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THESIS

**CONVERGENCE IN LATIN AMERICA:
ILLUMINATING THE PINK TIDE AND IRANIAN
NEXUS THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS**

by

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December 2017

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AND IRANIAN NEXUS THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the early 2000s, multiple countries across Latin America elected populist, leftist governments in a sociopolitical movement known as the Pink Tide. Eight Latin American countries currently encompass this regional bloc, aiming to limit U.S. regional influence. Many of the countries have turned to foreign state actors like Iran to support anti-U.S. economic and security initiatives. While many of the populist, leftist governments are transitioning to more conservative political leadership and away from vehemently anti-U.S. rhetoric characterized by the Pink Tide movement, this research demonstrates the enduring strategic importance of the complex network connecting various key individuals, corporations, quasi-governmental organizations, and Transnational, Transregional Threat networks (T3N) supported by the government of Iran.

This research illuminates and maps the social, economic, and political components of the Pink Tide network that serves as the connective tissue among the leftist countries of Latin America and demonstrates how Iran has leveraged the movement for its own geostrategic ends. By utilizing social network analysis and open-source materials, our research identifies observable political, ideological, physical, and virtual networks in Latin America that the United States must engage to maintain or increase its strategic influence in the region.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
AMIA	Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina
AOR	Area of Responsibility
BID	Banco Internacional de Desarrollo
CAFTA	Central American Free Trade Agreement
E.U.	European Union
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
GTC	Iran's Government Trading Corporation
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
IRISL	Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JI	Jemaah Islamiyah
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OAS	Organization of American States
OFAC	Office of Foreign Asset Control
PDVAL	Producción y Distribución Venezolana de Alimentos
PDVSA	Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.
SL	Sendero Luminoso
SNA	Social Network Analysis
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOC SOUTH	Special Operations Command South
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOUTHCOM	United States Southern Command
T3N	Transnational, Transregional Threat Networks
TBA	Tri-Border Area
UNASUR	Union of South American Nations
YPFB	Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos

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I. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. BACKGROUND

Academics and foreign policy experts have conducted a substantial amount of qualitative research on Latin America's populist-leftist movement known as the Pink Tide, resulting in a growing body of academic journal articles, books, and congressional testimonies alluding to the potentially destabilizing influence of the Pink Tide countries to regional stability.¹ Many of these studies suggest strong ties between the Pink Tide countries and Transnational, Transregional Threat Networks (T3N), or allege that Iranian interactions in many of the Pink Tide countries have sinister implications for U.S. national security.² Yet there is little evidence that anyone has conducted a systematic, quantitative analysis of the complex web of relationships that exist amongst the Pink Tide entities and foreign actors such as Iran. By structuring the copious amount of open-source data available, we can fully illuminate and analyze the enduring relationship ties amongst the Pink Tide governments and T3N. This research is motivated by the increasing confluence of state and non-state networks that produce illicit and destabilizing influence in the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and supporting Special Operations Command-South (SOCSOUTH) Area of Responsibility (AOR). Understanding the key pathways of subversive influence within and outside the AOR will greatly enhance SOUTHCOM and SOCSOUTH's current operational planning and engagement strategies.

¹ The introduction of potentially destabilizing influence is derived from the strong network ties held through ALBA/Pink Tide member states as noted by Cynthia Arnson, Halel Esfandiari and Adam Stubits, Ed., "Iran in Latin America, Threat or Axis of Annoyance," *Woodrow Wilson Center Reports on the Americas*, no. 23. (July 7, 2011), as well as Joseph M. Humire and Ilan Berman. Ed. *Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America* (Maryland: Lexington, 2014), and Luis Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chavez Era: The Security Threat to the United States* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013).

² Dr. Matthew Levitt August 1, 2013 testimony before the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, elaborated on Iranian intelligence and operational network's activities within Latin America begin before the AMIA bombings, conducted in 1992 and 1994 and a more recent plot to attack the JFK Airport in New York, 2007, through a network based out of Guyana. Former SOUTHCOM Commander GEN John F. Kelly also testified to the Hezbollah and Shia diaspora community operating within regional criminal and drug networks with operational reach into the U.S. GEN Kelly stated that "any group seeking to harm the United States—including Iran—could view criminal middleman, facilitators, and support networks as potential *enablers*, although not necessarily operational *requirements*."

B. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

This thesis's purpose is to provide a refined model for mapping the human and organizational domains, and detecting T3 networks in the SOUTHCOM AOR in order to assist in pre-conflict shaping operations and engagements. The objective of the research is to identify organizations and connections within these established networks to provide novel insights into areas that U.S. policy makers can apply leverage to, or act to counter maligned foreign influence effectively and efficiently to maximize effects in a resource constrained strategic environment.

C. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the social, economic, and political networks that encompass the Pink Tide movement, how are hostile state and non-state actors leveraging this movement, and how can U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) identify and potentially influence key entities or ties within the movement?

D. SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH AND DATA STRUCTURING

This research limits the structure of the Pink Tide and Iranian networks to identifiable links between organizations, events, key personalities, and development projects that were available from reputable unclassified sources of information, such as congressional testimonies, journal articles, government documents, and other published works. Despite of the growing body of knowledge addressing the activities and influence of a multitude of foreign actors such as Russia, China, and Iran in Latin America, this research was limited to understanding the links between the government of Iran's organizations, subnetworks, and key actors which connect into the broader Pink Tide movement. The limited scope of this research offers areas of future research that will be a valued contribution to the national security enterprise.

E. METHODOLOGY

Due to the wide regional breadth of the Pink Tide movement, this research utilizes social network analysis (SNA) to identify the most central or powerful organizations and individuals within the Pink Tide network. A network is defined as a set of actors (people,

organizations, events, etc.) that are linked to one another. SNA has long been utilized to determine the network construction of illicit, “dark,” or “covert” networks as a method of illuminating and establishing an increased level of understanding of the desired organization.³ It can also be utilized to organize and analyze a set of social interactions through empirical tools to define a network’s structure.⁴ SNA commonly analyzes four different areas of a given network’s structure: “topography, centrality, clustering, and brokerage.”⁵ We will detail the metrics and algorithms we use in our analysis later, but for now it is sufficient to note that they will help us to gain a more holistic understanding of the Pink Tide movement’s structure, its subgroups, and its key actors. To complement the use of SNA, we will also use spatial analysis to identify the most central geographic areas of the network. Once we have identified key organizations and entities, we will apply the analytical methodology to two case studies to determine the methodology’s utility and to potentially offer useful insights to key national security stakeholders.

The research was conducted in three phases, followed by an analytical phase. Phase One structured the network boundaries in order to determine the extent of the transregional span of the Pink Tide movement. In order to illuminate the depth of the network, we used existing open-source materials to unravel the relationships that exist among Pink Tide countries. We structured the data using a codebook to create an edge list of key regional organizations, quasi-governmental and private corporations, subsidiary companies, key events, development projects sponsored by Pink Tide-related organizations and the illicit networks that relate to the Pink Tide. Because this research focuses at the organizational level, identified relationships (funded by, subsidiary of, linked to, diplomatic ties) formed amongst key individuals were included only when those individuals serve as the bridge between entities.

³ Roberts, Nancy, and Sean F. Everton, “Strategies for Combating Dark Networks,” *Journal of Social Structure*, vol. 12, 2011, 2. <http://www.cmu.edu/joss/content/articles/volume12//RobertsEverton.pdf>.

⁴ Raab, Jorg and H. Brinton Milward, “Dark Networks Problems,” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 13, no. 4 (October 2003), 413.

⁵ Daniel Cunningham, Sean F. Everton, and Philip J. Murphy. *Understanding Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), XX.

Phase Two narrowed the analysis to a more detailed level of data collection of the key actors of the over-all network based upon the traditional SNA methodology of network topography, centrality, and broker and boundary spanner potential. Identification of the most central nations and regional organizations directed further qualitative research towards the most prominent areas of development and international interaction through projects and events. Additionally, the use of SNA can identify key seams in the Pink Tide network which illicit organizations and transregional and transnational threat networks are leveraging to build access and influence in the Pink Tide.

The final phase focused on the development projects and events that can determine the key points of physical influence and access within the member countries or from international observers. The process of narrowing our emphasis to the most active and influential sectors of the movement can help determine the key brokers of power and influence, as well as methods and areas of access utilized by Pink Tide members and international observer nations throughout the region, with the intent of determining observable indicators of influence or convergence between different networks. Analyzing the Pink Tide movement's network to this level of granularity enables recommendations for decision makers on where to monitor adversary interactions in Latin America, or potential areas to leverage for increased U.S. engagement in areas with limited to no access for the U.S. Government and Department of Defense.

F. PLAN OF THE THESIS

The first step to approaching our research question involves fully exploring all aspects of the existing literature on the Pink Tide movement, to include research from academics, regional and national security experts, and political analysts. After understanding the scope of existing literature on the Pink Tide, we will then use that literature to structure and code data for our initial social network analysis and geo-spatial analysis of the political, economic, and social relationships within the Pink Tide movement. After our exploratory analysis of the Pink Tide is complete, we will then apply the methodology to two case studies: the Rabbani network, which exemplifies historical Iranian influence in the Pink Tide, and the El Aissami network, which

demonstrates the potent convergence of T3N, hostile state actors, and populist-leftist movements in Latin America. Finally, we will conclude with a summation of our research, areas of interest and implications for policy makers and national security practitioners, and recommendations for further research.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE PINK TIDE AND IRANIAN THREAT

A. INTRODUCTION

This research expands on the body of knowledge surrounding the current political and security environment in Latin America by coalescing relevant academic and security experts' perspectives on the region. It explores the enduring nature of the leftist movement dubbed the "Pink Tide," its influence on current political and security environments, while illuminating potential risks to U.S. regional interests. Some regional analysts have argued that the Pink Tide has receded as leftist governments in Latin America have been recently replaced with more centrist governments.⁶ However, the prominent leadership from the hard-lined countries of Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador have maintained their leftist governments. More importantly, the networks and connections that were established in the 1970s and 1980s have endured despite the electoral pendulum swing. Extensive research exists that is devoted to multiple foreign actors' influence in Latin America, namely Russia, China, and Iran. This research focuses on the Iranian influence, its origins and development as a covert mechanism of influence, to its current position as a regional influence, integrated at all levels of national power with associated Latin American partners.

B. THE RISE OF LATIN AMERICAN POPULISM AND LEFTIST RULE

The politics of modern Latin America from the mid-20th Century to the present are characterized by the frequent transition of governments across the ideological spectrum. The political power struggle spanned the gamut of violent political behavior from coups, to counter-coups, revolutions, dictators, to democracy. The continuing cyclical shifts were compounded by global economic downturns and ineffective economic policies, all of which converged in the early 2000s and coalesced into the populist-leftist movement known as the Pink Tide. *New York Times* reporter Larry Rohter

⁶ Nick Caistor, "Latin America The Pink Tide Turns," BBC, December 11, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-35060390>.

dubbed the movement the “Pink Tide” in 2005, and it quickly gained traction throughout the region. A plethora of socio-economic, political, and cultural factors contributed to the formation of the Pink Tide, and understanding the underlying root causes and motivations of the movement is critical for illuminating the network of relationships that comprise the Pink Tide.

Latin America, circa 1945, was poised to contribute to the post-war reconstruction of Europe and the Pacific by filling requirements for high-demand commodities. Many of the Latin American governments restructured their free-market economic policies of production to meet the demand of global requirements, but the opportunities never fully materialized. Hopeful regional sentiments over the power of the free-market under delivered, leaving a floundering economic system incapable of meeting the needs of its people and caused a political swing to the left.⁷ The overpromised and under-delivered economic endeavor cemented a cyclical accelerant for political change and a swing towards opposition political groups with new policies and hopes.

Economic policies attempted to meet global demand signals but failed to make the necessary adjustments to cultivate self-sustaining and resilient domestic economies. World Wars brought the developing economies to the global market, but left no room for them after conflict subsided, resulting in rapid economic booms and downturns.⁸ The inability of Latin American governments to make structural and policy adaptations to the global economy in a timely fashion facilitated poor execution of economic policy attempts and an inability to appropriately react to the market.⁹ This inability doomed many political regimes and forced populist based movements to replace regime after regime when failure was perceived; this phenomena is the impetus for the trend of rapid and frequent change in modern Latin American politics.

⁷ Rosario Queirolo, *The Success of the Left in Latin America* (Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 2013), 26–27.

⁸ Albert O. Hirschman, “The Political Economy of Import-Substituting Industrialization in Latin America,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 82, no. 1 (1968): 3–4.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1882243>.

⁹ Rosario Queirolo, *The Success of the Left in Latin America*, 27.

The Cold War era was marked with leftist liberation movements, which delivered on promises of freeing the oppressed. Latin America possessed deep historical wounds suffered under the rightist military dictatorships, often tacitly or openly backed by the U.S., and the oppressive governments provided strong motivation to once again change the political spectrum. Fidel Castro's successful liberation movements in Cuba and the ultimate human rights violations of the U.S.-sponsored coup attempt in Guatemala tangibly signaled the weakness or lack of credibility of the U.S. and free-market systems to Latin Americans.¹⁰ Those two events were significant catalysts for liberation movements across Latin America in the 1950s and early 1960s, which thrust new, leftist political and economic regimes into regional prominence.

The 1970s marked an era under predominantly free-market oriented governments, which were deeply broken by the debt crisis, leaving many Latin American countries reeling with debt woes and popular demands for a new economic model to assuage trade deficits.¹¹ The remedy for discontent towards the free-market model was the advent of the leftist Bolivarian model that grew in Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and others that promoted "social solidarity" through collective prosperity.¹² The leftist solidarity movement offered great promise, but ultimately ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, ushering in a neoliberal free-market system. However, the 1990s-neoliberal wave over-promised and under-delivered yet again, due to poorly timed policies, mixed economic results, and popular demands for change once again.¹³ This era coincided with U.S.-backed regional exportation of free-market, liberal-democratic ideals, dubbed the "Washington Consensus" by opponents. As a result of the mixed economic outcomes, rampant unemployment and vast income inequality, opposition

¹⁰ Queirolo, 26–27.

¹¹ "ALBA: How Much of a Turn to the Left in Latin American Governance and Economic Policy?" *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, July 1, 2010. <http://www.coha.org/alba-how-much-of-a-turn-to-the-left-in-latin-american-governance-and-economic-policy/>.

¹² "Nicaragua & ALBANISA: The Privatization of Venezuelan Aid." *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, August 13, 2013. <http://www.coha.org/nicaragua-albanisa-the-privatization-of-venezuelan-aid/>.

¹³ Queirolo, *The Success of the Left in Latin America*, 36–37, 60.

groups rallied around the perceived failures of U.S.-backed policy to mobilize the public towards another political shift to the left.¹⁴

C. THE RISE OF THE PINK TIDE

The 1999 democratic landslide election of the Bolivarian Candidate and former leader of a 1992 failed coup attempt against the U.S. supported President Perez, marked a decisive break from the Washington Consensus. This break from neoliberal policies was built on a strong populist-socialist platform, promising to meet the peoples' needs and social inequalities. Chávez captured the voice of the people by uniting Bolivarian liberation pride against neo-liberal and capitalist failures, which were seen as the driving factor for persistent inequality and poor economic performance.¹⁵ President Chávez's leadership embodied the Bolivarian ethos, and became the moniker that unified the struggling nations of the region to rectify perceived failures and inequality.

Many Latin American countries that were reeling from previous failures shifted from neoliberalism to a socialist mode to bridge the income inequality gap. These perceived policy failures resulted in “oust[ing] neoliberal orthodoxy in favour [sic] of a stronger focus on society and a marked emphasis on reducing poverty and inequality. This created a hostile attitude...towards neoliberalism and its main exponents, namely the United States.”¹⁶ Leftist governments came to power in Venezuela in 1999, then Brazil in 2002, Argentina in 2003, Uruguay in 2004, Bolivia in 2005, Chile and Nicaragua in 2006, and more recently El Salvador and Paraguay.¹⁷ Democratic elections recaptured a highly symbolized and resurgent Marxist/Bolivarian manifesto as several of the participating states' presidents and many elected officials were leaders of famed groups such as the Uruguayan Tupamaros and Nicaragua's Sandinistas, amongst others.¹⁸ Yet

¹⁴ Queirolo, 65.

¹⁵ Queirolo, 65.

¹⁶ Gian Luca Gardini, *Latin America in the 21st Century: Nations, Regionalism, Globalization* (New York: Zed Books, 2009), 106–107.

¹⁷ Queirolo, *The Success of the Left in Latin America*, 17.

¹⁸ Castañeda, Jorge G., “Latin America's left turn,” *Foreign Affairs*, 85, no. 3 (2006): 33–37.

each country applied the Bolivarian economic and social model in varying degrees, and the manifestations of the Pink Tide differed in each country.

President Chávez's Bolivarian ideology gained rapid support targeting over half of Venezuelans living in sub-poverty conditions and marginalized existences. High levels of inequality mobilized vast popular support for a new system that promised relief.¹⁹ Chávez's anti-capitalist model nationalized key resource areas, including agriculture and oil, under private subsidiaries to meet his social agenda. His new agenda also countered U.S.-based trade agreements like NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement), and the multitude of other bilateral and multilateral trade agreements prevalent throughout the region. Chávez's policies also centralized media control and created community councils to give a semblance of control back to the populous under his newly centralized and ever expanding authoritarian power.²⁰ These private entities were the beginning of a corporate shell structure of organizations to enhance the movement's soft-power and to cultivate regional influence.

The first multilateral regional bloc established to counter the U.S. led neo-liberal platform was the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), in December of 2004 by President Chávez and Fidel Castro.²¹ ALBA members do not believe in the free-market's ability to regulate the economy and consequently created policies to enable state regulation of the economy, in order to ensure equitable distribution of wealth. ALBA was formed to meet the intrinsic needs of member states through facilitated market connection.²² Members trade, barter, and sell within the ALBA community to create a cohesive economic bloc that increases the potential for regional influence as two-thirds of the region are cosignatories. Full implementation of

¹⁹ "ALBA: How Much of a Turn to the Left in Latin American Governance and Economic Policy?" *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, July 1, 2010. <http://www.coha.org/alba-how-much-of-a-turn-to-the-left-in-latin-american-governance-and-economic-policy/>.

²⁰ Gardini, *Latin America in the 21st Century: Nations, Regionalism, Globalization*, 31–33.

²¹ "ALBA: How Much of a Turn to the Left in Latin American Governance and Economic Policy?" *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, July 1, 2010. <http://www.coha.org/alba-how-much-of-a-turn-to-the-left-in-latin-american-governance-and-economic-policy/>, 3.

²² "ALBA: How Much of a Turn to the Left in Latin American Governance and Economic Policy?" 3–4.

the Pink Tide's ideology can create a pseudo-hegemonic economic power with the potential to be the fifth largest global economic bloc in the world.²³

D. ACADEMIA AND POLITICAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVES ON THE PINK TIDE

Initially, many Western experts viewed the rise of leftist populist governments in Latin America as another swing of the left-right political pendulum in the Latin America. They also perceived the new-found solidarity amongst previously divided Pink Tide countries as a positive development. Many foreign policy academics hailed the creation of regional economic alliances, such as ALBA, as a boon for development and a direct result of turbulent U.S. policy and engagement in the region.

ALBA and other organizations were hailed as more than purely a rejection of neoliberalism and free trade economic policies, but as a state sponsored social movement synonymous with the Pink Tide movement. One description of ALBA, written as the Pink Tide was forming, described it well. ALBA is “not explicitly socialist but its emphasis on endogenous (self-sufficient) development, equitable exchange and social solidarity represents a major challenge to neo-liberalism and to the US-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas...It provides a protective umbrella under which socialist initiatives at least have a chance to develop.”²⁴

Another regional organization that developed as a result of the Pink Tide was the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which was created as an alternative to the Organization of American States (OAS). It stood as a new option as the policies and direction of the OAS often reflected the strong influence of the United States, who was a prominent and influential member. In contrast, UNASUR was explicitly created to reject U.S. influence and “to create a regional block of nations integrated in ways that reduce

²³ Gardini, *Latin America in the 21st Century: Nations, Regionalism, Globalizatio*, 84.

²⁴ Diana Raby, “Latin America's Pink Tide,” 2 February 2007. Accessed 13 February 2017, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/2207>.

tensions within South America and strengthen the region with regard to the United States and other powerful nations.”²⁵

In regional flare-ups such as the 2010 dispute between Venezuela and Colombia, U.S. opposition to the Venezuelan regime made adjudication of the dispute in the OAS nearly impossible. “Instead, UNASUR, without the divisive presence of the United States, was able to intervene to help reduce tension in the region.”²⁶ Other regional institutions that sprung from the Pink Tide include TeleSur, a cable television network with a strong regional focus, and BancoSUR, a regional bank designed to “wean the region off Washington-dominated prescriptions and help to deliver economic independence.”²⁷ Some Latin America experts have suggested that the regional organizations and institutions created by the Pink Tide will unavoidably foster a counter-hegemonic movement in Latin America united along political, economic, and ideological lines.²⁸

The current body of research on the Pink Tide is focused on political leaders of countries within the movement. Perspectives range from the Pink Tide as a direct threat to U.S. regional policy, to an ebbing movement of little concern. However, minimal academic rigor exists to elaborate on the enduring effects of the organizations created by the Pink Tide. The current political tilt of Latin America is on a center-right trajectory after severe economic woes in states with commodity-based economies.²⁹ Venezuela, a primary architect of the bloc, is facing considerable instability due to a narrow commodity based economic structure and many other founding Pink Tide leaders were

²⁵ James A. Baer, “UNASUR and Latin American Regionalism,” September 17, 2015. Accessed 13 February 2017, <http://www.coha.org/unasur-and-latin-american-regionalism/>.

²⁶ Baer, “UNASUR and Latin American Regionalism.”

²⁷ Rory Carroll, “Nobel economist endorses Chávez regional bank plan,” 11 October 2007. Accessed 13 February 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2007/oct/12/venezuela.banking>.

²⁸ Tom Chodor. *Neoliberal Hegemony and the Pink Tide in Latin America: Breaking Up with Tina?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 147–161.

²⁹ Ruchir Sharma, “The Anti-Incumbency Wave Is Changing Politics of Latin America.” *Time*, June 06, 2016. Accessed 10 October 2017, <http://time.com/4358194/the-anti-incumbency-wave-is-changing-the-politics-of-latin-america/>.

voted out of power in recent elections.³⁰ Despite the political setbacks of the left viewed by many, the organizations still remain connected through vast geopolitical and social areas, connected with millions of marginalized Latin Americans and under governed regions.

In light of the vast income inequality and pervasive poverty throughout Latin America, Pink Tide member nations have utilized established multilateral organizations to make great strides in meeting the growing needs of their people. Current reports on the development efforts of Pink Tide multinational organizations, chiefly ALBA and its numerous subsidiaries, show that they brought over 56 million people out of poverty and mobilize the affected masses against the classical capitalist model.³¹ Other examples of meeting intrinsic and social needs of member nations are visible through health programs and the advancement of education and literacy efforts. These programs demonstrate the potential of the Pink Tide's organizations to answer the needs of formerly disenfranchised people through inter-member commodity trades and bartering. Also, these programs and efforts showcase the potential of these organizations, which to date are under-developed due to economic issues, yet still impacting millions of member citizens.

Due to the absence of academic rigor regarding the enduring nature of the Pink Tide's organizational structure, research must focus on the body of academic work describing the nature of multilateral or regional governmental organizations. From a social science perspective, multilateral constructs, such as those affiliated with the Pink Tide and ALBA, fall into the model of operating as functional organizations to implement programs of domestic policies with regional implications or ties. Multilateral institutions are often created to address social demands of a particular section of society

³⁰David Alejandro Schoeller-Diaz, "South America's "Pink Tide" is Ebbing," February 8, 2016. Accessed September 14, 2016, <http://journal.georgetown.edu/south-americas-pink-tide-is-ebbing-will-pragmatism-surge-in-the-storm/> and "The Ebbing of the Pink Tide," November 28, 2015. Accessed September 14, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21679192-mauricio-macris-remarkable-victory-will-reverberate-across-south-america-ebbing-pink>.

³¹Tom Chodor, "Understanding and Misunderstanding the Pink Tide in Latin America," *Progress in Political Economy*. Accessed 03 September 2015. <http://ppesydney.net/understanding-and-misunderstanding-the-pink-tide-in-latin-america/>.

and solve domestic or regional issues.³² They also have a three-fold purpose to provide support through policy, technical developments, and lending for development purposes.³³ Organizational purposes demonstrate members' attempts to address problems through macro level engagements to create advantages through joint development and resource sharing through the member states.

Multilateral organizations are also established to create an economic comparative advantage and global engagement with economies of scale. Multilateral organizations lower trade barriers by creating a form of comparative advantage for increased competition on global markets, enabling members to collectively engage in large scale economic interactions.³⁴ The comparative advantage of regional organizations also extends to the protection of developing or essential member industries and decreased foreign influence into critical economic sectors.³⁵ In light of these underlying causes for countries to form regional economic institutions, the enduring nature of economic institutions becomes evident.

The Pink Tide's command of regional economic blocs, inter-member trade agreements of food, teachers, or doctors, principally in exchange for discounted oil. This model demonstrates their ability to create a level of comparative advantage by utilizing abundant resources within member states to meet domestic needs. This comparative advantage mitigates the effects of the perceived threat of U.S.-backed free trade agreements. The Pink Tide is also attempting to utilize established economic organizations by engaging other global economic powers like the E.U. and China to create larger economic linkages and garner international association outside of traditional U.S. spheres of influence.³⁶ Actions to develop specific economic relationships that

³² Morten Bøås and Desmond McNeill, *Multilateral Institutions A Critical Introduction* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2003), 2–6.

³³ Bøås and Desmond McNeill, *Multilateral Institutions A Critical Introduction*, 45.

³⁴ Sushil Vachani, *Transformations in Global Governance: Implications for Multinationals and Other Stakeholders* (Northampton, Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006), 22–23.

³⁵ Vachani, *Transformations in Global Governance: Implications for Multinationals and Other Stakeholders*, 7.

³⁶ Gardini, *Latin America in the 21st Century: Nations, Regionalism, Globalization*, 132.

insulate U.S. free trade agreements from member economies, demonstrate another avenue for the potential power of a Latin American regional economic bloc. With the existence of the Pink Tide bloc predicated on a desire to meet member needs, the institutions of the bloc will remain effective platforms of dialogue, global economic interaction, and development in an attempt to elevate the remaining impoverished population.

Another significant aspect of the multilateral organizations are the binding and “coercive” nature of the agreements to all members involved. These agreements create an increase in collective power both within and outside of the organization through ratified charters, protecting the weak members from the strong competitors.³⁷ Protection is established through mobilization of private currencies to increase the collective power and development of the organization through increasingly opaque governmental and corporate structures.³⁸

The concept of protection of the weak from the strong is evident throughout one of the original guiding documents of the ALBA organization titled, “The Fundamental Principles of ALBA.” The ALBA Treaty forms “cooperation and unconditional support” for weaker economies, “Sovereign trade” without interference in internal affairs (referencing U.S.-backed free trade agreements), and creates the “advantage of existing capacities and potentialities in the countries... [though]... complementarity [sic], cooperation and solidarity between different countries.”³⁹ The principles on which ALBA was founded fully embody the tenets of the modern multilateral organization. ALBA aligns enduring social ideals to multilateral organizational structures that meets a sufficient degree of social grievances to persist. Pink Tide and ALBA organizations are primarily funded through a consortium of state managed petrochemical companies like Venezuela’s *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.* (PDVSA), Bolivia’s *Yacimientos Petrolíferos Fiscales Bolivianos* (YPFB), or joint ventures like Albanisa (a joint Venezuelan/

³⁷ Bøås and Desmond McNeill, *Multilateral Institutions A Critical Introduction*, 142.

³⁸ Bøås and McNeill, 143-146.

³⁹ Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People’s Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). “Fundamental Principles of the People’s Trade Treaty (TCP).” Accessed February 13, 2017. <http://alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/governing-principles-tcp>.

Nicaraguan company), which are the impetus for much of the development projects within the bloc and have delivered improvements to millions of people.

Finally, the nature of the Pink Tide's organizations is founded in the language and ideals of its founding documents, which promote concepts that continue to be relevant. The organizations' purpose is to create cooperation between member countries and promote "efficient and competitive specialization which is compatible with the balanced economic development of every [member] country, with the strategies of fighting against the poverty and with the preservation of the cultural identity of the peoples."⁴⁰ Social safety nets, emergency funds, and development programs were all created through a subsidiary petrochemical corporation called PetroAmerica, where members sell and trade oil within the bloc for economic advantage.⁴¹ The bloc also coordinates and negotiates internationally with other countries and economic blocs to promote member development.⁴² Lastly, the bloc established bodies to defend Latin American and Caribbean culture and identity through TeleSur, a member owned corporation with a regional audience.⁴³

All of the organizational principles are inherently enduring in nature and tie into deep cultural themes advanced in Bolivarian countries that are centuries old, all with corresponding corporate structures to see the objectives' advancements. The principles are not overtly political and are explicitly created for the general betterment of the member nations and its peoples, which has the potential to draw from broad bases of support from the populations effected by development efforts.

After a series of electoral defeats for leftist governments, the new centrist leaders are using the same organizations as an outlet of discussion and to mobilize against the

⁴⁰ Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). "Principles of the ALBA." Accessed February 13, 2017. <http://alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/principles-alba>.

⁴¹ Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). "Principles of the ALBA."

⁴² Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). "Principles of the ALBA."

⁴³ Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). "Principles of the ALBA."

U.S. at the state level. In 2015, an emergency meeting of Pink Tide members was held to address U.S. sanctions against Venezuela for suspected human rights violations and was promoted regionally through TeleSur as an example of solidarity against U.S. meddling.⁴⁴ ALBA member summits are held annually to reaffirm membership and discuss member issues, of which the most recent 2016 summit focused on U.S. and European interventionism in the region.⁴⁵ These examples demonstrate Pink Tide members' reliance on preexisting intergovernmental infrastructure to solve disputes and voice unity over regional issues. The examples also reveal the potential of the organizations as enduring platforms to discuss mutual objectives and as a body of solidarity against perceived threats regardless of recent centrist political shifts.

The Pink Tide's organizational structure echoes a social or populist demand construct evident in the level of development and social service projects implemented throughout the region. However, a singular and unstable petroleum based funding structure creates vulnerability for outside influence and appropriation of existing organizations for nefarious secondary actions. Multinational organizations are inherently opaque, lacking transparency to external understanding and convoluting financial activities for the members.⁴⁶ This inherent lack of transparency creates a naturally duplicitous model for financing legitimate development programs and as a vehicle for purposed obfuscation of actions under the multinational structure.

E. INTRODUCTION: SECURITY EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE PINK TIDE

National security experts and academic scholars alike are increasingly worried about the large increase of foreign actors in Latin America (e.g., Iran), especially within Pink Tide and ALBA countries. A growing body of foreign policy experts, scholars,

⁴⁴ "Venezuela President Maduro Says Meeting With Obama Cordial." *TeleSur*. April 11, 2015. Accessed February 12, 2017. <http://www.TeleSurtv.net/english/news/Venezuela-President-Maduro-Says-Meeting-With-Obama-Cordial-20150411-0031.html>.

⁴⁵ Bolivarian Alliance for the peoples of our America – People's Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). "5th Extraordinary Meeting of the Political Council of ALBA-TCP, Caracas, 08 June 2016." Accessed February 13, 2017. <http://alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/5th-extraordinary-meeting-political-council-alba-tcp-08-june-2016>.

⁴⁶ Bøås and Desmond McNeill, *Multilateral Institutions A Critical Introduction*, 47, 49.

federal prosecutors, and intelligence professionals observed that Iran seized an opportunity created by the Pink Tide movement and ALBA countries to build diplomatic, economic, and security allies in the region. At the foundation of these alliances are shared anti-U.S. sentiments that serve to degrade U.S. regional influence within the region. The murky intent of external actors like Iran is exacerbated by the lack of transparency within ALBA countries. This lack of transparency enabled externally influenced corruption, illicit networks, and nefarious activity to converge under the guise of legitimate diplomatic practices. This will be further examined through the case studies of the Iranian Rabbani network's terrorist bombing of two targets in Argentina in 1992 and 1994, its connection to multiple other terror and assassinations attempts, and the convergence of illicit and state government demonstrated through Venezuelan Vice President Tareck El Aissami. The Argentina bombings and El Aissami examples will be expanded upon in more detail as case studies in Chapters Four and Five respectively.

1. The Rabbani Network: Establishment of Covert Networks and Influence

The first Iranian intelligence and operational networks were established ten years before the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina. Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) operatives infiltrated under the management of Mohsen Rabbani to develop operational networks through progressive covers, starting with tourist visas, to religious or business positions, and eventually into positions at the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina.⁴⁷ Rabbani himself developed the network so effectively that he was appointed to a position with diplomatic immunity prior to the execution of the second bombing.⁴⁸ As a result, the Rabbani network's connections throughout the government stymied resolution of the bombing for over 30 years by ensuring that

⁴⁷ *Threat to the Homeland: Iran's Extending Influence in the Western Hemisphere: Testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency, House of Representatives*, 113th Cong. (July 9, 2013) (statement of Joseph Humire, Center for a Secure and Free Society).

⁴⁸ *Examining the State Department's Report on Iranian Presence in the Western Hemisphere Nineteen Years After the AMIA Attack, testimony before the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, House Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 113th Cong. (August 1, 2013) (Statement of Dr. Matthew Levitt, Director of Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence and The Washington Institute for Near East Policy).

investigations were poorly conducted and mishandled.⁴⁹ The original Argentinian prosecutors responsible for the investigations were eventually charged with obstruction of justice for their willful mishandling of the case.⁵⁰

Justifications for the initial attacks establish a clear mode of operation for the Iranian Government through creating asymmetric counteractions to actions against Iranian global interests. Security experts believe justifications for the Argentinian bombings were counter actions to a variety of overt diplomatic and counter-terror operations against Hezbollah. Overt diplomatic opinions focus on the cessation of a bilateral agreement to share nuclear and missile technology from Argentina to Iran dating back to the 1970s.⁵¹ Other justifications depict the 1994 bombing as a counter action to the operations of the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, for killing Hezbollah leader Abbas al Musawi, and his son in 1992.⁵²

2. Iranian Strategy for Infiltration and Cooption in Latin America

The *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA) bombing marked the second attack in less than a year-and-a-half after the Israeli Embassy bombing, conducted by what is now called the Rabbani network. A third, and lesser known attack from a subsidiary of the Rabbani network was the successful bombing of Panamanian commuter flight in July of 1994. The case remains unsolved, but is claimed by a local Hezbollah affiliate tied to the AMIA bombing, and is yet another example of the lethal capabilities

⁴⁹ Alberto Nisman. *AMIA Case Indictment*. October 25, 2006. Accessed November 12, 2016, 15. http://albertonisman.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2006-Nisman-indict-AMIA-full-ENG_.pdf.

⁵⁰ Douglas Farah, *Back to the Future: Argentina Unravels*. Accessed November 12, 2016, 23. http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20130227_BacktotheFuture.pdf.

⁵¹ *Deepening Political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela: Implications for U.S. Interests and the Western Hemisphere: Testimony before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues, Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 113th Cong. (March 17, 2015) (statement of Douglas Farah, IBI Consultants LLC).

"Argentina Missile Chronology," Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2010. Accessed September 10 2017, 8. http://www.nti.org/media/pdfs/argentina_missile.pdf.

⁵² Matthew Levitt, "Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America: Then and Now," *Center for Complex Operations PRISM* 5, no. 4 (Not Dated): 120.

of the network.⁵³ These attacks marked a clear departure from the pattern set by indigenous Marxist movements, such as *Sendero Luminoso* (SL) and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). The SL, FARC, and other leftist terror groups in the region historically targeted state entities and national infrastructure, while the Israeli Embassy and AMIA bombings were perpetrated by international terrorists and a state sponsor of terror. Alberto Nisman was the Argentinian Federal Attorney who led the investigation from 2004 through 2015, until his murder just days before public disclosure of the investigation's findings. He concluded that Hezbollah conducted the attacks as part of a broader Rabbani network expanding across the region.⁵⁴

The Argentina examples demonstrate a covert action and covert network that was utilized to influence Argentina's government and meet Iranian policy objectives of establishing a foothold in the Western Hemisphere. These examples also facilitated the circumnavigation of UN sanctions over the Iranian nuclear program in more recent years. Argentina was influenced by the combination of the covert Rabbani network and other, more overt Iranian diplomatic programs to gain access and influence in the region. It became the template for expanding Iranian influence into an expansive network across the region.

In the two decades since the attacks in Argentina, signs of Iranian and proxy Hezbollah networks have been discovered regularly through investigations. These investigations have illuminated a growing number of other previously little-known terrorist attacks or attempts (six), interdiction of an illegal arms shipments (two), and the discovery of at least eight known logistics, finance, or operational cells that are a part of or support the broader Rabbani network.⁵⁵ The Rabbani network's support and logistics cells operate in concert with transnational and transregional criminal organizations across

⁵³ Eric Jackson, "Argentine trials may shed light on Panama mystery," Hartford Web Publishing, October 17, 2001. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/47/473.html>.

⁵⁴ Nisman, *AMIA Case Indictment*, 15.

⁵⁵ 1992 Israeli Embassy bombing in Buenos Aires, Argentina; 1994 AMIA bombing, Buenos Aires Argentina; 1994 Panamanian commuter flight bombing; 2006 thwarted bombing of U.S. Embassy, Caracas, Venezuela; 2007 thwarted cyber-attack against US; 2007 attempted bombing of JFK Airport, NYC; 2011 attempted assassination of Saudi Ambassador to the U.S.; 2014 thwarted attack of Hezbollah operative in Peru; and 2017 thwarted Hezbollah attack from U.S. based cell against targets in Panama.

the Western hemisphere and beyond. Due to the opaque and dark nature of the Rabbani network, points of clarity are only illuminated through thwarted operations, successful attacks, or investigated cells that create an evolving picture of a network over 30 years in the making. Nevertheless, the limited visible aspects of the network establish a salient model to understand how the Rabbani network was developed and operated, as well as how the network facilitates a larger effort to influence the region against the U.S. for Iranian benefit.

The Rabbani network was developed through sequential steps to infiltrate, influence, and garner support, beginning with covert contact of Muslim and Lebanese diaspora communities within Central and South America, and developing activities into overt diplomatic, economic, and security cooperation or cooption.⁵⁶ The covert end of the network is still operated through two distinct sub-networks, one of which is managed and developed by the IRGC Qods force, principally through cultural centers and religious diplomatic outreach, and the other through Hezbollah cells, which are predominantly facilitated from Margarita Island, Venezuela, and the Tri-Border Area (TBA) of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil.⁵⁷ Figure 1 demonstrates the four-phase method of Iranian infiltration developed from the 1994 AMIA bombing and subsequent investigations by Argentinian authorities. The model shows regional ties are first established through cultural outreach, followed by diplomatic and economic ties, and lastly, security cooperation programs that enabled all facets of Iranian government connections with the region.⁵⁸ Examples noted in the figure will be further discussed in subsequent sections and chapters. See Appendix A for further reading on Rabbani's support and operational networks, as well as further information about Hezbollah activities in the Western Hemisphere.

⁵⁶ *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere: Testimony before Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and Subcommittee on the Middle East & North Africa, House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs*, 114th Cong. (March 18, 2015) (statement of Joseph M. Humire).

⁵⁷ *Hezbollah in Latin America: Implications for U.S. Homeland Security, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence, House Committee on Homeland Security*, 112th Congress (July 7, 2011) (statement of Roger Noriega, The American Enterprise Institute).

⁵⁸ Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

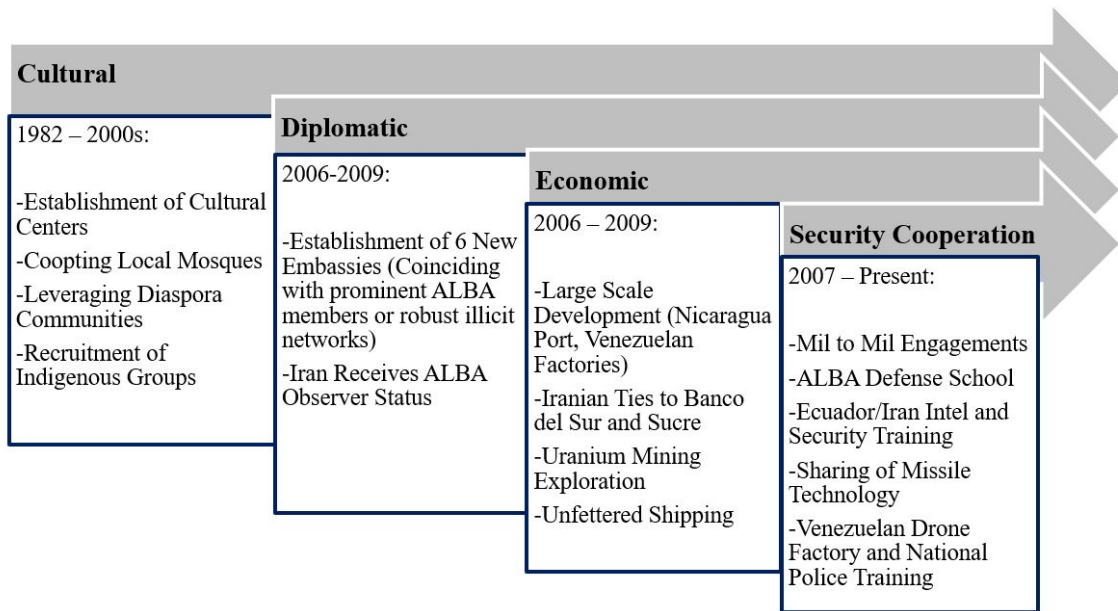


Figure 1. Model demonstrating Iranian expansion in Latin America.⁵⁹

F. CONVERGENCE: THE ALBA AND OVERT IRANIAN EXPANSION

Diplomatic and economic elements of the Iranian model of expansion in Latin America were most dynamic during the tenure of the nationalist- populist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. His election platform was a return to the historical Iranian theme of nationalism, which predates the Islamic Republic as it is known today and is based on mobilizing the working class at home with vehemently anti-Western [U.S. government] and anti-Zionist rhetoric.⁶⁰ Iranian domestic desire for a strong nationalist-populist candidate was rooted in the perceived fear of publicized “shock and awe” preemptive strike plans from the Bush administration. The plans were perceived as real threats with the focal point of U.S. and Western military might still surrounding Iran in Iraq and Afghanistan.⁶¹ Actions and policies that attempted to isolate Iran from the rest

⁵⁹ Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

⁶⁰ Stefan Immerfall, “Comparative Politics. Interests, Identities, and Institutions in a Changing Global Order,” Eds. Jeffrey Kopstein, Mark Lichbach *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, December 2001), 419.

⁶¹ William R. Polk, *Understanding Iran: Everything You Need to Know, From Persia to the Islamic Republic, From Cyrus to Ahmadinejad* (New York City, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 141.

of the world drove the aggressive rise of Ahmadinejad and the nationalist-populist movement in Iran during his 2005–2013 administration.⁶² Ahmadinejad’s newly elected administration counteracted to perceived threats of the West and played to his political base by establishing influence in America’s backyard.⁶³

Overt diplomatic and economic efforts peaked between 2006 and 2009 during Ahmadinejad’s tenure and resulted in large scale investment projects across ALBA member states, and the establishment of six new Iranian Embassies across the region, all with proximity to large monetary contributions or investments, criminal networks associated with Hezbollah, and terror plots across the region.⁶⁴ One such large-scale project is a \$350 million deep-water port facility in Nicaragua started in 2013, but to date, little work has been conducted despite the transfer of funds.⁶⁵ Other more nefarious projects include the sale of drones, weapons, and the construction of an explosives factory in Venezuela; the funding of the “Regional Defense School” in Bolivia, where Qods operatives teach curriculum on revolutionary warfare that is called the Anti-Imperialist Commando School; and the provision of “specialized training” by 200–300 IRGC military advisors to the Ecuadorian Military in 2009, which coincided with the cessation of a U.S. counter-narcotics program, to name a few.⁶⁶

Other economic means of overt integration were the development of several joint banks between various ALBA members, but chiefly the *Banco Internacional de Desarrollo* (International Development Bank, BID) based out of Caracas, Venezuela, which is a subsidiary of Iran’s Export Development Bank. BID was sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) for its

⁶² Immerfall, “Comparative Politics. Interests, Identities, and Institutions in a Changing Global Order,” 419.

⁶³ “Ayatollahs in the backyard,” *The Economist*, November 26, 2009, <http://www.economist.com/node/14969124>.

⁶⁴ Cynthia Arnson, Haeli Esfandiari and Adam Stubits, Ed., “Iran in Latin America, Threat or Axis of Annoyance,” *Woodrow Wilson Center Reports on the Americas*, no. 23. (July 7, 2011): 1.

⁶⁵ Arnson, *Iran in Latin America*, 16.

⁶⁶ Humire and Berman. Ed. *Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America* (Maryland: Lexington, 2014), 5. And Joshua Brandon and David Gray, “Iran’s Foothold in Latin America: Striking Back at the United States,” *Global Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 21.

involvement in money laundering, and was a key component of an Iranian financial mechanism. BID developed into multiple proxy banks and shell companies that transferred hundreds of millions of dollars in a successful effort to avoid sanctions and support Hezbollah operations and Iranian nuclear missile programs.⁶⁷ The creation of overt diplomatic and economic linkages coincided with the establishment of official diplomatic missions, followed by investment schemes, and military aid programs, giving Iran unprecedented access and influence in the Western Hemisphere. The Iranian integration into Latin American governments, chiefly ALBA states, is so profound that multiple member nations willfully defied sanctions to support Iran during their nuclear sanctions era.⁶⁸

Strategic-level utilization of covert mechanisms were further exposed with evidence of illegal arms transfers and attempts to mine nuclear material from Venezuela. In 2009, Israeli commandos interdicted a shipment of Katyusha rockets, ammunition, and other assorted Russian and Iranian weapons from a Venezuelan ship headed to Syria intended for Hezbollah.⁶⁹ Another weapons shipment was seized in Turkey in 2008 when a shipment of “tractor parts” destined for Venezuela to a joint Iranian and Venezuelan tractor project called VenIran Tractor Factory was discovered to have an explosives lab, bomb making material and other weapons under the Iranian shipping company, IRISL.⁷⁰ IRISL is cited by multiple authors as a shell company of the IRGC, supporting illegal weapons transfers and support nuclear weapons proliferation in Iran by Doug Farah and Joseph Humire in multiple congressional testimonies. Venezuela became complicit in the illegal Iranian nuclear program when their Minister of Basic Industries and Mining, Rodolfo Sanz, admitted that Iran was “testing uranium deposits found in remote areas of

⁶⁷ Levitt, testimony on *Examining the State Department’s Report on Iranian Presence in the Western Hemisphere Nineteen Years After the AMIA Attack*.

⁶⁸ Examples: ALBA nations’ support to Iran despite sanctions include Venezuelan transfer of 40,000 barrels per day of oil to Iran, Uruguay’s bartering of rice of oil, and the Argentinian and Venezuelan agreement to share nuclear technology.

⁶⁹ Noriega, testimony on *Hezbollah in Latin America – Implications for U.S. Homeland Security*.

⁷⁰ *Ahmadinejad’s Tour of Tyrants and Iran’s Agenda in the Western Hemisphere: Venezuelan Gateway*, 112th Cong. (February 2, 2012) (statement of Norman Bailey, Institute for Global Economic Growth and former Mission manager for Cuba and Venezuela, Office of the Director of National Intelligence).

Venezuela.”⁷¹ The location of mining coincides with one of the VenIran Tractor factory and an Iranian backed cement factory, with adjacent private port facilities to support the remote factories and mines, and direct access to unregulated international shipping.⁷² Yet another example of Iranian cooption of Latin American governments is manifested in the testing of a solid rocket fuel, based on Iranian technology. This program was originally hindered by international counter-proliferation sanctions, but was tested in a revitalized Argentinian Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile program in 2009.⁷³

The final example, which will be explored further in Chapter Five, is the El Aissami network. Tareck El Aissami is currently the Vice President of Venezuela, and his network illustrates the convergence of licit government organizations and businesses, opaque shell companies, drug cartels, Hezbollah, and international terrorist finance.⁷⁴ It is also a manifestation of the convergence between the government of Iran and how it can apply significant access, influence, and leverage through established connections across Latin America.⁷⁵ The most nefarious of activities alleged by U.S. Federal Prosecutors is the prolific distribution of valid Venezuelan passports, providing officially backed false identification to thousands in the Middle East.⁷⁶ The illumination of the so-called Tareck El Aissami network through recent investigations demonstrates the capabilities and capacities of a network facilitating large-scale operations. The El Aissami network will be discussed further as a case study in Chapter Five.

⁷¹ Simon Romero, “Venezuela Says Iran Is Helping It Look for Uranium,” *New York Times*, September 25, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/26/world/americas/26venez.html>.

⁷² Roger F. Noriega, “Hugo Chavez’s Criminal Nuclear Network: A Grave and Growing Threat,” *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research* No. 3 (October 2009): 1–7. <http://www.aei.org/publication/hugo-chavezs-criminal-nuclear-network-a-grave-and-growing-threat/>.

⁷³ Farah, *Back to the Future: Argentina Unravels*, 11–14.

⁷⁴ Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

⁷⁵ Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

⁷⁶ “Venezuela illegally issued 10,000 passports to Syrians, Iranians, report says.” *Fox News*, April 17, 2017. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/04/17/venezuela-illegally-issued-10000-passports-to-syrians-iranians-report-says.html>.

III. SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS OF THE PINK TIDE

A. INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2000, populist leftist governments came to power near simultaneously across Latin America. Foreign policy experts initially predicted it was another cycle in the recurring shift of political leaning that is fairly common in Latin America. What made this political shift different was the amount of virulent anti-U.S. rhetoric espoused by these leftist governments, and the sheer quantity of key individuals, shell corporations, subsidiaries, quasi-governmental organizations, indigenous political movements, regional blocs, and T3N that became affiliated with this movement; journalists coined it the “Pink Tide.”⁷⁷ The movement also encouraged an unprecedented amount of engagement with state and non-state actors from outside the region, notably Iran, with whom the Pink Tide nations feel united with by their shared anti-US sentiment.

In order to identify key actors in the Pink Tide, we first focused on open source research to collect and structure our data on the Pink Tide. Next, we identified and mapped the social, economic, and political relationship ties and linkages amongst the Pink Tide entities. After coding 1,962 links between 479 different nodes, we used SNA techniques to interpret the network’s topography and centrality (the 479 nodes consist of organizations, individual actors, events and projects). In order to determine the extent of Iranian influence in Latin America, we used spatial analysis to determine patterns between the populist-leftist countries of the Pink Tide and Iranian projects and influence.

⁷⁷ *New York Times* reporter Larry Rohter dubbed the movement the “Pink Tide” in 2005, and the movement quickly gained traction throughout the region; leftist governments came to power in Venezuela in 1999, then Brazil in 2002, Argentina in 2003, Uruguay in 2004, Bolivia in 2005, Chile and Nicaragua in 2006, and more recently El Salvador and Paraguay. After a series of electoral defeats for leftist governments, the new centrist leaders are using the same organizations as an outlet of discussion and to mobilize against the U.S. at the state level. See Chapter Two for more details on the current political state.

B. NETWORK TOPOGRAPHY OF THE PINK TIDE NETWORK

First, we discuss the overall structural characteristics of the network.⁷⁸ Analysis of network topography can help determine how effective a network operates and can also assist in identifying the overall resiliency of the network.

The aggregated Pink Tide network examines only the Pink Tide organizations and excludes people, events, and projects. This aggregated network consists of 345 actors with 796 links. In order to determine how this network operates as a whole, our topography analysis focused on network centralization and interconnectedness of the Pink Tide network. (See Appendix B for the formal definitions and interpretations of the metrics analyzed). Figure 2 displays the sociogram of the Pink Tide network and Table 1 displays the metrics of the aggregated network. We discuss the centralization and interconnectedness metrics in following paragraphs.

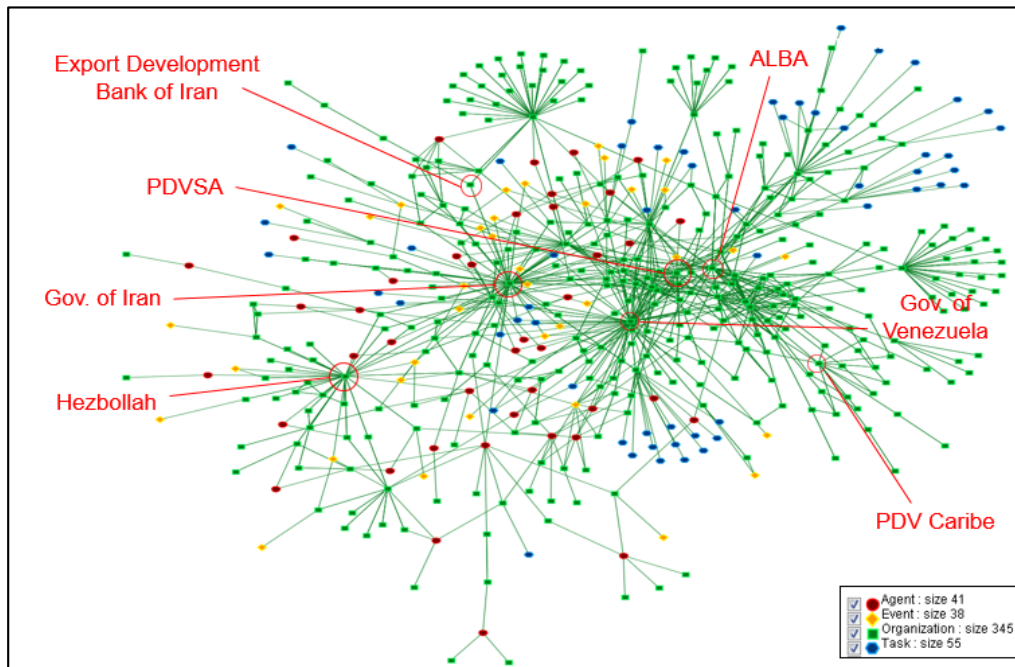


Figure 2. Sociogram of the Pink Tide Network. Produced in ORA.

⁷⁸ “Topography provides information about a network’s aggregate structure, which is in many ways as important as its component parts.” Daniel Cunningham, Sean F. Everton, and Philip J. Murphy. *Understanding Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), 85.

Table 1. Topography metrics of the aggregated (one-mode) Pink Tide network

Basic Metrics	Size	345 Nodes
	Links	796
	Diameter	11.000
Centralization Metrics	Degree Centralization	0.018
	Betweenness Centralization	0.290
	Eigenvector Centralization	0.514
	Closeness Centralization	0.251
Interconnectedness Metrics	Density	0.013
	Average Degree	5.635

Results produced with the standard network analysis report in ORA.

1. Measures of Centralization

The analysis of centralization measures helps to determine how a network is structured and operates. A more centralized network can be interpreted as potentially efficient because it is easier to transfer information or resources. Conversely, a more decentralized network may provide more security, but the network may be more inefficient in how it operates because it is more difficult to pass the same information or resources.⁷⁹ Each network has to find that optimal level of organization in order to balance network efficiency with overall security depending on the environment and the overall objectives of the network.⁸⁰

According to Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, “The standard measure of centralization uses variation in actor centrality within the network to measure the level of

⁷⁹ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 91.

⁸⁰ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, 98.

centralization... yielding a score between 0.0 and 1.0.”⁸¹ A centralization score of 0.0 (or 0%) indicates a decentralized network while a score of 1.0 (or 100%) indicates a very centralized network. In *Understanding Dark Networks*, the authors analyze the metrics for a variety of networks that range from licit to illicit. One network analyzed was an element of the FARC which received a centralization score of 7.49%. The authors describe this specific network as being decentralized.⁸² In contrast, the Koschade network (Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) Bali Bombing Cell) received a centralization score of 53.75% making it a very centralized network.⁸³ The Pink Tide network has a degree centralization score of 0.018 (1.8%), which is much less than the score of the decentralized FARC network thus we can assess that the Pink Tide network is decentralized.

This low centralization score makes sense because the Pink Tide has established several key institutions that revolve around petrochemicals and have allowed the leaders of Pink Tide countries to expand their networks into several subsidiary institutions that exist in each country. This myriad array of subsidiary institutions conducts both licit and illicit activities internally within their countries and with external actors. Pink Tide governments are centrally able to control the state-managed petrochemical institutions efficiently, but the subsidiary institutions branch off in a decentralized manner. The more decentralized subsidiary institutions maintain the ties to the external actors with the potential for nefarious intent or activities. This decentralized manner provides the Pink Tide governments a form of security by providing plausible deniability to the illicit activities those subsidiary institutions and external actors are conducting.

2. Measures of Interconnectedness

The interconnectedness of a network determines how dense or sparse the network is. Density and average degree are two measures of interconnectedness. The density metric is the “degree to which a network is connected” and is formally defined as “as the

⁸¹ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 87.

⁸² Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, 105.

⁸³ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, 94.

total number of observed ties in a network divided by the total possible number of ties in that network.”⁸⁴ Similar to centralization, density scores can range from 0.0 to 1.0. A density score of 0.0 can mean that “no ties exist between actors,” while a score of 1.0 can mean that “all possible ties exist between actors.”⁸⁵ This metric can be misleading because “the score is inversely related to network size (i.e., the larger the network, the lower the density).”⁸⁶ For this reason, analysts use the average degree measure because it “is not sensitive to network size.”⁸⁷ Interconnectedness scores can help determine how strong the ties are within a specific network and if the network maintains ties strictly internally or look to external ties to grow the network.

When comparing the interconnectedness scores of the various networks described in *Understanding Dark Networks*, the Pink Tide networks score low in density (0.013 or 1.3%), but has an average degree of 5.635 that falls between the spectrum of the FARC network and the Koschade network (JI) Bali Bombing Cell. The Koschade network has a density of 0.463 (46.3%) and an average degree of 7.412 and is assessed by Koschade as being very dense.⁸⁸ The FARC network has a density of 0.009 (0.09%) and an average degree of 3.888 making it more sparse.⁸⁹ The much lower density score for the Pink Tide Network compared to the Koschade network is due to the overall size of the network. The Pink Tide network has 345 nodes while the Koschade network only has 18 nodes. By contrast, the FARC network has 445 actors so the density level is fairly consistent with that of the Pink Tide network.

The average degree scores place the Pink Tide network as a fairly dense network. The Pink Tide’s average degree score of 5.635 falls between the FARC’s 3.888 and the Koschade network of 7.412. The organizations that compose the Pink Tide network are well connected through the ALBA economic bloc. Although the Pink Tide network,

⁸⁴ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 88.

⁸⁵ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, 98.

⁸⁶ Everton, 399.

⁸⁷ Everton, 398.

⁸⁸ Stuart Koschade, “A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006), 570.

⁸⁹ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 102.

FARC, and Koschade networks were developed for different strategies, each were made specifically for their environment that they had to operate within. The Pink Tide network is opaque with elements falling in the dark network realm that have to operate covertly, while also maintaining elements in the light network that conduct legitimate business in the region.

The central actors in the Pink Tide network maintain a large number of ties while subsidiary institutions maintain just a small number of ties and produce lower interconnectedness scores. This network conducts the illicit activities in a compartmentalized manner. Key nodes within the government have sub-networks that conduct the illicit activities and the key nodes maintain minimal ties to the sub-networks.

This method of structuring key organizations and supporting sub-networks makes it difficult to detect the illicit networks and allows for plausible deniability for the connections to the illicit activities. Furthermore, a lower density score can imply “that the removal a node is less likely to compromise the rest of the network.”⁹⁰ Both measurements of interconnectedness can be misleading because a network can be “locally dense, but globally sparse which a measurement like average degree cannot capture.”⁹¹ In the case of the Pink Tide network, being a relatively sparse network does not necessarily imply inefficiency. The Pink Tide maintains ties to several different types of external organizations through its licit organizations.

The analysis of centrality and interconnectedness scores of the Pink Tide network as a whole has assisted in determining that the network operates in an opaque manner that combines both licit and illicit organizations. The decentralized and relatively sparse scores are significant when assessing how the Pink Tide operates as a whole. Now we will look at individual actors within the Pink Tide network.

⁹⁰ Stuart Koschade, “A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006), 568.

⁹¹ Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 98.

C. CENTRALITY ANALYSIS OF THE PINK TIDE NETWORK

In order to illuminate and detangle the complex network of relationships amongst quasi-governmental organizations, public and private corporations, governments, and key individuals involved in the Pink Tide network, we analyzed centrality to determine the key actors. Degree, betweenness, closeness, and eigenvector centrality are the four main centrality measures used for this project. Two additional metrics, boundary spanner and boundary spanner, potential were analyzed to identify nodes that might not be central, but could potentially influence or disrupt the network. Degree centrality is simply the “count of the number of an actor’s ties,” or the number of connections that an organization has to other nodes in the network.⁹² Eigenvector centrality, or ‘prestige’ centrality, is closely related to degree centrality but instead measures an organization’s indirect ties. In addition to counting how many ties an individual organization has to other organizations, eigenvector centrality “assumes that ties to highly central [organizations] are more important than are ties to peripheral ones, so it weights an [organization’s] initial degree centrality by the degree centrality of its neighbors.”⁹³

While degree centrality and eigenvector centrality are similar in that each measure counts the number of ties between nodes, or organizations, in the network, betweenness centrality differs because it is a ‘path-based’ centrality measure. It is a function of “the number of times that any actor needs a given actor to reach any other actor,” that is, how often an organization lies on the shortest path between other organizations in the network.⁹⁴ Betweenness centrality is one of the most critical measures of node centrality because “each [organization’s] flow betweenness score captures the extent to which each [organization] is involved in all of the flows between all other pairs of [organizations] in the network.”⁹⁵ Another significant facet of betweenness is that it potentially identifies

⁹²Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 322–327.

⁹³Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, 148.

⁹⁴ Stephen P. Borgatti and Martin G. Everett, “A Graph-Theoretic Perspective on Centrality,” *Social Networks* 28 no. 4 (2006), 474.

⁹⁵ Robert A. Hanneman and Mark Riddle, “Concepts and Measures for Basic Network Analysis,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Network Analysis*, eds. John Scott and Peter J. Carrington (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2011), 366–367.

which actors are brokers in a network. Brokers are the actors that connect different subnetworks and act as an intermediary conduit of communication or interaction. Due to the broker's location as an association between disparate subnetworks, they also pose a significant danger; if they are removed, the network is in danger of becoming disconnected or fragmented.⁹⁶ Finally, closeness centrality “reflects the [average path] distance from each [organization] to every other [organization] in the network.”⁹⁷

Table 2. Top 10 most central actors of the Pink Tide Network

Rank	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness	Betweenness	Boundary Spanner ^a	Boundary Spanner, Potential
1	Gov of Venezuela (0.019)	Gov of Venezuela (0.537)	Gov of Venezuela (0.374)	Gov of Venezuela (0.298)	Banco Central de Venezuela (1)	Export Development Bank of Iran (0.047)
2	Gov of Iran (0.018)	El Aissami Network (0.521)	Gov of Bolivia (0.368)	Gov of Iran (.261)	Hezbollah (1)	Toseyeh Saderat Iran Bank (0.023)
3	ALBA (0.011)	Profit Corporation, C.A. (0.483)	Gov of Iran (0.364)	ALBA (0.185)	ALBA* (1)	SUCRE (0.022)
4	Hezbollah (0.010)	Gov of Iran (0.362)	ALBA (0.358)	Banco Central de Ecuador (0.148)	ALBANISA* (1)	Banco Central de Venezuela (0.021)
5	El Aissami Network (0.009)	SMT Tecnologia, C.A. (0.328)	PDVSA (0.336)	Banco de Venezuela (0.132)	PDVSA* (1)	Banco Central de Bolivia (0.019)
6	Banco Central de Ecuador (0.008)	Grupo Sahect (0.317)	Veniran (0.330)	Hezbollah (0.126)	ALBA Depositos de Nicaragua* (1)	PDV Caribe (0.018)
7	Profit Corporation, C.A. (0.008)	Yakima Oil Trading, LLP (0.316)	ACS (0.325)	PDVSA (0.110)	ALBA Equipos de Nicaragua (Econsa)* (1)	Banco Nacional de Cuba (0.018)
8	Gov of Ecuador (0.007)	Alfa One, C.A. (0.308)	Petrocaribe (0.324)	Gov of Bolivia (0.105)	PDV Caribe* (1)	Banco Central de Ecuador (0.016)
9	PDVSA (0.006)	MFAA Holdings Limited (0.308)	TeleSur (0.320)	ALBANISA (0.098)	Gov of Iran* (1)	ALBANISA (0.016)
10	Gov of Bolivia (0.006)	Servicios Tecnologicos Industriales (0.308)	Beniroug (0.319)	PDV Caribe (0.065)	FSLN* (1)	ALBA (0.015)

^a The Top 10 for Boundary-Spanner were all tied at 1

^b Results produced with the standard network analysis report in ORA

⁹⁶ Faulkner, Robert R. and Eric R. Cheney, *Breakdown of Brokerage: Crisis and Collapse in the Watergate Conspiracy*, January 11, 2012. Accessed March 1, 2017 http://www.robertfaulkner.org/uploads/9/1/0/9/9109862/faulknerandcheney_breakdownofbrokerage.pdf.

⁹⁷ Cunningham, Everton, and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 150.

Initial interpretation of the centrality scores (as depicted in Table 2) bear out some expectations and produced some surprising results. For example, as expected, the Government of Venezuela and ALBA have high degree and betweenness centrality scores. Since Hugo Chávez and the Government of Venezuela were the impetus of the Pink Tide movement and responsible for the creation of many of the organizations and corporations affiliated with the Pink Tide, it stands to reason that Venezuela is highly central in the network. ALBA was the first regional organization created at the onset of the Pink Tide movement to bring the leftist organizations together in Latin America, and many of the subsidiary organizations, bi-lateral projects and petrochemical companies stem from the ALBA construct, which is the intergovernmental backbone comprising the Pink Tide movement.

The centrality scores also confirm the initial assumptions of the high centrality of the Iranian government. Iran has fostered a close relationship with most of the leftist countries affiliated with the Pink Tide and sponsored a variety of bi-lateral and multilateral agreements and projects. PDVSA, the national petrochemical corporation of Venezuela also scored relatively high in most centrality measures. This is as expected because PDVSA serves as the main mechanism for implementing the energy partnerships for ALBA member states, and through its many subsidiaries and dummy corporations, has co-funded projects sponsored by the government of Iran.⁹⁸

Other results are more illuminating. The El Aissami network, and the corporations that form the El Aissami network, score high in terms of eigenvector and degree centrality. The El Aissami network, which was recently sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Treasury for links to illegal narcotics trafficking and ties to terrorist organizations, has a high eigenvector centrality score because it exists in the ‘seams’ between the overt, legal, quasi-official Pink Tide network, and the dark network of illicit

⁹⁸ Sean Goforth, *Axis of Unity: Venezuela, Iran & the Threat to America* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 24–25.

organizations associated with the Pink Tide.⁹⁹ In particular, it is located at the convergence of the Government of Venezuela, drug trafficking organizations, and T3N (see Chapter Five for a case study analysis of the El Aissami network).

D. BOUNDARY SPANNERS AND GIRVAN-NEWMAN GROUPS

This research used additional SNA techniques, including boundary spanner analysis, in order to provide a more complete analysis of the Pink Tide network. Boundary spanners, also referred to as “cut-points,” are the actors or nodes whose removal will disconnect the network into separate components. Cunningham, Everton, and Murphy note that it is uncommon for a network to “contain a single actor whose removal disconnects the network,” and the Pink Tide network is no exception; yet boundary spanner analysis did provide interesting results.¹⁰⁰ Several organizations, including Hezbollah and the government of Iran, tied for the highest score in the boundary spanner metric. As Doowan Lee and Christopher Fussell note, “boundary spanners have great potential to bridge and connect multiple subnetworks.”¹⁰¹ Even identifying, locating, and acknowledging the influence that these nodes have due to their structural position in the network is a critical step to potentially disrupting the network. It is important to note that Lee and Fussell’s work was focused on social network analysis of Iraqi Kurdistan, however, their point is equally as salient when applied to Iranian influence of the Pink Tide: “It is also noteworthy that Iran seems willing to work with those with the most potential for connecting multiple groups as opposed to those who are just politically aligned with Iranian interests.”¹⁰²

The ORA boundary spanner, potential metric was utilized to illuminate possible methods for influencing, fragmenting, or disrupting the network. Boundary spanner,

⁹⁹ United States Department of Treasury, “El Aissami & Lopez Bello Network.” 13 February 2017. Accessed 27 February 2017. https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/20170213_el_aissami_lopez_bello_network.pdf.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Cunningham, Sean Everton, and Philip Murphy. *Understanding Dark Networks*, 172.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Fussell and D.W. Lee, “Networks at War: Organizational Innovation and Adaptation in the 21st Century,” Chapter 17 in *Beyond Convergence: World Without Order*, eds. Hilary Matfess and Michael Miklaucic (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2016.), 385.

¹⁰² Fussell and Lee, “Networks at War,” 385.

potential is calculated by dividing betweenness centrality by degree centrality. Thus, it is likely to identify actors that serve as bridges between disconnected groups and will be “high when the agent is potentially influential but is not in the know.”¹⁰³ Banking institutions, including the Export Development Bank of Iran and Toseyeh Saderat Iran Bank, scored high in terms of boundary spanner potential, as did PDV Caribe, the PDVSA subsidiary responsible for supplying energy to many ALBA member states. According to a contributor to Joseph Humire’s *Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America*, “utilizing the Sucre as a parallel financial system could be Iran’s most sophisticated financial scheme in Latin America to date... [using the Export Development Bank of Iran and subsidiaries,] Iran would use Venezuelan banks, with ties to third party banks in the region that have longstanding relationships with U.S. financial institutions, in order to inject Iranian funds into the U.S. financial system.”¹⁰⁴ The use of the boundary spanner potential is a key indicator for the possibility that these nodes could be used to influence or fragment the network.

¹⁰³ ORA.

¹⁰⁴ Alex Pérez, “Sanctions Busting Schemes in Ecuador,” in *Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America*, eds. Joseph Humire and Ilan Berman (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 52.

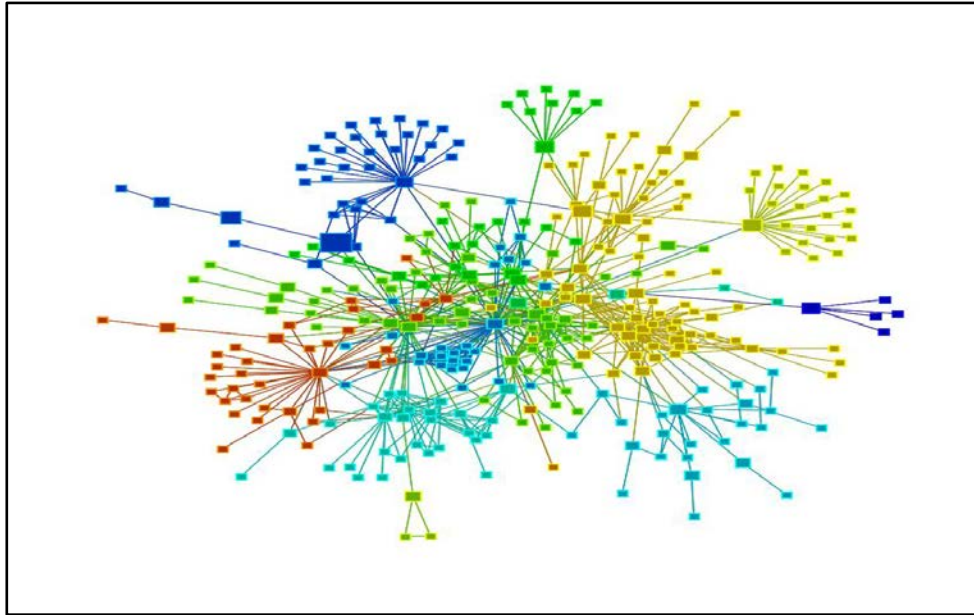


Figure 3. Sociogram depicting Girvan-Newman groups of the Pink Tide Network. The nodes sized by Boundary Spanner, Potential. Produced in ORA.

This research also conducted rudimentary faction analysis to determine the primary subgroups within the network. Both the Newman and the Girvan-Newman community detection algorithms in ORA were used to detect subgroups in the Pink Tide network because “within dark networks... [it] highlights potential seams, or vulnerabilities, between those communities.”¹⁰⁵ Both the Newman and Girvan-Newman algorithms identified 12 separate subgroups within the Pink Tide network, which roughly correlate to those discovered in our qualitative research; i.e., the banking institutions are one subgroup, while the illicit organizations form another subgroup. The Hezbollah financing networks were all located within one group due to their similar types of ties. While both Newman and Girvan-Newman found the optimal fit using 12 groups, there was slight variation in the distribution of organizations amongst the groups. When comparing algorithms, analysts look at the “modularity score (Q) as a measure of the quality of the division of the networks. The higher values of Q are interpreted as

¹⁰⁵ Cunningham, Everton, Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 111.

reflecting relatively better representations of community structure in the network.”¹⁰⁶ In other words, the modularity score describe the measure of fit and thus a higher modularity indicates a better measure of fit. The Girvan-Newman algorithm had a modularity (Q) value of 0.8068, compared to 0.6491 for the Newman algorithm.

Based on the qualitative research and the higher modularity score, the analysts determined that the Girvan-Newman algorithm produced a better representation of the sub-groups within the Pink Tide network.¹⁰⁷ Using the Girvan-Newman algorithm also allowed us to determine which organizations have connections that span subgroups, showing their potential to serve as brokers or bridges between disparate groups.

E. SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF THE PINK TIDE NETWORK AND IRANIAN ORGANIZATIONS AND PROJECTS

The spatial analysis focused on two different aspects of the structured data to identify any geographic trends associated with the Pink Tide movement. First, the analytical program QGIS was utilized to identify how Pink Tide organizations and projects are unequally dispersed throughout Latin America and compared that to the dispersion of Iranian affiliated organizations and projects in Latin America in order to identify any spatial patterns that may exist between the Pink Tide and Iranian influence. The analysis consisted of 174 separate organizations and projects. Figure 4 displays a side by side comparison of the Pink Tide affiliated organizations and projects, on the left, and the Iranian organizations and projects, on the right. The analysis will be discussed in following paragraphs.

¹⁰⁶ Cunningham, Everton, Murphy, 133.

¹⁰⁷ Cunningham, Everton, Murphy, 132.

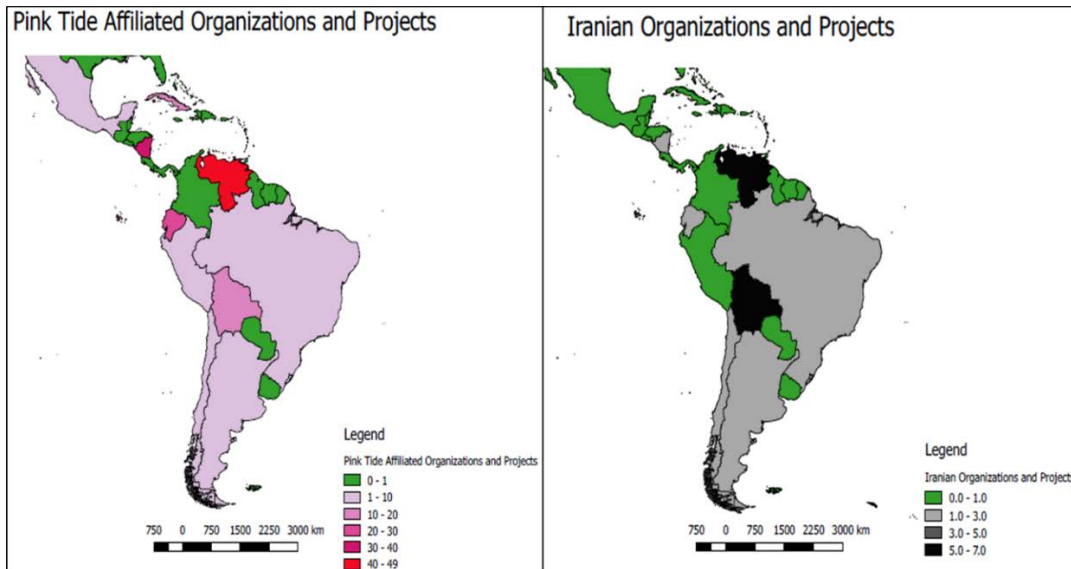


Figure 4. Spatial analysis of Pink Tide organizations and projects compared to Iranian organizations and projects. Produced in QGIS.

The analysis first focused on identifying which countries had the largest quantity of Pink Tide affiliated organizations and projects physically located within their country. In the image above, graduated colors were utilized to display the number (counts) of these organizations and projects within each country. The organizations that were analyzed included headquarters for multilateral regional blocs such as the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) and the subsidiary organizations affiliated with ALBA. Several quasi state-run petrochemical companies are also associated with ALBA, and depicted in the image above. Lastly, ALBA affiliated organizations and their subsidiaries support a number of projects within their respective countries. The count of those projects is also included in the quantities for each country.

When analyzing the image, the brighter the pink color corresponds with the higher quantity of Pink Tide organizations and projects. From our analysis, countries that are green do not display any affiliation with the Pink Tide. The top five countries with the highest quantity of Pink Tide affiliated organizations and projects are Venezuela (49), Nicaragua (40), Ecuador (30), Bolivia (18), and Cuba (11). These countries are all members of the ALBA bloc and Venezuela designed the original construct for the

multilateral organization. The subsidiary organizations, companies, financial institutions, and projects were developed in those countries and show a higher quantity.

Next the number of Iranian organizations and projects within Latin America were analyzed. On the right side of the image above, graduated colors display the number (count) of these organizations and projects within each country in Latin America. Iranian organizations and projects included diplomatic missions, military exchanges, cultural centers, financial institutions, and other businesses that are directly linked through formal ties and direct pledges. Although not all encompassing, 32 separate organizations and projects were included in this specific data set.

Figure 4 shows that countries that have the highest count of Iranian-affiliated organizations and projects are Venezuela (7), Bolivia (6), Brazil (3-Tie), and Ecuador (3-Tie). Nicaragua, Argentina, and Chile each have two Iranian organizations or projects within their country. Venezuela has the most documented ties to Iran from the data that was coded. These organizations include the Iranian embassy in Caracas, two Iranian sponsored military facilities, and four Iranian companies within Venezuela. Hugo Chávez fostered a close diplomatic and economic partnership with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during the same time period that ALBA was forming. The close relationship between Venezuela and Iran facilitated the spread of Iranian influence into other ALBA countries such as Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. Iran also gained Observer Status of ALBA in 2010 to further formalize relationships with ALBA countries. When compared side-by-side, one can see the clear correlation between Iran and Pink Tide affiliated organizations and projects.

F. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PINK TIDE NETWORK ANALYSIS

The Pink Tide has established several key institutions that revolve around petrochemicals and have allowed the leaders of Pink Tide countries to expand their networks into several subsidiary institutions that exist in each country. This myriad of subsidiary institutions is conducting both licit and illicit activities internally within their countries and with external actors. External actors, such as Iran, have identified leverage points within the overall Pink Tide network to insert themselves into the region through

the use of cultural, diplomatic, and economic exchanges (Chapter Four will discuss the mechanisms that Iran utilized). Pink Tide governments are able to centrally control the state-managed petrochemical institutions efficiently, but the subsidiary institutions branch off in a decentralized manner. The decentralized branches create the opaque qualities that make this network difficult to monitor.

The highly central organizations – the governments of Venezuela and Iran – are out of reach of efforts to influence the Pink Tide network, but the network *is* vulnerable at the seams. As demonstrated by the U.S. Department of Treasury sanctions that targeted the El Aissami network, an organization that served as the bridge between the licit and illicit parts of the Pink Tide network, those nodes or organizations are vulnerable to disruption or influence (discussed further in Chapter Five).

From spatial analysis of the network, we determined that there is a pattern amongst countries that host a high quantity of Pink Tide affiliated organizations and projects. These countries also host a high quantity of Iranian sponsored organizations and projects. Hugo Chávez fostered a close diplomatic and economic partnership with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad during the same time period that ALBA was forming (2003-2008). The close relationship between Venezuela and Iran facilitated the spread of Iranian influence into other ALBA countries such as Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador.

Our analysis of the overall Pink Tide network as a whole has illuminated convergence points that connect this network to two sub-networks with ties to Iran: the Rabbani network and the El Aissami network. Chapter Four will analyze the Rabbani network which was initially established in 1982 in Argentina. Chapter Five will analyze the El Aissami network, which is a current day case study that involves Venezuela. Both case studies explore qualitatively and quantitatively how nefarious Iranian activity has been, and is currently being, fostered in Latin America through the co-option of the overall Pink Tide network.

IV. THE MOHSEN RABBANI NETWORK

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a description of a terrorist attack that occurred in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1994 and analyzes the network that was established to conduct the attack. Of more importance is the analysis that identifies key actors within the network that are tied into the overall Pink Tide network that was described in the last chapter. By analyzing these key actors, one can begin to understand how a third-party country, such as Iran, can establish influence throughout Latin America with the objective of countering American influence.

B. THE 1994 AMIA BOMBING

On July 18, 1994, Argentina and all of Latin America were shocked by one of the most catastrophic terrorist attacks to ever take place in South America. Unknown terrorists bombed the *Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina* (AMIA), a Jewish cultural center in Buenos Aires. The blasts caused the deaths of 85 people and injured more than 151 others.¹⁰⁸ The attack followed a previous terrorist attack on the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires in 1992 that killed 29 people. The unprecedented terrorist attacks in Latin America led to an array of mishandled Argentine investigations. However, Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman conducted a comprehensive investigation and indictment that concluded that the AMIA attack was orchestrated by the government of Iran (utilizing Mohsen Rabbani's network) and carried out at their behest by Lebanese Hezbollah.¹⁰⁹

Despite the comprehensiveness of the report, Argentina's policy toward Iran has been mixed; none of the six high-ranking Iranian officials linked to the bombing have been tried or extradited, despite being indicted by Argentina in 2006.¹¹⁰ Nisman then

¹⁰⁸ Alberto Nisman. *AMIA Case Indictment*. October 25, 2006. Accessed November 12, 2016, 2. http://albertonisman.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2006-Nisman-indict-AMIA-full-ENG_.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ Nisman, *AMIA Case Indictment*, 15.

¹¹⁰ Julian M. Obiglio and Diego C. Naveira, "Rewriting History in Argentina," in *Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America*, eds. Joseph Humire and Ilan Berman (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 81.

released a separate report in 2013 alleging much wider Iranian influence throughout all of Latin America, and inferred that Iran, and the Iranian terrorist proxy, Hezbollah, are deliberately infiltrating Latin America countries, “building local clandestine intelligence stations designed to sponsor, foster and execute terrorist attacks, within the principles to export the Islamic Revolution.”¹¹¹ The sensational revelations brought the country to a frenzied pitch when Alberto Nisman was found murdered in January 2015.

The first Iranian networks in Latin America responsible for the bombings in Argentina, and started development in 1982 with the first group of intelligence officers arriving under the management of the then-Cultural Attaché at the Iranian Embassy, Mohsen Rabbani. The AMIA bombing was approved by the senior leadership of the Iranian government including Ali Fallahian, the Iranian Intelligence Chief and overall operation commander, Ahmad Vahidi, then-commander of Qods Force and later Minister of Defense. The bombing itself was given to Hezbollah’s Imad Mughniyeh, with Mohsen Rabbani providing logistical and operational support.¹¹² Rabbani was the head of Latin American operations for the Iranian government, and managed the nascent intelligence operations from the Iranian Embassy in Spain until the formal development of a diplomatic mission in Buenos Aires and his arrival in 1983.¹¹³ Intelligence officers infiltrated under progressive and well developed covers to make contact with and recruit leading families and individuals in Muslim and Lebanese diaspora communities to develop a support network, while operational networks were established through trained personnel that were predominantly Hezbollah operatives.

¹¹¹ Alberto Nisman, “Nisman’s report on Iran’s terrorist networks throughout Latin America- Report May 2013.” Accessed October 30, 2016. <http://albertonisman.org/nisman-report-dictamina-on-sleeper-cells-full-text/>.

¹¹² Matthew Levitt, “Iranian Doublespeak on the Anniversary of the AMIA Bombing,” The Washington Institute. Accessed May 23, 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-doublespeak-on-the-anniversary-of-the-amia-bombing>. Mughniyeh was later killed in a joint CIA/Mossad operation for his involvement in the U.S. Embassy attack in Beirut, IEDs being utilized in Iraq against U.S. forces, and his role in the AMIA bombings in Argentina. See: <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-doublespeak-on-the-anniversary-of-the-amia-bombing> and https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-and-mossad-killed-senior-hezbollah-figure-in-car-bombing/2015/01/30/ebb88682-968a-11e4-8005-1924ede3e54a_story.html?utm_term=.77127b316175.

¹¹³ Humire, *After Nisman*, 10.

Rabbani and his agents' initial covers for infiltration of Buenos Aires were on tourist visas. Rabbani then became the *Imam* of the At-Tauhíd mosque, which facilitated overt and official ties to the Iranian mission via the Islamic Propaganda Organization.¹¹⁴ His position as an *Imam* enabled a plausible reason to establish his first cover business, a *halal* meat inspection company, called South Beef under Iran's Government Trading Corporation (GTC). Argentina is a major supplier of beef globally and possessed a natural economic connection with the capacity to conduct large monetary transactions and money laundering to support the development of what is now called the Rabbani network.¹¹⁵ Rabbani's final position in Argentina was as the Cultural Attaché at the Iranian Embassy in 1994, which afforded him diplomatic immunity for his involvement in the bombings.¹¹⁶ The development of the initial covert network for the bombings spanned eleven years and established the foothold for connections across the region.

Nisman's subsequent investigation uncovered a web of connections and illicit influence throughout the Argentinian government, which aided in, and facilitated an increasing span of Iranian influence in Argentina. Nisman's allegations of corruption included then-President Kristina Fernandez de Kirchner, her Vice President Elias Jaua, and her Planning Minister Julio de Vido. Nisman's investigation discovered wire taps of Rabbani's discussions of weapons sales and sharing of nuclear technology, in spite of international sanctions forbidding such actions with Iran at the time. Government officials were connected to \$240 million in Iranian development funds for "Socialist Factories," which resulted in limited development or actual functioning factories.¹¹⁷ The program is assessed to be a money laundering mechanism to move capital from the then-sanctions strapped Iran.¹¹⁸ President Fernandez de Kirchner's corrupt practices were demonstrated through the arrest of a courier from President Hugo Chávez, who was

¹¹⁴ Matthew Levitt, "Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America: Then and Now," *Center for Complex Operations PRISM* 5, no. 4 (Not Dated): 120.

¹¹⁵ Humire, *After Nisman*, 14.

¹¹⁶ *Examining the State Department's Report on Iranian Presence in the Western*, 3.

¹¹⁷ Humire, *After Nisman*, 30–31.

¹¹⁸ *Deepening Political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela: Implications for U.S. Interests and the Western Hemisphere*, 113th Cong. (March 17, 2015) (statement of Douglas Farah, IBI Consultants LLC), 4.

attempting to deliver \$800,000 in campaign finance funds and was caught flying into an international airport. Officials believe the money was only a portion of illicit contributions to de Kirchner's campaign that originated from Iran.¹¹⁹ Overt Iranian advances and renewed relations came shortly after with a secret agreement and Memorandum of Understanding that effectively relieved Iran and Rabbani's agents from prosecution. The Argentinian Judiciary deemed the agreement unconstitutional, but it effectively stagnated Nisman's investigation, which has not been followed through with since his death.¹²⁰

The dangerous and effective nature of Rabbani's Latin American network in Argentina highlights Iran's ability to leverage a region for its own ends. The network capitalized on corruption, under-governed spaces like the TBA, and mobilization of radical Islamic ideologues to develop an effective covert infrastructure in what many policy makers (chiefly the Department of State) believe to be an area too culturally and politically disparate to build alliances.¹²¹ Despite the official downplaying its influence, the network proved its worth and effectiveness to meet strategic objectives of the government of Iran and Ayatollah across the region.

As the Rabbani network matured and expanded across the region, overt diplomatic actions took place simultaneously to increase influence through a burgeoning leftist political movement sweeping the region known as the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA). An essential tenet of ALBA is countering what are deemed the imperial powers of the U.S. and its free-market systems for a system managed by the state.¹²² Mutually aligned objectives and a core belief of counter-U.S. policy objectives reaching back to the early 1980s provided Ayatollah Khomeini the foundation for

¹¹⁹ Douglas Farah, *Back to the Future: Argentina Unravels*. Accessed November 12, 2016, 21–22. http://www.strategycenter.net/docLib/20130227_BacktotheFuture.pdf.

¹²⁰ Humire, *After Nisman*, 8, 16.

¹²¹ "Annex A, Unclassified Summary of Policy Recommendations," Appended to press release, Duncan Releases Statement on the State Department's Report on Iranian Activity and Influence in the Western Hemisphere," June 26, 2013. Accessed on June 1, 2017 at <https://0-www.hSDL.org/?view&did=740788>.

¹²² "Principles of the ALBA," last accessed May 23, 2017, <http://alba-tcp.org/en/contenido/principles-alba>.

regional relationship. This policy was continued under Ayatollah Khamenei under the nationalist agenda of then-President Ahmadinejad. Iran sought these relationships through overt cultural centers and a missionary network that offers education, community and politically based outreach, and various media messaging efforts. These overt efforts helped establish bilateral diplomatic relations, proselytizing of radical Islamic messages to Middle-Eastern diaspora communities and indigenous groups, to “win over, convert, indoctrinate, and radicalize nationals of Latin American Countries.”¹²³

Rabbani’s agents identified the five most prominent and influential Muslim families in Buenos Aires, out of approximately 700, to develop susceptible communities into support networks.¹²⁴ These Argentinian families facilitated establishment of front companies, financial mechanisms, and operational support to Hezbollah, to enable the AMIA and Israeli Embassy bombings.¹²⁵

C. SOURCE DATA AND ANALYSIS

To analyze the Mohsen Rabbani network operating in Argentina, we drew primarily from Joseph Humire’s *After Nisman: How the Death of a Prosecutor Revealed Iran’s Growing Influence in the Americas*, which describes the relationships between each actor and each actor’s role in the network.¹²⁶ Nisman’s *AMIA Case Indictment* was also referenced, particularly for actors involved in the post-AMIA bombing network and the AMIA bombing itself.¹²⁷ This case study serves to analyze how the Rabbani network ties into the greater Pink Tide network through several key actors that were identified as convergence points.

¹²³ *Emerging External Influences in the Western Hemisphere*, 115th Cong. (May 10, 2017) (statement of Dr. Emanuele Ottolenghi, Foundation for Defense of Democracies), 1–2.

¹²⁴ Humire, *After Nisman*, 12.

¹²⁵ Humire, *After Nisman*, 12–13.

¹²⁶ Available at <http://www.securefreesociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/After-Nisman-Report.pdf>.

¹²⁷ Available at http://albertonisman.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/2006-Nisman-indict-AMIA-full-ENG_.pdf.

D. NETWORK TOPOGRAPHY OF THE MOHSEN RABBANI NETWORK

Similar to Chapter Three, before analyzing individual actors within a network, it is important to understand how the network as a whole is structured and operates. Figure 5 displays the sociogram of the Mohsen Rabbani network (green nodes) and how it is connected into the overall Pink Tide network (pink nodes). The nodes in the sociogram are sized by betweenness centrality. Table 3 displays the basic topographical metrics for the Rabbani network as well as the measures of centralization and interconnectedness.¹²⁸

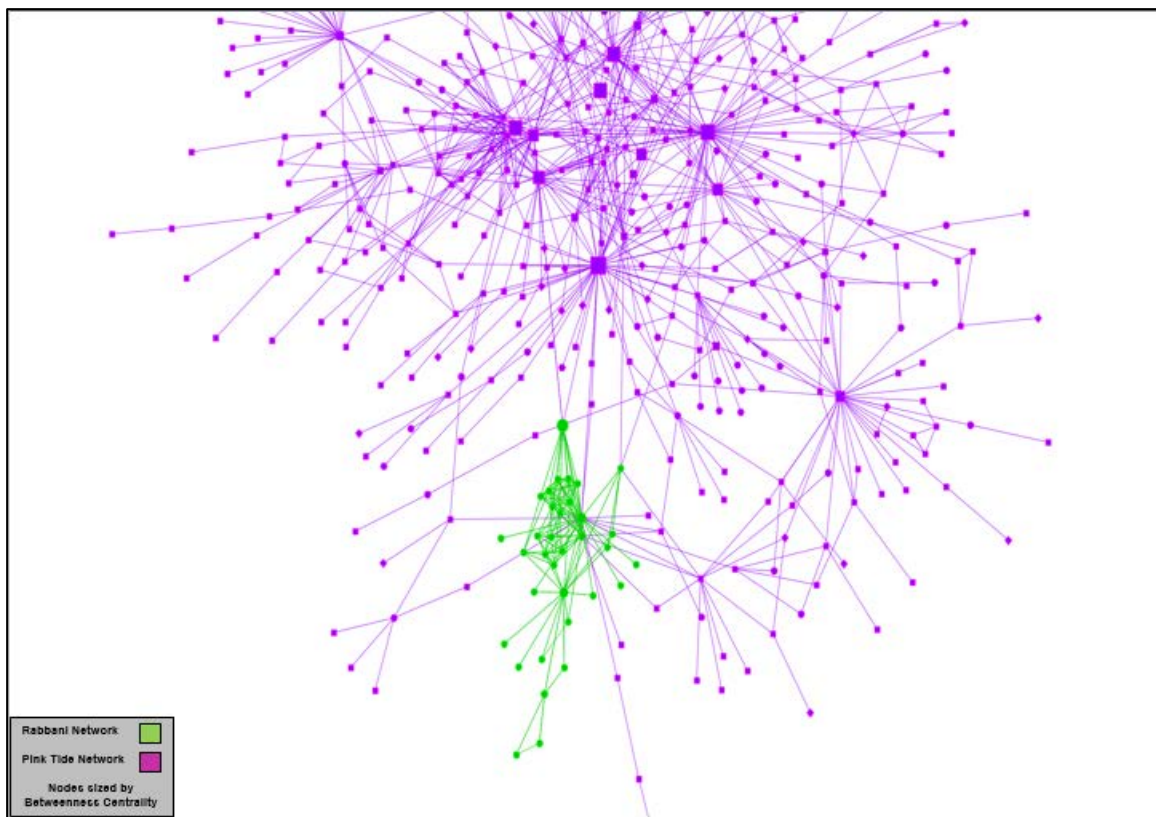


Figure 5. Sociogram depicting the Rabbani Network (in green) and its ties to the overall Pink Tide Network (in pink). The nodes are sized by betweenness centrality. Produced in ORA.

¹²⁸ The measures are defined and discussed in Chapter Three as well as Appendix B.

Table 3. Topography metrics of the aggregated Mohsen Rabbani Network

Basic Metrics	Size	38 Nodes
	Links	249
	Diameter	38.000
Centralization Metrics	Degree Centralization	0.201
	Betweenness Centralization	0.340
	Eigenvector Centralization	0.363
	Closeness Centralization	0.020
Interconnectedness Metrics	Density	0.177
	Average Degree	15.789

Results produced with the standard network analysis report in ORA.

The Rabbani network consists of 38 actors with 249 links between them. This network is moderately decentralized (as displayed in Table 3) by its relatively low degree centralization score of 0.201. However, it is far more centralized than the overall Pink Tide network (discussed in Chapter Three), which received a score of 0.018 or 1.8%. When compared to other terrorist organizations, such as the JI network with a centralization score of 53.75%, one could state that the Rabbani network is moderately decentralized.¹²⁹ Topographical metrics, such as centralization, allow us to analyze a specific network across a spectrum of other networks to begin to determine how the network operated. Each network operates differently when considering their objectives and the environment from which they are operating.

¹²⁹ The Jemaah Islamiyah Network was responsible for bombings in Bali in 2002. Reference Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29 (2006).

The Rabbani network revolves around a few central actors, such as Mohsen Rabbani and other Iranian decision makers. However, the central actors are able to maintain operational security through a decentralized network and operations in a highly covert network. Rabbani recruited key Argentineans from the diaspora communities that kept Iran removed from any implications. The Rabbani network was designed as a covert network that would be activated to conduct one or more terrorist acts (like the 1994 AMIA bombing) when tasked. The Pink Tide network was more decentralized because the network relied on a larger number of licit businesses to act as covers to facilitate illicit operations.

In Stuart Koschade's analysis of the JI network, he noted that the density was 43.38% while the average degree was 6.941.¹³⁰ The Rabbani network scored a 17.7% for density but scored an average degree of 15.789. As discussed in Chapter Three, average degree is used when comparing networks of a different size. The JI network had 18 nodes while the Rabbani network had 38 nodes. Koschade assesses that the JI network was very dense and this caused the network to operate with "lower levels of covertness that this density created."¹³¹

Rabbani in contrast designed his network as a covert network from the initial establishment in 1982 by utilizing cultural, diplomatic and economic covers. He remained removed from the operational planning by utilizing his system of locally recruited Argentineans. The network falls in the spectrum of moderate density, but remained covert and cellular in nature. This provided more operational security and cover for nefarious activities. Rabbani's Network has an average degree score of 15.789 which is relatively high compared to the JI network score of 6.941. Koschade notes that with the JI network "the exposure of one node within the cell would potentially lead to almost seven other nodes..."¹³² If a node in the Rabbani network was exposed, it would lead to almost 16 other nodes within the network. This high average degree is reason why the

¹³⁰ Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 29 (2006), 569.

¹³¹ Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," 570.

¹³² Stuart Koschade, 570.

Rabbani network operated in a more covert manner. Rabbani had to rely on locally recruited agents to provide plausible deniability of any connection to Iran. This covert nature also made it hard for authorities to track and develop a case against the nodes within the network during the investigation after the bombings.

E. CONVERGENCE POINTS BETWEEN THE MOHSEN RABBANI NETWORK AND THE PINK TIDE NETWORK

Rather than analyzing the Rabbani network as a closed system, here we identify several key actors, or convergence points, that connect the Rabbani to Pink Tide networks. These actors served, and continue to serve, as bridges between the Iranian sponsored network and Pink Tide organizations in Latin America such as ALBA. By analyzing these specific actors, the analysis identified the methods of how Rabbani was able to establish a network in the early 1980s that is rooted within Latin America and is postured to conduct nefarious activity.

Figure 6 displays where the key actors are located within the Rabbani network and how they tie into the greater Pink Tide network. The analysis began to see those actors with the most ties to the Pink Tide network by analyzing where the actors were structurally located in the network. These actors consisted of both Iranians and the Argentinean citizens that were co-opted by Rabbani. Two Iranian actors and two Argentinean actors were identified that fell into the category of convergence points.

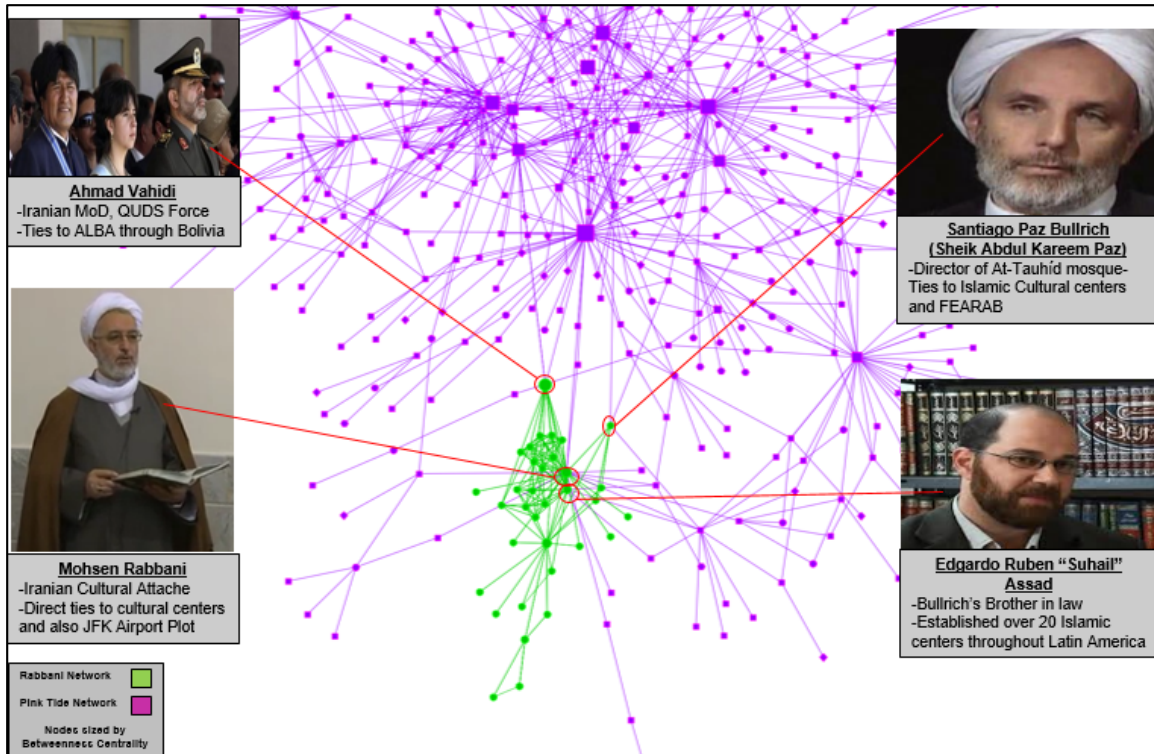


Figure 6. Sociogram of the key actors, or points of convergence connecting the Rabbani Network (in green) to the Pink Tide Network (in pink). Produced in ORA.¹³³

Table 4 displays the measures of centrality for the four actors with the most ties between the Rabbani network and the Pink Tide network and also their overall ranking when compared against other actors within the Rabbani network. The rankings in the network are in parenthesis below each measure.

¹³³ Rabbani Photo Source: "La Prostracion," YouTube video. 0:03. Posted by "Mohsen Rabbani," May 10, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJ3MtQC-yfw>.

Vahidi Photo Source: *Iran's Influence and Activity in Latin America*, Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs (February 16, 2012) (statement of Douglas Farah, Adjunct Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies), 13–14.

Bullrich Photo Source: "Entrevista al Sheij Abdul Karim Paz sobre la masacre en Palestina," YouTube video. 0:01. Posted by "prensaislamica," November 22, 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wCyhog6Eutc>.

Assad Photo Source: "Un viaje con musulmanes latinos- Sheij Suhail," YouTube video. Posted by "HispanTV," July 20, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdUnfmvNHI>.

Table 4. Actor level measures of centrality for actors with the most ties to the Pink Tide Network

Name	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness	Betweenness
Mohsen Rabbani	0.261 (1st)	0.506 (1st)	0.073 (1st)	0.280 (2nd)
Ahmad Vahidi	0.099 (11th)	0.302 (11th)	0.069 (25th)	0.002 (21st)
Santiago Paz Bullrich AKA Sheik Abdul Kareem Paz	0.176 (4th)	0.433 (4th)	0.072 (3rd)	0.082 (4th)
Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad	0.099 (14th)	0.212 (15th)	0.071 (5th)	0.017 (9th)

The parenthesis below the metrics display their rank for that particular metrics against the other actors within the network. Metrics produced in ORA.

The analysis begins with the Iranians that had the most ties from the Rabbani network to the Pink Tide network: Mohsen Rabbani and Ahmad Vahidi. Mohsen Rabbani established the network in Argentina through the guise of cultural and then diplomatic purposes. Rabbani is perhaps the most important figure; he scored highest in three of the four metrics. More importantly, he has ties outside of the network that expand to cultural centers and mosques throughout Latin America. Despite having an Interpol Red Notice issued for his arrest in 2007, Rabbani is still able to exert his influence by bringing disciples to study at Al Mustafa University in Qom.¹³⁴ More recently, Rabbani has been connected to the attempted bombing of the New York JFK International Airport. He reportedly gave direct guidance to the cell, based out of Guyana and Trinidad, to conduct the attacks (refer to Appendix A for a more inclusive listing of operational manifestations of the Mohsen Rabbani network).¹³⁵

Ahmad Vahidi was the commander of the Qods force at the time of the AMIA bombings and he would later rise to become the Minister of Defense for Iran from 2009–2013. Vahidi scores in the lower spectrum on all centrality scores within the Rabbani

¹³⁴ Iván Witker, "The Southern Cone: Iran's Backdoor." *Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America*. Edited by Joseph Humire and Ilan Berman. (Lanham, CT: Lexington Books, 2014), 40; "Interpol Red Notice for Mohsen Rabbani." Accessed August 30, 2017. <https://www.interpol.int/notice/search/wanted/2007-49960>.

¹³⁵ Mark P. Sullivan and June S. Beittel, *Latin America: Terrorism Issues* (CRS Rept No. RS21049) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 21. <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RS21049.pdf>.

network; however, he provided direct assistance to the network as “directed by Iran’s Supreme National Security Council in 1993.”¹³⁶ He was also issued an Interpol Red Notice calling for his arrest in 2007.¹³⁷ Despite this Red Notice, Vahidi travelled to Latin America in his official capacity as the Minister of Defense for Iran when he visited the ALBA Regional Defense School in Bolivia the day before the inauguration in June, 2011. He is seen pictured in the sociogram with Bolivian President, Evo Morales, at the official ceremony.¹³⁸ Ahmad Vahidi has maintained ties to indigenous organizations in the region for over twenty years. Both of these Iranian actors were directly implicated in AMIA bombing plot, according to Alberto Nisman, yet are still able to wield influence in the region.

Next, we analyze two Argentinian citizens that have the most connections from the Rabbani network to the greater Pink Tide network: Santiago Paz Bullrich, also known as “Sheik Abdul Karim Paz,” and his brother in-law, Edgardo Ruben “Suhail” Assad. Bullrich is an Argentinian convert who married into the Assad family, replacing Rabbani at the At-Tauhíd mosque that supported the AMIA bombings.¹³⁹ While Rabbani was grooming him as a prominent local agent, he was further trained and educated at Al-Mustafa International University in Qom, Iran, at a school linked to training and influencing Latin Americans to support Iranian operations. Bullrich also established multiple affiliate mosques throughout the region with the purpose of recruiting and radicalizing Islamic communities.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Matthew Levitt, “Iranian Doublespeak on the Anniversary of the AMIA Bombing,” The Washington Institute. Accessed May 23, 2017, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/iranian-doublespeak-on-the-anniversary-of-the-amia-bombing>.

¹³⁷ “Interpol Red Notice for Ahmad Vahidi.” Accessed August 30, 2017. <https://www.interpol.int/notice/search/wanted/2007-49957>.

¹³⁸ *Iran’s Influence and Activity in Latin America: Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, and Global Narcotics Affairs, Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (February 16, 2012) (statement of Douglas Farah, Adjunct Fellow, Center for Strategic and International Studies).

¹³⁹ *Threat to the Homeland: Iran’s Extending Influence in the Western Hemisphere: Testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency, House of Representatives*, 113th Cong. (July 9, 2013) (statement of Joseph Humire, Center for a Secure and Free Society).

¹⁴⁰ Humire, testimony on *Threat to the Homeland*.

Bullrich's brother-in-law, Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad, is credited with establishing another 20 Islamic centers across the region. Jointly, Bullrich and Assad facilitated (and allegedly still do today) the travels of converts to Qom, Iran, where they are resident instructors with Rabbani at the Iranian religious studies institution.¹⁴¹ In a March 2015 Congressional Testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dardo Lopez-Dolz (former Vice Minister of Interior for Peru in 2006) testified that Assad served a pivotal role in proselytizing communities throughout Latin America and more specifically within Peru through his "skill as a propagandist..."¹⁴² From his analysis, Mr. Lopez-Dolz conjectured that once proselytized, "Latin Americans have intertwined their new Muslim faith with existing militant positions prevalent throughout their communities, adopting the Iranian and Bolivarian (ALBA) mission to "liberate the oppressed" in their country."¹⁴³ Assad has created a model to expand his influence throughout the region, beginning in Argentina in the early 1990s, that is still operating today, joining the nationalist leftist agendas of Latin American countries with Iranian expansion in the region against Western influence.

While Bullrich scores higher than Assad in terms of all four centrality scores, they both played pivotal roles in the network as Rabbani's local agents. Both Bullrich and Assad are prime examples of local actors coopted by Rabbani to connect Iran to Latin America.

F. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE MOHSEN RABBANI NETWORK ANALYSIS

By analyzing this historical case study, this research was able to identify how Mohsen Rabbani was able to coopt Latin Americans with ties to indigenous organizations

¹⁴¹ *Emerging External Influences in the Western Hemisphere: Testimony before the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 117th Cong. (May 10, 2017) (statement of Dr. Emanuele Ottolenghi, Foundation for Defense of Democracies).*

¹⁴² *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere: Testimony Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere & Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, 113th Cong. (March 18, 2015) (statement of Mr. Dardo Lopez-Dolz, former Vice Minister of Interior (2006) and President of PKS Consultants).*

¹⁴³ Lopez-Dolz, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

in the early 1980s in way that led to a major terrorist attack in 1994. More importantly, Rabbani's network is still active today as displayed by his ties to key actors like Santiago Paz Bullrich, also known as "Abdul Karim Paz," and his brother in-law, Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad. Despite being on watch lists and having his travel restricted, Rabbani is still able to penetrate into the region through these local actors. Furthermore, Bullrich and Assad, through the mechanism of religious proselytization, have been able to connect indigenous organizations, like ALBA and the Pink Tide, that are complimentary to Iranian objectives of countering American interests in Latin America.

V. THE TARECK EL AISSAMI NETWORK

A. INTRODUCTION: WHO IS TARECK EL AISSAMI?

Perhaps the most salient example of the convergence between the populist-leftist Pink Tide movement and transnational, transregional threat networks is Tareck El Aissami, the current Vice President of Venezuela. The United States Department of Treasury designated Tareck El Aissami “as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker” in February of 2017 and alleged that El Aissami is responsible for facilitating narcotics trafficking through his vast governmental, commercial, and illicit networks.¹⁴⁴ However, the February 2017 sanctions for drug trafficking and money laundering were not the first allegations of ties to illicit networks; certain U.S. foreign policy experts have testified that El Aissami also had tangential ties to terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah.¹⁴⁵

Prior to assuming the Vice Presidency, El Aissami was the deputy director for the Venezuelan office known as Onidex, which was charged with producing Venezuelan passports, identification cards, border controls. He later served as the Minister of Interior and Justice from 2007 to 2012, and Governor of Aragua from 2012 to 2017. Certain journalists have asserted that El Aissami’s rapid rise to power comes from close personal ties to Adan Chávez Frias, the older brother of Hugo Chávez.¹⁴⁶ During his time in the Venezuelan government, El Aissami purportedly facilitated funds transfers to Hezbollah in the Middle East, and assisted foreign fighters entering into Latin America that are now operating throughout the region.¹⁴⁷ He also allegedly provided over 10,000 official

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions Prominent Venezuelan Drug Trafficker Tareck El Aissami and His Primary Frontman Samark Lopez Bello,” February 13, 2017. Accessed August 29, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/as0005.aspx>.

¹⁴⁵ Roger Noreiga, *Prepared Statement of Ambassador Roger F. Noreiga Before the United States Senate*, February 16, 2012. Accessed October 24, 2017, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-112shrg73922/html/CHRG-112shrg73922.htm> and Matthew Levitt, *Threat to the Homeland: Written Testimony before House Committee on Homeland Security Subcommittee on Oversight and Management* July 9, 2013. Accessed October 24, 2017, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/testimony/LevittTestimony20130709-House.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ Di Stasio, Alessandro, “Tareck El Aissami, de gobernador a vicepresidente de la Republica,” *Efecto Cocuyo* January 4, 2017. Accessed August 29, 2017, <http://efectococuyo.com/politica/tareck-el-aiissami-de-gobernador-a-vicepresidente-de-la-republica>.

¹⁴⁷ Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

Venezuelan passports out illegally, predominantly through the Venezuelan Embassy in Syria.¹⁴⁸ A high-level Venezuelan diplomat in Syria and associate of El Aissami, Ghazi Nasr al Din, was also indicted by OFAC for providing material support to Hezbollah through financing and passport scheme, facilitating the establishment of a Hezbollah based community center in Venezuela, “and meeting with Hezbollah officials in Lebanon to discuss operational issues, kidnappings and terrorist attacks.”¹⁴⁹ As we illuminated the breadth and depth of Tareck El Aissami’s ties and relationships to different groups, individuals, and organizations, we realized the criticality of identifying key nodes and ties.

B. SOURCE DATA

The source data was drawn primarily from the U.S. Department of Treasury Sanctions reports, which identify associates of El Aissami and organizations tied to El Aissami through money laundering and drug trafficking. Additionally, Spanish-language political websites and blogs provided additional information, primarily on El Aissami’s familial ties and relationships.¹⁵⁰

C. NETWORK TOPOGRAPHY OF THE EL AISSAMI NETWORK

After performing the network topographical analysis of the El Aissami network, we determined that the analysis is potentially skewed toward subgroups of the network. Certain subgroups within El Aissami’s network have been fully illuminated through investigative journalism and judicial indictments, while opaque parts of the network do

¹⁴⁸ “Venezuela illegally issued 10,000 passports to Syrians, Iranians, report says.” *Fox News*, April 17, 2017. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/04/17/venezuela-illegally-issued-10000-passports-to-syrians-iranians-report-says.html>.

¹⁴⁹ *Deepening political and Economic Crisis in Venezuela: Implications for U.S. Interests and the Western Hemisphere: testimony to the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women’s Issues, Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, 114th Cong. (March 17, 2015) (statement of Douglas Farah, President IBI Consultants).

¹⁵⁰ Jose Brechner, “Crece la influencia islámica en América Latina,” Accessed September 7, 2017, <http://www.neoliberalismo.com/influencia-islamica.htm>, Emily Avendano, “La biografía prohibida de Tareck El Aissami,” February 16, 2017. Accessed September 7, 2017, <http://elestimulo.com/climax/la-biografia-prohibida-de-tareck-el-aissami/>, Alek Boyd, “Who is Tareck El Aissami?” November 14, 2013. Accessed September 4, 2017, <http://infodio.com/141113/who/is/tareck/el/aissami>, “¿Quién es en realidad Tarek El Aissami?” December 15, 2015. Accessed September 7, 2017, <http://vivavenezuelalibre.blogspot.com/2015/12/quien-es-en-realidad-tarek-el-aissami.html>.

not have high centrality scores due to the paucity of information on those actors and organizations. Figure 7 displays the sociogram of the El Aissami network and Table 5 displays the topographical metrics for the network. Compared to the JI network and the Rabbani network analyzed in Chapter Four, the El Aissami network appears to be decentralized.¹⁵¹

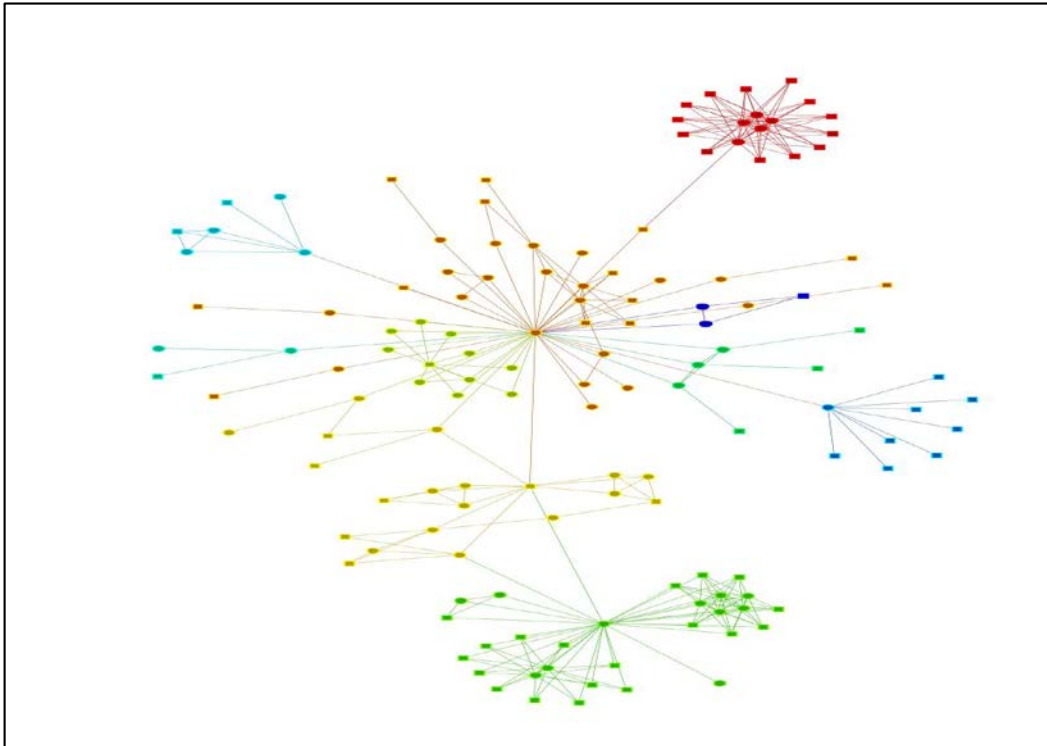


Figure 7. Sociogram of the El Aissami Network with nodes colored by Girvan-Newman group. Produced in ORA.

¹⁵¹ The Jemaah Islamiyah Network was responsible for bombings in Bali in 2002. Reference Stuart Koschade, "A Social Network Analysis of Jemaah Islamiyah: The Applications to Counterterrorism and Intelligence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006).

Table 5. Topography metrics of the El Aissami Network

Basic Metrics	Size	71 Nodes
	Links	199
	Diameter	26.000
Centralization Metrics	Degree Centralization	0.045
	Betweenness Centralization	0.851
	Eigenvector Centralization	0.600
	Closeness Centralization	0.257
Interconnectedness Metrics	Density	0.080
	Average Degree	0.045

Results produced with the standard network analysis report in ORA.

As noted by Cunningham, Everton, et al., the size of a dark network may only reflect the known boundaries determined by the analyst, and not the true size of the network.¹⁵² The El Aissami network falls in this category simply because only small portions of the network, mainly drug trafficking networks already sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Treasury, have been illuminated and explored. This affects the metrics of network topography: for example, the El Aissami network appears to have a relatively low average degree, compared to both the JI network and the Rabbani network, which would indicate that the network is not highly interconnected. This could be a consequence of El Aissami's structural position at the convergence between several different networks; he is connected to illicit narcotics trafficking networks, Iranian-sponsored terrorist networks, and legitimate networks inside the government of Venezuela which are highly connected in-and-of themselves, but not too each other.

¹⁵² Cunningham, Everton, and Murphy. *Understanding Dark Networks*, 89.

This is supported by Cunningham, Everton et al, who state, “networks that adopt a cell-like structure can be locally dense but globally sparse, which a measure like average degree cannot, at least by itself, capture.”¹⁵³ However, the low average degree score could also be a result of the opaque nature of the El Aissami network as a whole; there could be ties or nodes bridging different sub-groups of his network that are simply not illuminated yet. Until analysts expose more of El Aissami’s network, the analytic results in this case study are tentative and exploratory.

D. CENTRALITY ANALYSIS OF THE EL AISSAMI NETWORK AND POINTS OF CONVERGENCE

In the case of the El Aissami network (visualized in Figure 8), much of it remains in the dark, and is not fully illuminated. In the course of our research, the only aspects of the El Aissami network that were fully disclosed were organizations that the U.S. government has sanctioned, and individuals discussed in Venezuelan political websites. Consequently, the node centrality analysis is skewed towards nodes such as Ayman Saied Joumaa, who was indicted in 2011 and the extent of his drug trafficking network sanctioned by the U.S. government (metrics displayed in Table 6).¹⁵⁴ In order to determine how the El Aissami network fits with the overall Pink Tide network, we instead looked at points of convergence between the two networks.

¹⁵³ Cunningham, Everton, and Murphy, 88.

¹⁵⁴ Department of Treasury, “Treasury Sanctions Maritime Network Tied to Joumaa Criminal Organization,” October 1, 2015. Accessed September 7, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl0196.aspx>.



Figure 8. Sociogram depicting El Aissami network (blue nodes) connected to the overall Pink Tide network (pink).Produced in ORA.

Table 6. Measures of centrality for the top five central actors of the El Aissami network.

Name	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness	Betweenness
Tareck El Aissami	.049 (1 st)	0.098 (6 th)	0.359 (1 st)	0.861 (1 st)
Ayman Saied Joumaa	0.031 (2 nd)	0.003 (Tie- 11 th)	0.300 (2 nd)	0.263 (2 nd)
Francisco Lautaro Valez Quispe	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.644 (1 st)	0.063 (Tie- 71 st)	-
Nelson Jose Moreno Araujo	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.635 (Tie- 2 nd)	0.063 (Tie- 71 st)	-
Juan Manuel Aguirre Chuecos	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.635 (Tie- 2 nd)	0.063 (Tie- 71 st)	-

The parenthesis below the metrics display their rank for that particular metrics against the other actors within the network. Metrics produced in ORA.

1. Points of Convergence: The Hezbollah Group

One notable point of convergence between the El Aissami network and the overarching Pink Tide network is Tareck El Aissami's indirect connection to the Iranian-sponsored terrorist group, Hezbollah (Figure 9 displays where Hezbollah is located in the sociogram). Although the centrality measures of these three actors are not exceedingly high (see Table 7), their structural location as a broker between the two networks is noteworthy. Because of their structural location, these actors serve as the cut-outs between Tareck El Aissami and Hezbollah. Lebanese national and explosives expert Abdul Ghani Suleiman Wanked is a close confidant of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, and is physically located in Venezuela helping to train Hezbollah recruits.¹⁵⁵ According to The Center for Security Policy, Suleiman Wanked, Rada Ramel Assad and Abouchanab Daichoum Dani all came to Venezuela with temporary Visas granted and approved by El Aissami, in his role as the head of Onidex.¹⁵⁶ Allegedly, all three Hezbollah operatives were part of Tareck El Aissami's plans to recruit "Venezuelan Arabs to train in Hezbollah camps in southern Lebanon."¹⁵⁷ All three Hezbollah agents have relatively high centrality scores, which could indicate that they are potentially influential in other areas of the network.

¹⁵⁵ Nicole Ferrand, "Venezuela's Tarek El-Aissami," October 3, 2008. Accessed August 30, 2017, <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2008/10/03/venezuelas-tarek-el-aissami-2/>.

¹⁵⁶ Perdue, Jon B. *The War of All the People: The Nexus of Latin American Radicalism and Middle Eastern Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2012), 210–211.

¹⁵⁷ Matthew Levitt, "South of The Border, a Threat from Hezbollah," *Journal of International Security Affairs*. Accessed August 31, 2017, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Levitt20130515-JISA.pdf>.

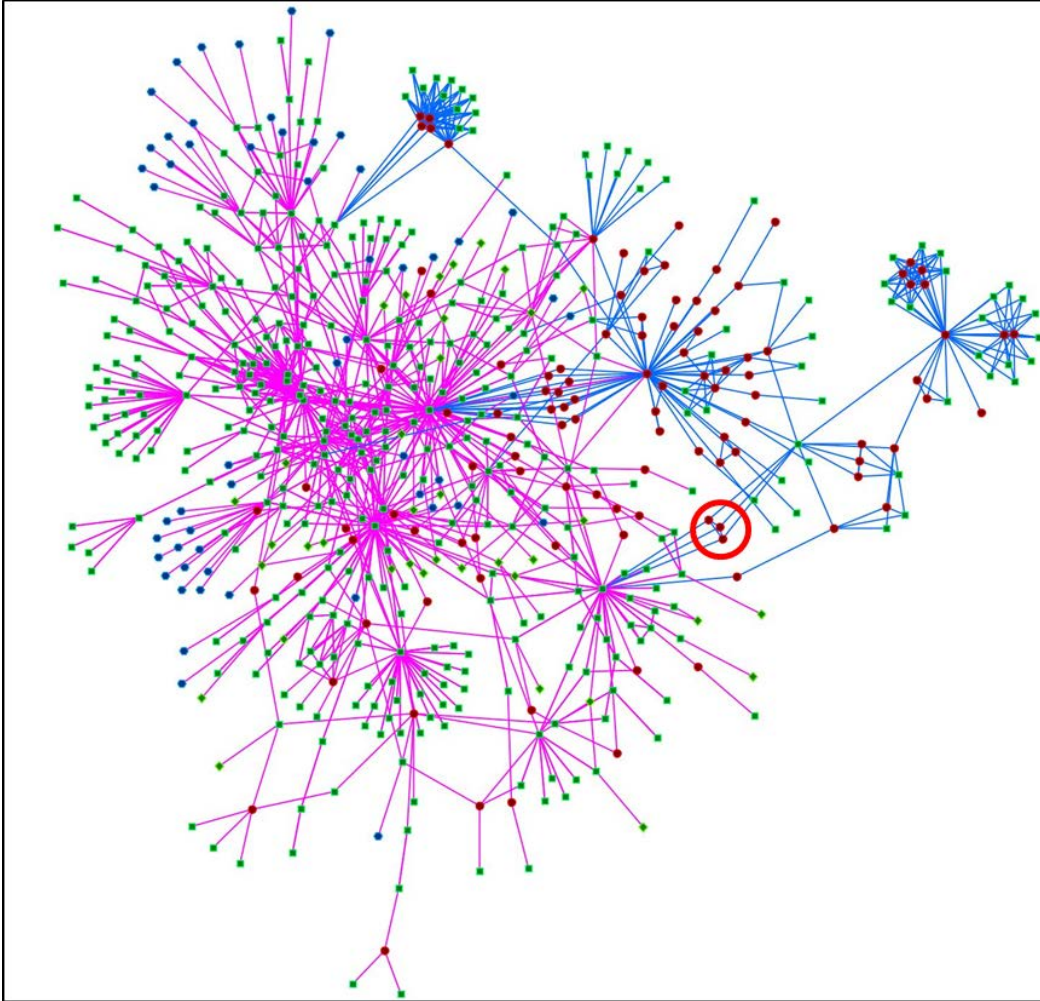


Figure 9. El Aissami network (blue) displayed with Pink Tide network (pink). Circled nodes connect to the Hezbollah organization in the Pink Tide network. Produced in ORA.

Table 7. Actor level measures of centrality for actors tied to Hezbollah organization in the Pink Tide network and Tareck El Aissami in the El Aissami network.

Name	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness	Betweenness
Abdul Ghani Suleiman Wanked	0.06 (Tied-18 th)	0.003 (Tied- 13 th)	0.287 (Tied- 6 th)	0.007 (Tied- 13 th)
Rada Ramel Assad	0.06 (Tied- 18 th)	0.003 (Tied- 13 th)	0.287 (Tied- 6 th)	0.007 (Tied- 13 th)
Abouchanab Daichoum Dani	0.06 (Tied- 18 th)	0.003 (Tied- 13 th)	0.287 (Tied- 6 th)	0.007 (Tied- 13 th)

The parenthesis below the metrics display their rank for that particular metrics against the other actors within the El Aissami network. Metrics produced in ORA.

2. Points of Convergence: The Associate Network

Another point of convergence between the two networks is Tareck El Aissami's Associate network. It is considered a subgroup of El Aissami's friends network and does not have any direct ties to El Aissami himself.¹⁵⁸ According to investigative journalists, this subgroup controls several Venezuelan companies and launders money through large banks, including Banco Occidental de Descuento, Banco Mercantil, Banco Central de Venezuela, and Regionsbank in Miami. It also operates the mechanism for moving financial assets out of Venezuela.¹⁵⁹ While the individual centrality metrics for these nodes are not especially high (as displayed in Table 8), the structural location of these nodes shows their indirect relationship to Tareck El Aissami and their ties to large financial institutions in the Pink Tide network (as displayed in Figure 10), indicates they could be in a position of influence of brokerage. Although the disparate types of nodes in these two networks preclude the use of traditional SNA metrics, the visual analysis indicates that the associate network could function as a potential boundary spanner.

¹⁵⁸ Alek Boyd, "Who is Tareck El Aissami?" November 14, 2013. Accessed September 4, 2017, <http://infodio.com/141113/who/is/tareck/el/aissami>.

¹⁵⁹ Rafael Rivero Muñoz, "'Torpedo Tareck Zaidam El Aissami Maddah,'" September 22, 2014. Accessed September 6, 2017, <https://riverom.wordpress.com/2014/09/22/torpedoi-tareck-zaidam-el-aissami-maddah/>.

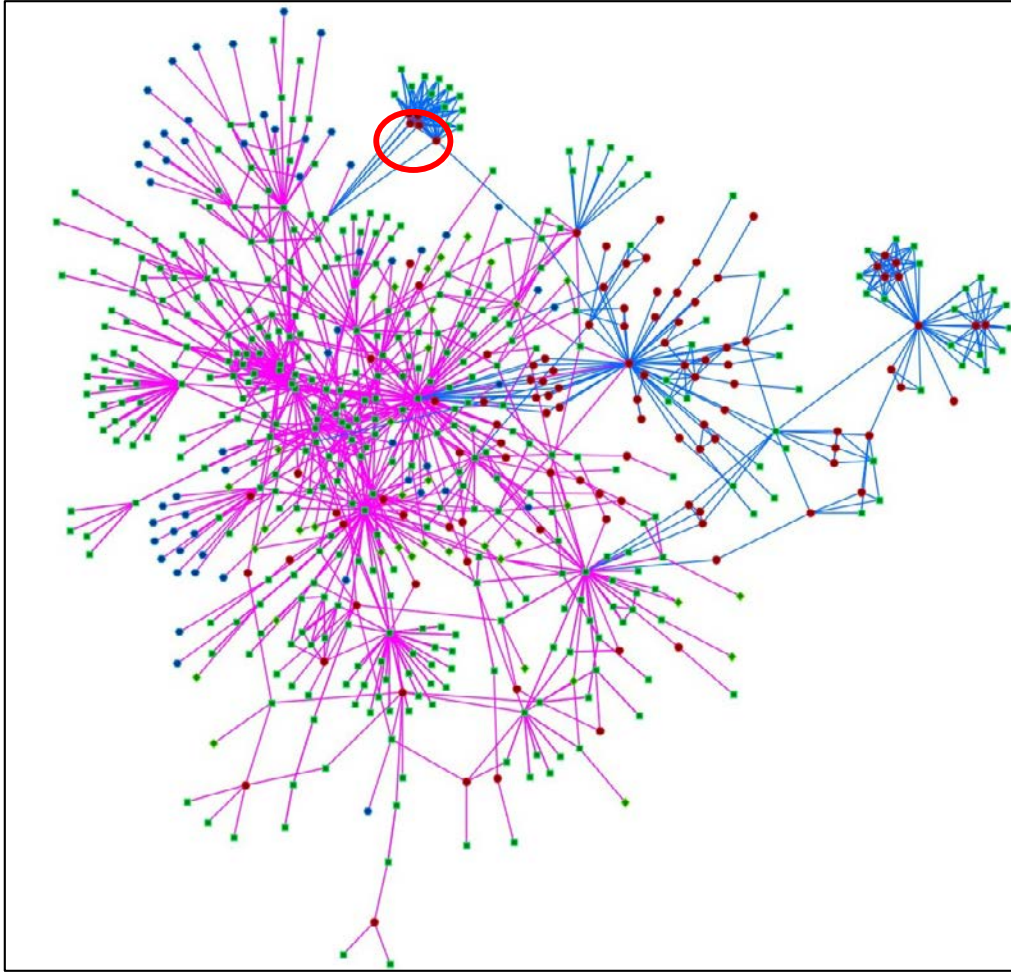


Figure 10. El Aissami network (blue) displayed with Pink Tide network (pink). Circled nodes connect to the Associate network in the El Aissami network. Produced in ORA.

Table 8. Actor-level measures of centrality for actors tied to Associate Network in the El Aissami Network.

Name	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness
Nelson José Moreno Araujo	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.635 (Tied- 2 nd)	0.063 (Tied- 69 th)
Juan Manuel Aguirre Chuecos	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.635 (Tied- 2 nd)	0.063 (Tied- 69 th)
Blas Lorenzo Román Torres	0.022 (7 th)	0.616 (5 th)	0.067 (67 th)
Francisco Lautaro Vélez Quispe	0.023 (Tie- 3 rd)	0.644 (1 st)	0.063 (Tied- 69 th)

The parenthesis below the metrics display their rank for that particular metrics against the other actors within the El Aissami network. Metrics produced in ORA.

3. Points of Convergence: Organizations

Several organizations are also points of convergence between the El Aissami network and the overall Pink Tide network (as displayed in Figure 11). Most notably, Tareck El Aissami is tied PDVAL, or *Producción y Distribución Venezolana de Alimentos*. “PDVAL, the new PDVSA food subsidiary created by President Hugo Chávez, was launched in order to fight food hoarding” and operates a food distribution network throughout Venezuela with close ties to different sections of the Venezuelan government.¹⁶⁰ “PDVAL’s launching included the participation of the National Armed Forces, the Agriculture and Food Ministries, Mercal, the Bolivarian Missions, and electricity companies to guarantee PDVAL’s success.”¹⁶¹ El Aissami is tied to PDVAL through George Kabboul Abdelnour, who served as the chief executive of Bariven S.A., a PDVSA-subsidary corporation responsible for procurement.¹⁶² George Kabboul Abdelnour was the highest scoring boundary spanner potential in the El Aissami network, and is allegedly responsible for corruption and influence peddling in PDVAL’s food acquisition process.¹⁶³ El Aissami’s direct ties to allegedly corrupt officials and his access to a nationwide distribution network indicate this is a potentially influential relationship.

¹⁶⁰ PDVSA, “Venezuelan Government Launches New States Food Company,” January 22, 2008. Accessed September 6, 2017, <https://venezuelanalysis.com/newsbrief/3091>.

¹⁶¹ PDVSA, “Venezuelan Government Launches New States Food Company.”

¹⁶² Bloomberg, “Company Overview of Bariven S.A.,” Accessed September 6, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/private/snapshot.asp?privcapid=25550441>.

¹⁶³ RUNRUNES, “CORRUPCIÓN DE ALIMENTOS EN PDVAL,” May 6, 2010. Accessed September 6, 2017, <http://runrun.es/runrunes-de-bocaranda/runrunes/1492/mas-evidencias-de-corrupcion-de-alimentos-en-pdvs.html>.

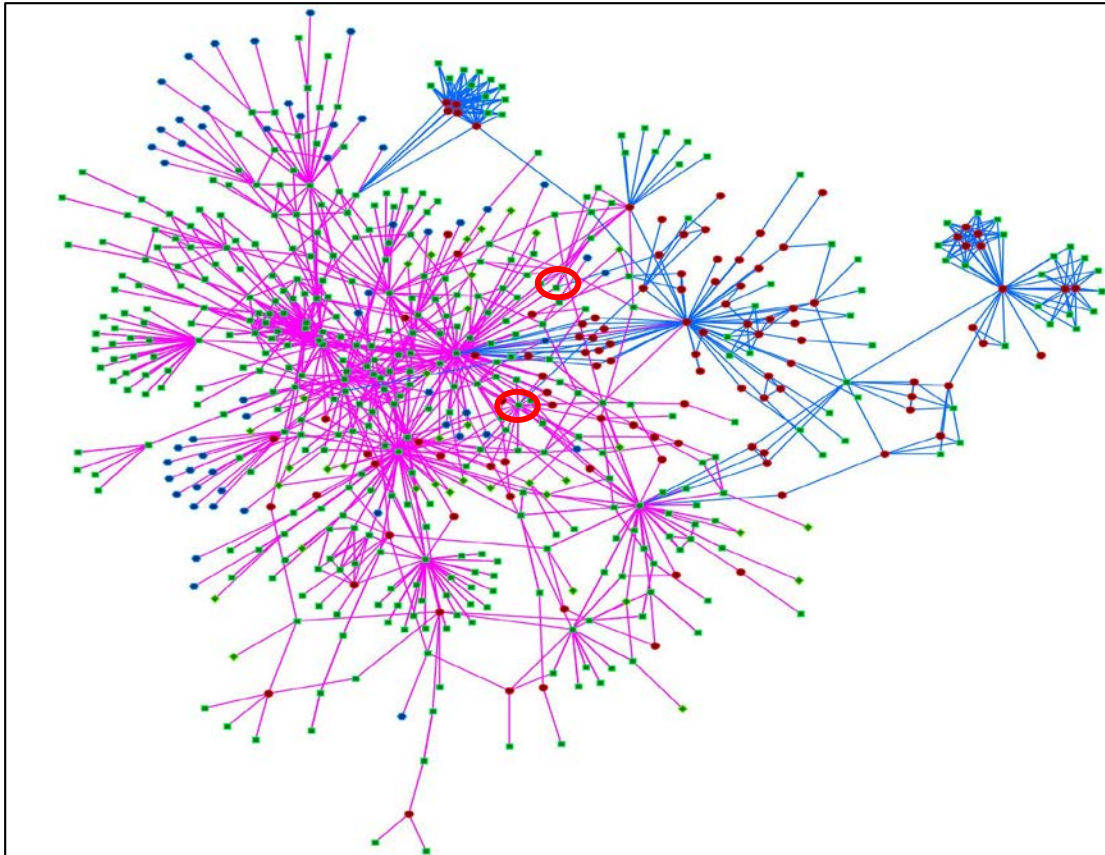


Figure 11. El Aissami network (blue) displayed with Pink Tide network (pink). Circled nodes are the PDVAL organization and the FARC. Produced in ORA.

Tareck El Aissami has also been linked to the FARC, a leftist guerrilla movement that fought the Colombian government for over fifty years before the recently concluded peace agreement. El Aissami is tied to Jose Luis Merino, a Salvadoran businessman, politician, and former *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) guerrilla leader who allegedly launders money for both the FARC and El Aissami's Yakima Trading Corporation.¹⁶⁴ The U.S. Department of Treasury included El Aissami's Yakima Trading Corporation on the list of corporations receiving sanctions in January

¹⁶⁴ Maibort Petit, "Vinculan a Tareck El Aissami con poderoso empresario salvadoreño José Luis Merino," August 24, 2017. Accessed September 6, 2017, <http://maibortpetit.blogspot.com/2017/08/vinculan-tareck-el-aissami-con-poderoso.html>.

2017.¹⁶⁵ The Venezuelan government has frequently been accused of both tacit and overt support to the FARC; as recently as 2009, the Venezuelan government allegedly provided shoulder-launched anti-tank missiles to the FARC.¹⁶⁶ El Aissami's relationship with Merino and the FARC is indicative of how El Aissami's official role in the Venezuelan government blends with his connections to T3N and drug trafficking organizations. Noted Latin America expert Doug Farah noted that the ALBA states and leaders who support the FARC "reaps enormous profits from the drug trade... and keeps an armed ally or proxy force on call," which will be even more critical for El Aissami's continued political survival as the ongoing turmoil in Venezuela continues.¹⁶⁷

4. Points of Convergence: Venezuelan Government

Finally, El Aissami's access and influence are also reinforced by ties to family, friends, and associates within the government of Venezuela, in spite of recent U.S. sanctions. Although the actors directly tied to both El Aissami and Venezuelan government did not score particularly high in terms of centrality measures in our analysis of the Pink Tide network and the El Aissami networks, their structural location represent a critical bridge for connecting El Aissami network to other parts of the Pink Tide network. Although their government position may have changed, Haiman El Troudi Douwara served as the Minister of People's Power for Planning and Development; Haitam Sabek El Hani, the Director General of the Surveillance and Private Security Services of the Ministry of People's Power for Internal Affairs and Justice; Hind Anderi, the Ministry of Commerce and Information; Kamal Naim, the President of the Legislative Council of the Bolivar State; Radwan Sabbagh Achkar the President of Ferrominera Orinoco; Rafio Souki Rincon his Deputy; Raid Douglas Saab Halabi, the Executive of the Government of Anzoátegui; Soraya Beatriz Achkar Gousoub, the Executive Secretary of

¹⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Treasury, "Treasury Sanctions Prominent Venezuelan Drug Trafficker Tareck El Aissami and His Primary Frontman Samark Lopez Bello," February 13, 2017. Accessed August 29, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/as0005.aspx>.

¹⁶⁶ CNN, "Colombia: FARC arms traced to Venezuela." July 28, 2009. Accessed September 6, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/07/27/colombia.venezuela.arms/>.

¹⁶⁷ Doug Farah, "Convergence in Criminalized States," Ch. 8 in *Beyond Convergence*, eds. Hilary Matfess and Michael Miklaucic (Washington, D.C.: Center for Complex Operations, 2016), 189.

the General Police Council; Tarek Willians Saab Halabi, the Governor of Anzoátegui; Thaer Hasan Abdilhadi, his Deputy; Uasim Azam El Troudi Douwara, the Head of the State Employment Agency Barinas; Wiliem Asskoul Saab, the cousin of Tarek, Ministry for Sport.¹⁶⁸

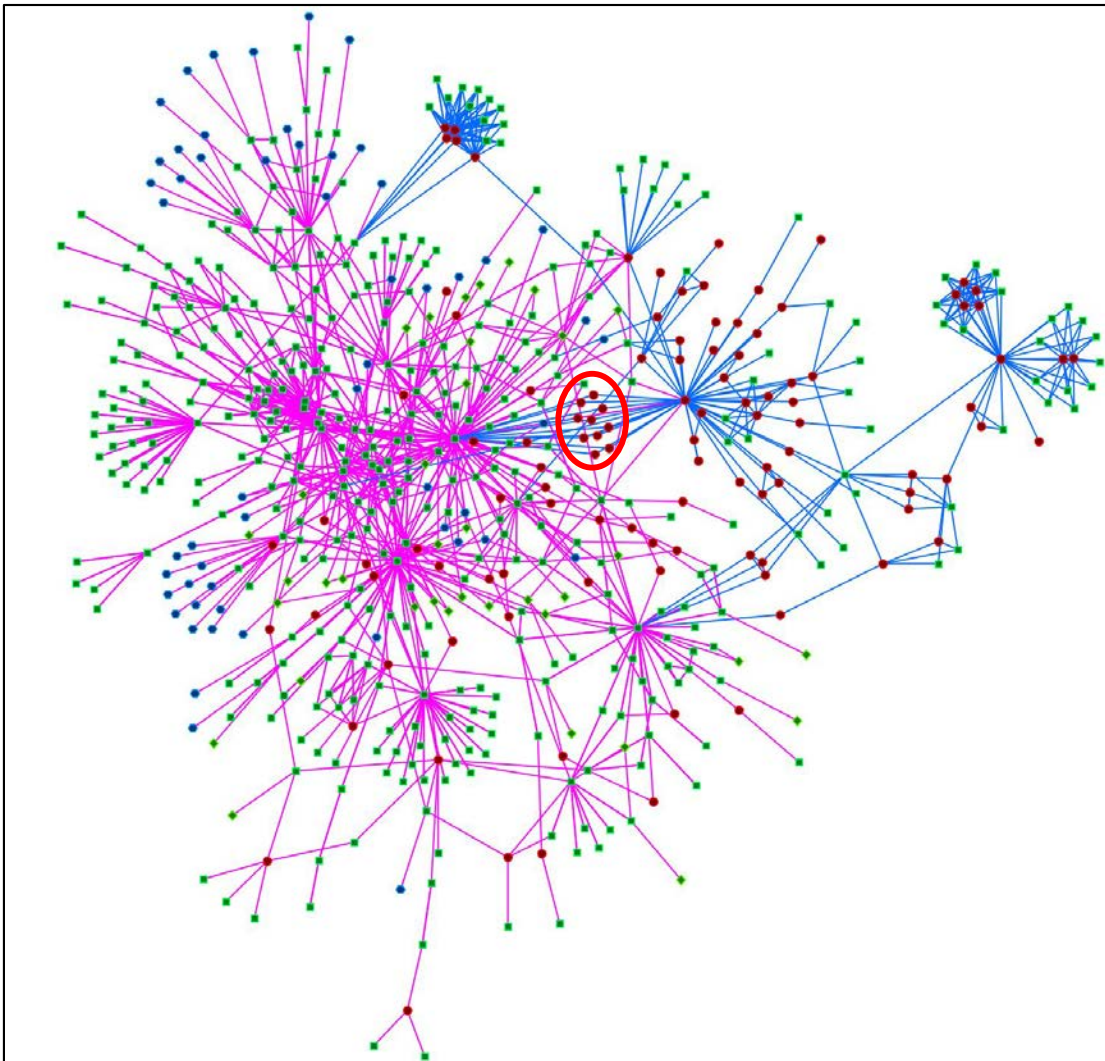


Figure 12. El Aissami network (blue) Displayed with Pink Tide network (pink).Circled nodes are the tied to both the Government of Venezuela and Tareck El Aissami. Produced in ORA.

¹⁶⁸ Jose Brechner, “Crece la influencia islámica en América Latina,” Accessed September 7, 2017, <http://www.neoliberalismo.com/influencia-islamica.htm>.

Table 9. Actor-level measures of centrality for actors tied to the Government of Venezuela in the Pink Tide network and Tareck El Aissami in the El Aissami network.

Name	Degree	Eigenvector	Closeness
Haiman El Troudi Douwara	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Haitam Sabek El Hani	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Hind Anderi	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Kamal Naim Naim	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Raid Douglas Saab Halabi	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Soraya Beatriz Achkar Gousoub	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Tarek Willians Saab Halabi	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Uasim Azam El Troudi Douwara	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)
Williem Asskoul Saab	0.004 (Tie- 26 th)	0.002 (Tied- 23 rd)	0.275 (Tied- 13 th)

The parenthesis below the metrics display their rank for that particular metrics against the other actors within the El Aissami network. Metrics produced in ORA.

E. CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EL AISSAMI NETWORK ANALYSIS

Tareck El Aissami appears to be a critical node of the Pink Tide network because he is a key point of convergence in both the greater Pink Tide network and in his network of illicit ties to people and organizations. He lies at the intersection between the opaque T3N, drug trafficking organizations, leftist political movements, corrupt criminal elements, and the Venezuelan government, and is an important figure because his personal ties and relationships bridge the different parts of the network. As the vice-president of Venezuela, El Aissami wields considerable influence over the Pink Tide movement, and his prolific ties to the T3N mean that the recent U.S. sanctions will have little effect on his reach throughout the Pink Tide network. In order to deal with his influence, policy officials must understand the vast extent of his network. The analysis demonstrates that El Aissami’s influence potentially extends much further than the actors and organizations impacted by the U.S. sanctions, and only by identifying the brokers and

influential actors in his subnetwork can the OFAC sanctions successfully mitigate El Aissami's influence in the Pink Tide.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The rising political power and regional influence of the Pink Tide network will have lasting implications for U.S. policy in Latin America. While many of the populist-leftist governments within the Pink Tide have shifted politically towards the center, the strong relationship ties amongst the individuals, corporations, political movements, and T3N built during the height of the Pink Tide appear to endure, regardless of the political leaning of the government in power. Our social network analysis of the Pink Tide network suggests that, the government of Venezuela has particularly leveraged the structural location of petrochemical companies in order to further extend the reach and influence of the Pink Tide movement, and create enduring relationships and ties. In many cases, the Pink Tide simply built upon pre-existing transregional, ideological pathways between T3N or leftist organizations with parallel interests or simply a mutual aversion to U.S. policy and influence in the region. While the central organizations in the Pink Tide movement have overt, public presence, the transitory and opaque nature of many subsidiary and affiliated organizations makes illuminating the extent of the Pink Tide network difficult.

Our social network analysis of the Pink Tide network ultimately consisted of 796 unique links amongst 345 different nodes. The centrality analysis of the Pink Tide confirmed our initial assumptions regarding the high centrality of Iran, due to Iran's close ties to several of the Pink Tide governments, projects, events, and organizations. We also determined that the petrochemical organizations, such as PDVSA, PDV Caribe, and PetroAmerica are also highly central within their network. These organizations serve as ALBA's primary mechanism for reaching bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements, place influence and leverage on smaller member nations, and are closely tied to the governments of Venezuela and Iran.

Furthermore, the spatial analysis of Iranian influence in Latin America determined that the extent of Pink Tide organizations in a country, is highly correlated with the magnitude of Iranian sponsored organizations and projects. The Iranian correlation indicates that the Pink Tide is a conduit for external regional influence and an

avenue for adversarial countries to apply pressure on the U.S. closer to home. Our analysis of the Pink Tide network identified two key points of convergence between Latin American populist-leftist movements and Iranian influence: the Mohsen Rabbani network, and the Tareck El Aissami network.

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RABBANI AND EL AISSAMI CASE NETWORKS

The social network analysis of the Rabbani network identified how Rabbani built a complex network of Iranian agents with ties to local, indigenous organizations in the early 1980s that directly led to the 1992 Israeli Embassy and 1994 AMIA bombings in Argentina. Even more critically, our analysis of the Rabbani network proved to be a potent conduit of how Iran is building influence and covert capability throughout the region. The Rabbani network, was not developed as a result of a crisis or an immediate response to the political environment, but was built slowly and methodically over time. The operational network for the Argentina bombings took over 10 years to develop before the bombings. It highlighted the strategic nature of Iran's network development. This network was used as the main platform for regional infiltration as it matured over time. The development of the Rabbani network was larger than just Argentina bombings, as it supported a larger Iranian government program to gain influence in the region. The network and its executors, were highly adaptable and astute to coopt preexisting organic movements such as ALBA to gain legitimized and expedited network effects at the strategic level. The network also identified isolated or disenfranchised indigenous and Muslim diaspora communities at the operational and tactical levels, which were ultimately demonstrated in the Iranian ability to operate Qods and Hezbollah sub-networks within the continental U.S. and recruit U.S. citizens for maligned ends.

Despite a mixed record of operational successes, the network as a whole is a salient demonstration of an effective covert network across a region, as it has remained operational for over thirty years. The Iranian Rabbani network has become one of the most significant threats to U.S. regional influence, and allows Iran to wield a considerable influence. Connections from the Rabbani network enabled the circumnavigation of stringent international sanctions and mitigating their effects through

developed Latin American partners. Examples of some tangible measures of effectiveness are demonstrated through the deep connections of the network that enabled suppression of the AMIA investigation for decades and the effective expulsion of a crucial DEA program in Ecuador in 2009, only to be replaced by IRGC influence, training, and coordination.¹⁶⁹ Fundamentally, the enduring nature of the network and its resiliency to continue operations and influence despite failed operations is perhaps the most effective measure of success.

The enduring nature of the Iranian influence within the region was also demonstrated in our analysis of the Tareck El Aissami network. El Aissami serves as a critical point of convergence in the greater Pink Tide network, and within his own subnetwork. El Aissami lies at a key seam between licit and illicit aspects of the network. His relationships to important actors and organizations, ranging from T3N to main-stream political parties are noteworthy because the sheer number of ties and relationships indicate that U.S. sanctions will not have a significant effect. Initial U.S. sanctions against El Aissami were enacted close to a year ago, and yet he remains the vice-president of Venezuela, a highly influential actor in the Pink Tide. If Rabbani's covert network is a salient example of over thirty years of Iranian infiltration and influence peddling in Latin America, Tareck El Aissami's network represents the future of Iranian and Hezbollah influence in the region. El Aissami's overt relationship and diplomatic support to Iranian officials indicates a new phase in the Iranian model and a state to state integration of mutually supportive policy strategies as a counterweight against the U.S.

B. CONVERGENCE POINTS

We also illuminated other significant points of convergence in key financial support areas. Perhaps one of the most revealing discoveries was the pervasive and integral nature of Hezbollah and its ties throughout the Rabbani network and into the Venezuelan government. These connections facilitated millions of dollars of international

¹⁶⁹ Joshua Brandon and David Gray, "Iran's Foothold in Latin America: Striking Back at the United States," *Global Security Studies* 6, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 21.

financing for the terrorist organization's international efforts, local funding and logistical support for terrorist operations in Latin America, and many uncharted ties to drug cartels.

Hezbollah's connections to the Venezuelan government, via the El Aissami network, enabled mechanisms for proliferation of false documentation and freedom of movement for terrorist activity between the Middle East and Latin America. Although we did not find a direct connection between the nefarious activities of the El Aissami network and the Iranian shipping company IRISL, the potential for a powerful illicit connection is highly possible. This point is extremely relevant as many in the national security sector are deeply concerned with the reverse flow of extremist foreign fighters returning from failing terrorist campaigns in the Middle East¹⁷⁰

Iran's International Development Bank (IBID), and subsidiaries like the Iranian Toseyeh Saderat, Export Development Bank of Iran, mark the convergence between state sponsored licit and illicit connections. The licit ties connect to key organizations within the Pink Tide development and investments sectors, acting as legitimate fronts that do conduct some beneficial projects for the recipient nations. The illicit ties utilized these investment systems as state sponsored money laundering through the ALBA Sucre banking system during Iranian sanctions. These vetted connections provide a proven method to circumnavigate sanctions as the U.S. Congress is currently debating reinstatement of sanctions on Iran following President Trump's decertification of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) or "Iran Nuclear Deal," as it is known by many.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Current U.S. policies and programs to counter this dark network are insufficient to effectively thwart or deny its existence either. Examples like the El Aissami network and the Iranian Export Development Bank may have been hamstrung through sanctions, but the mechanisms themselves remain functional. The U.S. government has only indicted key members of the El Aissami network, but has no recourse to affect the corrupt

¹⁷⁰ Charles Lister, *Returning Foreign Fighters* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2015), <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/En-Fighters-Web.pdf>.

Venezuelan government that willfully facilitates such activities. After all, Tareck El Aissami is still the Vice President of Venezuela. In regards to Iranian banking shell companies, sanctions against the Iranian Export Development Bank and its subsidiaries were lifted in 2016, in conjunction with the JCPOA agreement.¹⁷¹ This action enabled the potential for increased financial throughput with the legal usage of international and regional banking systems.

Iranians have positioned themselves in influential positions within the Pink Tide network through overt diplomatic and economic activities tied to the powerful regional bloc, ALBA. Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, has been able to establish themselves throughout the region in a covert manner. This offers Iran and Hezbollah unprecedented regional access, while supporting Iran in nuclear developments despite previous sanctions. Iran has established over 80 cultural centers regionally, with an estimated 1,000 Latin Americans trained and educated in Qom from 2007–2013 alone.¹⁷² Diplomatic connections through covert networks and overt policy marginalized and quashed the investigation into the AMIA bombing, with no Iranian prosecutions. Perhaps most telling success of the Rabbani network and its connections in Latin America is the lack of concern by policymakers who place the preponderance of U.S. counter-Iranian proxy efforts focused solely in the Middle East. There has been little emphasis placed on the threat directly to the southern border of the U.S. despite a clear methodology of Iranian counter-actions to U.S. or its allies' policies or actions. Latin America provides easy access for the manifestation of counter-actions or operational cells can reach into the U.S. itself.

In an era of resource and budget constraints, U.S. policymakers must recognize the extent that Iran is attempting to harness the virulent anti-U.S. sentiment of the Pink

¹⁷¹ United States Department of Treasury, "JCPOA-related Designation Removals, JCPOA Designation Updates, Foreign Sanctions Evaders Removals, NS-ISA List Removals; 13599 List Changes," January 16, 2016. Accessed November 1, 2017, https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/updated_names.aspx.

¹⁷² Gen. John F. Kelly, "Posture Statement of General John R. Kelly, United States Marine Corps, Commander, United States Southern Command Before the 114th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee," (March 12, 2015) 5. accessed at: www.southcom.mil/newsroom/Documents/SOUTHCOM_POSTURE_STATEMENT_FINAL_2015.pdf. And Ottolenghi, testimony on *Emerging External Influences in the Western Hemisphere*.

Tide countries in order to secure a foothold in the region to asymmetrically challenge U.S. transregional interests. While the volatile relationship between the U.S. and Iran continues to evolve as it is shaped by events, both in the Middle East and diplomatic spheres, there is little expectation that Iran will seek decreased access in Latin America. By providing additional resources to further illuminate the Pink Tide and Iranian nexus, policymakers can identify which actors and organizations can be leveraged to decrease hostile influence in the region.

By using social network analysis, combined with rigorous qualitative analysis, we believe that policymakers and national security practitioners can narrow the focus for the limited U.S. and partner nation resources in the region to find the most effective methods of challenging hostile influence and mapping networks. As an example, our research identified the PDVSA as a central actor in the network. PDVSA is instrumental as a mechanism for exerting Venezuelan influence over other Pink Tide countries and for partnering to advance the Iranian agenda in the region. This assessment was validated by the Trump Administration's August 2017 decision to impose sanctions on PDVSA.¹⁷³

It is important that these networks and relationships are mapped now rather than later. As governments in Latin America shift in the political spectrum, the relationships between actors and organizations may become opaque, while still enduring. Equally challenging to U.S. policymakers is the lack of access to many regions in Latin America, which must be addressed in order to fully map the parts of the network that span these areas. Most critically, SOUTHCOM must continue to operate and train with partner nations throughout Latin America. Building and maintaining friendly and enduring relationships across the region is the most prominent method the U.S. will be able to identify and counter hostile networks. While SOUTHCOM is focused on Latin America, U.S. Special Operations Command was "given the responsibility of synchronizing DOD planning against global terrorist networks and, as directed, conducting global operations

¹⁷³ Donald J Trump, *Executive Order 13808 of August 24, 2017: Imposing Additional Sanctions With Respect to the Situation in Venezuela*, August 29, 2017. Accessed October 26, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/13808.pdf>.

against those networks” in the 2004 Unified Campaign Plan.¹⁷⁴ SOUTHCOM and U.S. Special Operations Command must coordinate directly to identify those countries within Latin America that are facilitating development of networks that pose a threat to U.S. interests. These networks are exploiting seams between Geographic Combatant Commands as they expand across regions. Enduring engagement throughout the region is essential for building and maintaining the exact type of linkages and relationships that hostile state and non-state actors would attempt to co-opt. Research focused on this topic can assist in future planning for security cooperation.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

An important next step would be to address the growing influence of China, Russia, and transnational criminal organizations (cartels and foreign crime syndicates) in Latin America, especially in the populist-leftist countries of the Pink Tide. Both countries are heavily invested in Latin America, providing economic support, engineering and energy expertise, and security cooperation engagement.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, our research did not fully illuminate the evolving array of drug trafficking organizations that are tangentially affiliated with the Pink Tide network. Finally, our research was conducted using unclassified open-source data. Our approach might have more fidelity as to Iranian and Hezbollah actions in the region through research at a higher classification level. Ultimately, the Iranian / Pink Tide nexus is constantly evolving as the socio-political and security situation in Latin America morphs and shifts, and continuous analysis of the networks is ideal for the most current situation awareness.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Feickhart, U.S. *Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. RS21048 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Services 2016), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS21048.pdf>.

¹⁷⁵ Mac Margolis, “Russia Wants to Be Latin America’s New BFF,” *Bloomberg View*, September 18, 2017. Accessed October 24, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-09-18/russia-wants-to-be-latin-america-s-new-bff>.

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APPENDIX A. ILLUMINATED CELLS IN THE RABBANI NETWORK AND HEZBOLLAH SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

A. OPERATIONAL CELLS UNDER THE RABBANI NETWORK

The Rabbani network, and its subsidiaries, conducted multiple successful and attempted operations across the region. Manifestations of the network were illuminated as a result of investigations and thwarted attacks across Latin America and the U.S. The numerous thwarted attacks are easily connected back to Iran, and in most cases via Rabbani himself. Local leaders like Edgardo Ruben “Suhail” Assad who is a trusted Latin American regional protégé of Rabbani. Assad is tied to AMIA, with known visits to other cultural centers before thwarted attacks occurred, or visits to known Hezbollah support areas prior to attempted attacks. One such attack was uncovered in 2014 when a Hezbollah operative, Mohammad Amadar, a Lebanese citizen that married a Peruvian-U.S. dual citizen moved to Sao Palo, Brazil, for several years. The area is a known area with Hezbollah ties through the Guarulhos Mosque and radical Sunni Cleric, Razek Tak el-Din.¹⁷⁶ He was later found with bomb making materials, and intelligence suggested he was targeting the “areas popular with Israeli backpackers, the Israeli embassy in Lima, and Jewish community institutions.”¹⁷⁷ Further illuminating the connection between Amadar and Rabbani’s network was the connection between Amadar’s active support for a local Islamic activist group that was directly supported by Edgardo Suhail Assad, who was also alleged in the Nisman report as providing material support for the AMIA bombing as well.¹⁷⁸

A 2007 thwarted cyber-attack was allegedly managed by the Iranian Ambassador to Mexico and diplomats from Venezuelan and Cuban embassies within the US. The plot was designed to penetrate U.S. governmental systems at “the White House, FBI, CIA,

¹⁷⁶ Noriega, testimony on *Hezbollah in Latin America – Implications for U.S. Homeland Security*.

¹⁷⁷ Matthew Levitt, “Iranian and Hezbollah Operations in South America: Then and Now” *Prism* 5, no. 4 (2015), 130.

¹⁷⁸ Humire, *After Nisman*, 48–49.

and two nuclear facilities.”¹⁷⁹ Yet another example of a thwarted attack claimed by Hezbollah was the 2006 attempt to attack the U.S. Embassy in Caracas with explosives. The perpetrator, Teodoro Darnott, was a college student, active ideologue of Chávez’s Fifth Republic Movement, and leader of another Marxist organization called Guaicaipuro Movement for National Liberation (MGLN). He placed two bombs outside the Embassy in boxes containing propaganda material for Hezbollah, which claimed responsibility for the failed attempt.¹⁸⁰ The investigation brought Darnott’s connection directly to Hezbollah as a recruit that was offered weapons from Paraguay via FARC intermediaries. The area in Paraguay is known to support Hezbollah activity in vicinity of the TBA under the auspices of Hamid Nasrallah, relative of the Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah. MGLN was then charged with becoming a Hezbollah recruitment front in Venezuela in return for their support as well.¹⁸¹

Other potentially catastrophic attempted attacks on U.S. soil through the Rabbani network were the attempted bombing of New York’s JFK International Airport and the attempted assassination of the Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. in Washington, DC. In 2007, a cell under the direct guidance of Rabbani based out of Guyana and Trinidad was arrested before an attempt to blow up the fuel lines of JFK airport. The leader of the group received training at Al Mustafa University in Qom, Iran, and sent his children there for education under Rabbani as well. Further trial testimonies of the perpetrator in a New York District Court solidified Rabbani’s role as directing operatives operating under “Iranian *fatwas*” [religious orders] to execute the attacks.¹⁸² The DEA thwarted another serious attempt in 2011 when a U.S. citizen and Qods operative attempted to hire the Zeta’s drug cartel, to kill the Saudi Ambassador in a crowded restaurant. They met with an undercover DEA agent posing as a Zeta in Mexico City multiple times to plan the

¹⁷⁹ Ahmadinejad’s *Tour of Tyrants and Iran’s Agenda in the Western Hemisphere: Venezuelan Gateway*, 112th Cong. (February 2, 2012) (statement of Congressman Dan Burton, Representative from Indiana).

¹⁸⁰ Luis Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013), 128.

¹⁸¹ Fleischman, *Latin America in the Post-Chávez Era: The Security Threat to the United States*, 129, 132.

¹⁸² Douglas Farah, *Back to the Future: Argentina Unravels*, 26.

attack, resulting in the U.S. citizen's imprisonment.¹⁸³ The reach of Rabbani's network is of great concern to security experts with Qods operatives recruiting on U.S. soil for operations and the discovery of multiple Hezbollah cells.

B. DEVELOPMENT OF HEZBOLLAH'S LATIN AMERICAN LOGISTICS AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

Iran's official policy tied into the Pink Tide enabled unprecedented access, which facilitated the establishment of Hezbollah logistic and support infrastructure. Hezbollah initiated regional connections with complicit support, or at least indifference to stopping a known terrorist organization, in multiple Latin American areas. Areas include under-governed or highly corrupt areas with Islamic ties in Tacna Peru, Iquique Chile, Maicao Colombia, Colon Panama, but principally out of Ciudad Este in the Paraguayan Tri-border area (also known as the TBA of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay) and Margarita Island in Venezuela.¹⁸⁴

An example of a notorious Hezbollah support organization is the Barakat cell, a notorious illicit finance and money-laundering cell.¹⁸⁵ It utilizes a myriad of shell companies and generates funds through counterfeit activities, and taxing the local Shia community [under Quranic *Zakat*].¹⁸⁶ The Barakat cell also supported Hezbollah's Foreign Relations Department (FRD) as informants on the greater Arab community and individual activities in the area, as well as acting as the financial director of a local Mosque.¹⁸⁷ Margarita Island is another example of an illicit hub where the nexus of criminal, state, and terrorist networks converge. Hezbollah uses the area as an illicit

¹⁸³ Mark P. Sullivan and June S. Beittel, *Latin America: Terrorism Issues* (CRS Report No. RS21049) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 21.
<https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RS21049.pdf>.

¹⁸⁴ Humire, testimony on *Threat to the Homeland: Iran's Extending Influence in the Western Hemisphere*.

¹⁸⁵ Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah's Criminal Networks: Useful Idiots, Henchmen, and Organized Criminal Facilitators," in *Beyond Convergence: World Without Order*, eds. Hilary Matfess and Michael Miklaucic (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2016), 158–160.

¹⁸⁶ Levitt, *Hezbollah's Criminal Networks*, 158–160.

¹⁸⁷ Levitt, 161.

financing hub with connections to criminal organizations.¹⁸⁸ Perhaps one of the most illuminating convergence points is a high-ranking Lebanese born, Venezuelan diplomat to Syria named Ghazi Atef Salamaeh Nassereddine, and his brothers Abdallah and Oday Nassereddine who manage the Margarita Island efforts through an Iranian backed Islamic organization (Federation of Arab and American Associations, FEARAB) and a staunchly pro-Chávez/Maduro enclave called *Circulos Bolivarianos*, which raises funds, recruits, and conducts training for Hezbollah.¹⁸⁹ The island is also known to facilitate safe-haven for some FARC operatives as well.¹⁹⁰

A new and developing TBA covering Chile, Bolivia, and Peru was also established in a resource rich and economically advantageous area. Cultural centers and mosques were established as community outreach and recruitment centers in areas like **Arica and Iquique, Chile, with deep water port access**, Tacna, Peru, and Santa Cruz, Bolivia [location of the Iranian backed, Anti-Imperialist Commando School], all with an established and growing Iranian and Hezbollah presence.¹⁹¹ The establishment of the “new TBA” followed the steps and model utilized by Rabbani and created a new regional hub of security threats where major narcotics trafficking originates, in Peru and Bolivia, with access to marginally controlled port and coastal areas.

Other well documented Hezbollah illicit financing schemes include the 2002 illicit tobacco scheme based in Charlotte, North Carolina, which generated an estimated \$1.5 million in funds; two Canadian logistic and finance networks that worked through a Lebanese-Canadian bank allegedly moved millions of dollars and multi-ton cocaine shipments at the behest of Mexican and Colombian cartels for Hezbollah; and other U.S. based affiliate finance cells in Los Angeles and Detroit.¹⁹² Other examples of identified

¹⁸⁸ Ahmadinejad’s *Tour of Tyrants and Iran’s Agenda in the Western Hemisphere: Venezuelan Gateway*, 112th Cong. (February 2, 2012) (statement of Congressman Eliot L. Engel, Representative from New York).

¹⁸⁹ Noriega, testimony on *Hezbollah in Latin America*.

¹⁹⁰ Noriega, testimony on *Hezbollah in Latin America*.

¹⁹¹ Iván Witker, “The Southern Cone: Iran’s Backdoor.” in *Iran’s Strategic Penetration of Latin America*, eds. Joseph Humire and Ilan Berman (Lanham, CT: Lexington Books, 2014), 39.

¹⁹² Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah’s Criminal Networks*, 158, 160, 163. And Humire, testimony on *Iran and Hezbollah in the Western Hemisphere*.

cells or activities include two Hezbollah illicit financing and narco-trafficking cells based out of Colombia and Hezbollah support to a Brazilian criminal gang with weapons and explosives.¹⁹³

¹⁹³ Levitt, *Hezbollah's Criminal Networks*, 166, 168.

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APPENDIX B. DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL NETWORK ANALYSIS METRICS ANALYZED

Topography (Network Level)		
Measure	Definition	Interpretation
Centralization	The standard measure of centralization uses the variation in actor centrality within the network to measure the level of centralization. More variation yields higher network centralization scores, while less variation yields lower scores. The output ranges from 0 (decentralized) to 1 (centralized).	Centralization indicates how centralized, or decentralized, a dark network is, which sheds light onto the potential trade-offs a network may have to make.
Measures of Interconnectedness		
Measure	Definition	Interpretation
Density	Density is formally defined as the total number of observed ties in a network divided by the total possible ties in that network. The output ranges from 0 to 1.	Indicates how interconnected a dark network is, which sheds light onto the potential trade-offs it may have to make. For example, a dark network's focus on recruitment via strong ties may limit its ties to outsiders who might have valuable resources and information.
Average Degree	This measure is formally defined as the sum of ties in a network divided by the number of actors in the network. Not dependent on network size.	Average degree indicates how interconnected a dark network is, which sheds light onto the potential trade-offs it may have to make.
Additional Metrics		
Measure	Definition	Interpretation
Girvan-Newman (Subgroup Detection)	Similar to faction analysis in that subgroups are defined as having more ties within and fewer ties between groups than would be expected in a random graph of the same size with the same number of ties. Focuses on edge betweenness.	Helps analysts identify larger communities, or relatively dense clusters, within dark networks, which highlights potential seams, or vulnerabilities, between those communities.

Boundary Spanner	A node which, if removed from a network, creates a new component.	A node that could be considered a “gatekeeper” or bridge.
Boundary Spanner, Potential	Individuals or organizations that connect groups are those that are connecting disconnected groups. The individual or organization may be connected to only one or a few members of each group. This is a composite measure that is high when the agent is potentially influential but is not in the know. This is calculated as the ration of betweenness centrality to total degree centrality and is calculated on agent by agent networks.	A node that has the potential to be considered a “gatekeeper” or bridge.

Sources: Tables and definitions adapted from Cunningham, Everton and Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks*, 87–88, 111, and 144. Definitions are also adapted from ORA.

APPENDIX C. PINK TIDE NETWORK CODEBOOK

A. ACTORS

This network includes state and non-state actors at the organizational level that are involved in the Pink Tide movement. This includes any government apparatus, political parties linked to the Pink Tide, private and quasi-governmental organizations, shell corporations, terrorist organizations and regional organizations. For the purpose of this exercise, factions and offshoots will be considered separate from their parent organization in order to prevent coding redundant ties. In other words, the most micro-level affiliations are coded.

B. NETWORKS

1. Key Personalities (Two-Mode Network, 345 x 40)

Indicates that a person is tied to an organization. It must be explicitly stated in a source that a person is employed by, leads, has links to, or is otherwise tied to an organization.

List of key personalities:

1. Abdallah Nasr al Din
2. Abdul Kadir
3. Ahmad Vahidi
4. Alvaro Garcia Linera
5. Antonio Peredo
6. Ayman Joumaa
7. Carlos Vallejo Lopez
8. Daniel Ortega
9. Diego Borja
10. Edgardo Ruben "Suhail" Assad
11. Evo Morales
12. General Aref Richany Jimenez
13. Ghazi Nasr al Din
14. Gustavo Larrea
15. Hajitollah Soltani
16. Henry de Jesus Rangel
17. Hugo Armando Carvajal

18. Hugo Chavez
19. Hugo Moldis
20. Jamal Yousef
21. Jorge Ceballos
22. Jose Ignacio Chauvin
23. Kristina Kirchner
24. Luis D'Elia
25. Mariana Lopez de la Vega
26. Mohammed Amadar
27. Mohsen Rabbani
28. Norberto Rafael Ceresole
29. Oday Nasr al Din
30. Pedro Delgado
31. Rafic Labboun
32. Ramon Emilio Rodriguez Chacin
33. Reza Mahboubi
34. Rodrigo Jallou
35. Samark Lopez Bello
36. Santiago Paz Bullrich aka Abdul Kareem Paz
37. Sheik Khaled Razeq Tak el-Din
38. Sheikh Taleb al-Khazraji
39. Tareck El Aissami
40. Teodoro Rafael Darnott

2. Funded by (One-Mode Network, 345 x 345)

If an organization is funded or actively supported by another organization, the network will display the relationship. *For example: the government of Iran funds/supports Hezbollah, so Hezbollah will have a “Funded By” tie to Iran.*

3. Subsidiary of (One-Mode Network, 345 x 345)

If an organization is a shell corporation or subsidiary of a parent corporation. For example, the network will display the tie as *Organization X is a Subsidiary of Organization Y.*

4. Linked to (One-Mode Network, 345 x 345)

For all other inter-organizational relationships that do not fit in another category. Link must be explicitly stated in source document.

5. Affiliation with a Regional Organization (One-Mode Network, 345 x 345)

Indicates a relationship or membership tie to a regional, trans-regional or global organization such as ALBA, Mercosur, etc.

6. Supports Project (Two-Mode Network, 345 x 55)

Indicates a state or non-state organization support of a project through funding, equipment, or training of personnel. These projects range from petroleum projects to mining projects and military facilities.

List of projects:

1. National Basic Food Project
2. Nicaraguan Aqueduct and Sewer Company (Enacal)
3. Zero Usury
4. Zero Hunger
5. Streets for the People
6. Decent Housing
7. Operation Miracle
8. Oil Plant in Miramar (Fuel Reception, Storage, and Dispatch)
9. Blue Power & Energy La Fe San Martín
10. Chiltepe Farm
11. Hotel Seminole
12. Corinto Tree Project
13. Hugo Chavez Thermal Plant
14. Che Guevarra Thermal Plant
15. Deepwater Port: Bilwi #1
16. Deepwater Port: Bilwi #2
17. Deepwater Port: Monkey Point
18. Deepwater Port: Puerto Sandino
19. Houses for the People
20. Solidarity Bonus
21. La Teja Refinery Project
22. Iron Mining Agreement

23. Las Cristinas mine Agreement
24. Cerro Azul Cement Plant
25. Agro Industrial Park
26. TIPNIS Road Project
27. Carrasco Petrochemical Plant
28. Iranian-Venezuelan Military Facility
29. Bolivia Milk Processing Plant (1 of 6)
30. Aframax Oil Tankers
31. DIANCA Shipyard
32. Veniran Tractor Plant
33. Development Loans (\$280million)
34. Astinave Shipyard
35. Bolivia/Iranian Red Crescent Hospital
36. Deepwater Port Project: Monkey Point
37. "Mega-Polyclinic" Health Project
38. Bodoky Hydroelectric Project (Tuma River)
39. Deepwater Port Project: Corinto
40. Iranian-Venezuelan Tractors
41. Brito Hydroelectric Project
42. Estrella Power Project
43. Piedra Puntuda Power Project
44. Milk Processing Plants
45. Irrigation System Project
46. Agricultural Training Courses
47. Housing Project (10,000 Homes)
48. Dobokubi Petroleum agreement
49. Orinoco River Agreement
50. Bolivia Veniran Tractor Distributor
51. Uranium Mining
52. Bicycle Plant Cojedes
53. Car assembly Plant in Aragua
54. Gold / Uranium Mine
55. Foreign Convert Recruitment and Training

7. Event (Two-Mode Network, 345 x 38)

Indicates a state or non-state organizations link to a specific event or activity. These events can range from specific terrorist attacks, meetings, or diplomatic agreements.

List of events:

1. \$3 million for Explosive Manufacturing Plant
2. \$800k Kirchner Campaign Contribution
3. 1st Meeting Iran-Ecuadorian Parliamentary Friendship Group
26MAY14, Quito Ecuador
4. 2004 Deal to facilitate commercial transactions
5. 2008 2nd Congress of MCB [FARC]
6. 2009 Basij Defense Chief Meeting
7. 2009 IRGC Training to Ecuador
8. 2010 Caracas Terror Summit
9. 2010 Deal for technical partnership
10. 2013 Iran-Argentina MOU
11. 2014 Weapons Transfer
12. Alas Chiricanas Flight 00901 Bombing
13. AMIA Bombing
14. Attempted Cyberattack on U.S.
15. Attempted JFK Airport Bombing
16. Attempted Saudi Ambassador Assassination October 2011
17. Attempted UAV Procurement
18. Bolivian Embassy moves to Tehran
19. Cerro Azul Cement Plant
20. Drug Transportation
21. Ecuador Oil/Mine Exploration (2009)
22. Ecuador visit to Iran Nov 2007
23. Flight of Terror
24. Iran-Ecuador cooperation document signing
25. Iran-Ecuador economic delegation Aug 2007
26. Israeli Arms Shipment
27. Loan (\$860M)
28. NIOC office in Santa Cruz Bolivia
29. Orinoco Oil Field
30. Sanctions on Tareck El Aissami
31. Seized Arms Shipment
32. Sold to PDVSA
33. Syria Arms Shipment
34. Thwarted Caracas U.S. Embassy Bombing
35. Thwarted Peruvian Attack
36. Tractor Shipments to Bolivia
37. Tractor Shipments to Nicaragua (2012)
38. Ven- Uruguay Bilateral Trade/Barter Agreement

C. ATTRIBUTES

Type of organization. Defined as the primary role of the state or non-state actor.

Coding scheme:

1. Government
2. Terrorist Organization
3. Financial Institution
4. Telecommunications Institution
5. Petrochemical Institution
6. Logistics Institution
7. Regional Group
8. Criminal Organization
9. Trade Alliance
10. Development Organization
11. Indigenous Political Activists
12. Energy Institution (Power)
13. Construction Institution
14. Tourism Institution
15. Security Apparatus
16. Military Institution

APPENDIX D. MOHSEN RABBANI NETWORK CODEBOOK

A. ACTORS

We limited our actors to those individuals that are listed by name in Joseph Humire's *After Nisman: How the Death of a Prosecutor Revealed Iran's Growing Influence in the America* as well as cross-referenced with Alberto Nisman's *AMIA Case Indictment*, particularly for actors involved in the post-AMIA bombing network and the AMIA bombing itself.

B. NETWORKS

1. Professional Relationship Network (One-Mode Network, 38 x 38)

This network identifies all the actors in Rabbani's network, and their professional or communication connection to all other actors.

2. Operational Network (One-Mode Network, 38 x 38)

This network identifies all the current members of Rabbani's Network who were involved in the 1994 AMIA bombing. They are identified as having an Interpol Red Notice or they are named in the AMIA Indictment.

3. Kinship Network (One-Mode Network, 38 x 38)

This network identifies familial relationships such as brother, brother-in-law, nephew, etc. Kinship will also include current marriages and past marriages due to divorces and/or deaths.

C. ATTRIBUTES

1. Current Country of Residence

Where the actor reportedly lives (as of December 2016).

Coding scheme:

1. Argentina

2. Iran
3. Lebanon
4. Colombia
5. Brazil
6. Syria
7. Chile
8. Venezuela
9. Peru

2. Familial Clan.

There are over 700 families within the Syrian and Lebanese community of Argentina, but the most relevant to Iran and Hezbollah are the following five familial clans.

Coding scheme:

0. Unknown/Not stated
1. Haze
2. Sain
3. Salomon
4. Saleh
5. Assad

3. Current Status

Defined as the physical condition of the individual as per After Nisman: How the Death of a Prosecutor Revealed Iran's Growing Influence.

Coding scheme:

0. Dead
1. Alive
2. Jail
3. Interpol Red Notice

4. Role in the Network

This attribute identifies what specific role the individual assumed in the network.

Coding Scheme:

1. Courier – A person only involved in communication between groups and locations
2. Facilitator – A person providing shelter, hiding information about the whereabouts of the terrorist/insurgent group / related information
3. Leader – A person was classified as a leader if he was either a founder, or took over the reins of an organization
4. Liaison – A person involved in contact for garnering support with other groups operating outside Indonesia
5. Local leader – A person heading a local unit of a terrorist/insurgent organization or an area commander
6. Recruiter – A person involved in recruitment of new members
7. Religious Leader, Teacher, Mentor, Motivator – An Imam or a local religious head. A person involved in spiritual grooming, motivation, and mental preparation of members to commit a violent act
8. Sympathizers – An individual not actively involved in operations
9. Resource Provider: Person providing financial and material support to the network
10. Strategist – A person was classified as a strategist if he contributed either in planning or doctrine formulation
11. IRGC/Hezbollah- A person described as an operative for one of these organizations.

5. Association with the At-Tauhid Mosque in Buenos Aires

This attribute identifies if an actor has an association with the At-Tauhid Mosque in Buenos Aires. Association can include a religious role, administrative role, or a person who attended the mosque for prayer.

Coding scheme:

0. No Association with the At-Tauhid Mosque
1. Association with the At-Tauhid Mosque

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APPENDIX E. EL AISSAMI NETWORK CODEBOOK

A. ACTORS

This network includes individual associates and organizations (both state and non-state) connected to the Tareck El Aissami network as identified in the U.S. Department of Treasury Sanctions reports.

B. NETWORKS

1. Licit Ties (One-Mode Network, 71 x 71)

For the purposes of coding the El Aissami network, licit ties are defined as when an individual has non-illicit relationship with another individual. This can be a personal or professional relationship, as long as the purpose of the relationship is not for illegal, illicit or immoral means. This type of relationship does not include family ties.

2. Illicit Ties (One-Mode Network, 71 X 71)

Illicit Ties are defined as a personal or professional relationship when the purpose of the relationship is for illegal, illicit or immoral purposes. If the individuals are tied through an illegal, illicit or immoral organization, this type of relationship tie is considered an illicit tie. This type of relationship does not include family ties.

3. Family Ties (One-Mode Network, 71 X 71)

Family ties are defined as a familial relationship between two actors. The relationship can be licit or illicit, personal or professional. Family ties also include familial ties through current marriages and past marriages due to divorces or deaths.

4. Organizational Affiliation (Two-Mode Network, 71 x 31)

Organizational affiliation is defined as membership in an organization, governmental directorate, terrorist or insurgent group, or informal subnetwork. This type of relationship excludes purely business ties.

List of organizations:

1. Family Network
2. Associate Network
3. Tertiary Network
4. ONIDEX
5. Hezbollah
6. FARC
7. Ejercito Revolucionario Popular Antiterrorista de Colombia (ERPAC)
8. CORPORACION BRICKWALL, C.A.
9. SUPAC INTERNACIONAL, C.A.
10. INVERSIONES GALILEO, C.A.
11. FRESSCO MERIDA, C.A.
12. Banco Bicentenario
13. Banco Universal
14. Banco Occidental de Descuento
15. Regionsbank (Miami)
16. Bank of St Lucia Intl.
17. BANESCO
18. Banco Mercantil
19. Banco Provincial
20. INTEVEP
21. Government of Venezuela
22. PDVAL
23. MVR
24. Sucre
25. ULA
26. CORE 2
27. Aragua Police
28. PNB
29. Cartel of the Suns
30. Utopia
31. Al Qaeda

5. Business Affiliation (Two-Mode Network, 71 x 37)

Business affiliation is defined as membership in a for-profit business venture that employs people.

List of businesses:

1. Yakima Oil Trading, LLP
2. Yakima Trading Corporation
3. Grupo Sahect
4. Profit Corporation, C.A.
5. SMT Tecnologia, C.A.
6. MFAA Holdings Limited
7. Servicios Tecnolgicos Industriales, C.A.
8. Alfa One, C.A.
9. Importadora Sylvania, C.A.
10. Bodega Michigan
11. New Line Exchange Trust Co, Beirut
12. Caesar's Park Hotel, Beirut
13. Almacen Junior No. 2, Maicao
14. Comercial Planeta, Maicao
15. Almacen Junior, Maicao
16. Goldi Electronics S.A. , Colon
17. Zona Libre International, Colon
18. Hassan Ayash Exchange Company Sarl., Beirut
19. Ellissa Holding, Beirut
20. Ellissa Exchange CO. SARL, Saida
21. Solmar, Beirut
22. Phenicia Shipping Offshore Sarl, Beirut
23. Societe Ellissa Group Congo, Republic of Congo
24. Ellissa Group SA, Benin
25. Ellissa Megastore, Benin
26. Ellissa Parc Cotonou, Benin
27. Ellissa Shipping, Benin
28. Agrophen, Benin
29. Cotonou, Benin
30. Banco Provincial
31. BANESCO
32. HSBC (Panama)
33. Banco Nacional de Crédito, C.A.
34. INE
35. PDVSA
36. Ferrominera Orinoco
37. VTV

C. ATTRIBUTES

Defined as the primary or secondary role the individual serves within the network.

Coding scheme:

1. Family member
2. Friend
3. Front man
4. Representative
5. Lawyer
6. Government official
7. Businessman
8. Terrorist / insurgent
9. Criminal
10. Courier
11. Leader

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