in support of Al-Qaeda ideology.

While Al-Kifah provided the infrastructure to attract and employ jihadist, Sheik Rahman provided the direction and justification. The influence Sheikh Rahman wielded must not be understated. As an Islamic scholar from a premier institution, his fatwas were heard and acted upon emphatically. This is evidenced by the 1981 assassination of

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<sup>98</sup> Allison Mitchell, "After Blast, New Interest in Holy-War Recruits in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, April 11, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/11/nyregion/after-blast-new-interest-in-holy-war-recruits-in-brooklyn.html>.

Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, where the assassins acted at the behest of the Sheikh's Fatwas.<sup>99</sup> Although he was not convicted for his involvement, it is believed that his words played a part in influencing, and justifying the actions of the assassins. During his reign at Al-Kifah Sheikh Rahman provided similar influence and justification for the 1993 World Trade Center bombers. He acted as their spiritual guide, assuring them that their actions were founded in Islamic law. Sheik Rahman defined his role as an influencer in response to a question from a reporter, "My work is not to gather people or send volunteers. My work is not to collect money. My work is to call on people to collect money for the mujahedeen and to go over there for jihad. And I don't belong to any party."<sup>100</sup>

### C. CONCLUSION

The Al-Kifah Refugee Center, under Sheikh Rahman's control acted as an agent of influence for Al-Qaeda. Al-Kifah's shift in focus from supporting jihad efforts in Afghanistan to expanding its scope to target other governments, especially non-Muslim governments, is in line with the MAK strategy shift implemented by Bin Laden. This shows that Al-Kifah supported Al-Qaeda strategy. The connection between Sheikh Rahman and Al-Kifah to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda was deliberately concealed. They implemented a scheme using a middle man to pass funds and avoid detection. This is evidence of a clandestine relationship. Sheikh Rahman, through Al-Kifah influenced a population to act in line with Al-Qaeda. The 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the Land Marks plot and printing of *Al-Hussam* are all evidence of this. Through Sheikh Rahman and the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, Osama Bin Laden successfully spread Al-Qaeda ideology to an audience in the United States and influenced individuals to commit acts of violence against the United States to further Al-Qaeda objectives.

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<sup>99</sup> Richard Bernstein, "Trial of the Sheik: A Special Report; On Trial: An Islamic Cleric Battles Speculation," *New York Times*, January 8, 1985, <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/08/nyregion/trial-sheik-special-report-trial-islamic-cleric-battles-secularism.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>100</sup> Allison Mitchell, "After Blast, New Interest in Holy-War Recruits in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, April 11, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/11/nyregion/after-blast-new-interest-in-holy-war-recruits-in-brooklyn.html>.



## V. CONCLUSION

This thesis demonstrates that non-state network-based actors can indeed possess a strategic planning capacity. This is proven by showing two instances where networks employed agents of influence, an act that requires a strategic planning capability. In both of these instances the network-based actors employed agents of influence that showed similar characteristics those employed by states.

### A. FINDINGS

For an organization or an individual to be considered an agent of influence they must be aligned strategically with a sponsor, engage in a clandestine or secret relationship with the sponsor, and possess the ability to influence an audience. The strategic alignment of the agent with the sponsor is critical. Without this alignment the actions of the agent of influence are not likely to benefit the sponsor and may even be damaging. The clandestine relationship protects the agent of influence's credibility with the target population and hides the hand of the sponsor.

Hamas effectively employed the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) as an organizational agent of influence. This case showed that the HLF's efforts fell in line with Hamas' strategic goals, that a clandestine relationship between Hamas and the HLF existed, and that the HLF conducted influence activities on behalf of Hamas. The HLF successfully staged events to raise funds, recruit operatives and influence attendees to embrace Hamas' position, which was and still is the re-establishment of old Palestine without negotiating with Israel.

Al-Qaeda infiltrated Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman into the Al-Kifah Refugee Center, resulting in Al-Kifah becoming an organizational agent of influence for Al-Qaeda. Due to Sheikh Rahman's actions Al-Kifah became aligned with Al-Qaeda's ideology. Sheikh Rahman then used Al-Kifah as a platform to spread Al-Qaeda ideology, resulting in assassinations, the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, and plans to attack U.S. infrastructure.

## **B. AREAS OF FURTHER INTEREST**

While researching agents of influence and networks it became very apparent how vulnerable the United States is to agents of influence and how difficult it is to determine which networks have a strategic planning capacity. This presents two broad areas for future research to answer: 1) How can the U.S. detect and safeguard against agents of influence; and 2) What characteristics are required for a network to have strategic planning capability? Safeguarding against agents of influence is relevant because it directly addresses a larger topic of how to prevent foreign actors from fomenting dissent within the U.S. population. Identifying which characteristics are required for a network to have a strategic planning capacity is relevant because it can lead to new ways to identify which networks pose the greatest potential threat.

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