The Ties that Bind

State Sponsorship and the Durability of Militant Alliances

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ABSTRACT

How does the involvement of state sponsors affect the durability of alliances amongst militant groups? This dissertation investigates the distinctions between alliances involving groups with state sponsors and those without such support, and how that subsequently impacts militant cooperation with other militant allies. I theorize that state sponsor involvement affects alliance management firstly by providing the necessary resources to cover the costs of cooperation. Secondly, I contend that state sponsor involvement helps facilitate a more stable and institutionalized structure for inter-alliance coordination. Lastly, I argue that state sponsor involvement ensures that alliances don't unintentionally fail due to weak organizational resiliency against counter-militant measures. I then further theorize that state sponsor involvement influences militant alliance dynamics, particularly in competitive conflict environments, where shared sponsors may mitigate the competitive pressures from the external conflict environment and dyadic relations internally.

To test my theory, I first run a panel fixed-effects model to test whether state sponsorship is positively associated with the overall size of a militant group's alliance network and the number of new allies it makes on a yearly scale. I then run survival models (event history analysis) to evaluate whether the presence of state sponsors impacts alliance durability by assessing the risk of alliance failure for militant dyads. Lastly, I conduct a comparative case study on Hamas and its state sponsors (Iran in particular), in contrast to Al Qaeda and its network of allies and affiliates. I use this case to illustrate how the nature of Hamas' relationship with other Palestinian groups has largely been facilitated by Iran, which helped overcome some of the difficulties Al Qaeda has had to face in maintaining the solidarity and strength of its network in contrast. I then further delve into how Iran's increasing presence and influence among different militant networks has the potential to cause a ripple effect on regional stability and militant behavior in the Middle East and beyond. I conclude by outlining the research's contribution to the discipline, and directions for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It would be inadequate to try to understand international relations in the post-World War II era without recognizing the evolving threat posed by nonstate armed groups. During the Cold War, they were relevant predominantly in the context of their role in proxy warfare as a tool of major powers such as the United States, Soviet Union, and China. It is therefore unsurprising that the Cold War paradigm traditionally frames the relationship between militant groups and their state sponsors to take on a state-centric, principle-agent structure, where states covertly delegate to militant groups to conduct some of their foreign policy (San-Akca 2016, 2).

However, nonstate armed groups have increasingly gained notoriety and significance in matters of contemporary threats to international security. On one hand, modern proxy relations have become more complex due to globalization and the multipolarity of contemporary conflict in the post-Cold War era, and non-state-

sponsored proxy wars have become an enduring fixture in contemporary warfare (Moghadam and Wyss 2020; Karlén et al. 2021; Rauta 2021a). This has challenged the rather outdated understanding of its function as a mere agent of interstate conflict, and has shifted the literature's understanding of the principal-proxy relationship to be agent-centric (San-Akca 2016; Rittinger 2017; Farasoo 2021; Rauta 2021b; Thaler 2021). A case that best illustrates this development is Hezbollah's involvement in Syria's civil war; while a nonstate proxy of Iran, the Lebanon-based group is observed to not merely act as a puppet but also capable of functioning as a principal in its own right (Kaunert and Wertman 2020).

Simultaneously, terrorist groups have increasingly exploited societal fragmentation and weak governance to push their ideologies and gain power through violence. Regional and intrastate conflicts, demographic pressures, environmental degradation, and democratic retrenchment have increasingly exacerbated the political, economic, and social grievances terrorists have long exploited to gain supporters as well as safe havens to organize, train, and plot [1]. They have accomplished this by adopting a decentralized, hub-based network structure of formal alliances that have persevered despite prolonged pressure from countermilitant strategies (Bacon 2018, 3).

Although it is almost certain that there will be costs to their security and autonomy, it is in the best interest of militant groups to establish and maintain cooperation. This is because among many other benefits, being a part of a formal alliance bolsters bargaining leverage to militant groups necessary to successfully achieve their political aims (Bond 2010, 2). Case in point, there have been several occasions where

1. "Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World," National Intelligence Council, March 2021.

Latin American guerrilla groups during the Cold War era were able to accomplish their objective by establishing formal alliances. To illustrate, the umbrella organization Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity was formed in 1982 by rebel groups during the Guatemalan insurgency to coordinate political and military activities, while the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador was comprised of several left-wing guerrilla organizations under a unifying manifesto to facilitate coordination of political and military efforts (Jones 2017). Both alliances eventually reached a peace agreement with their respective governments and successfully transitioned into legitimate political parties.

Yet militant groups do not always benefit from being a part of a formal alliance. One of the largest and deadliest militant umbrella organizations in Pakistan, the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was established in 2007 under Baitullah Mehsud, with close ties to Al Qaeda and also associated with the Afghan Taliban (CISAC 2018). However, since 2014, it has suffered from disputes and fragmentation due to internal disagreements over factors such as territorial control, leadership positions, and negotiations with the Pakistani government, resulting in a breakdown of the TTP unity. Given the constant risk of their subsequent failure, alliances are faced with additional difficulty in sustaining them over time (Bacon 2013). Considering the difficulties in forming alliances, and the benefits that can be gained once they overcome commitment problems, what factors could account for why some alliances endure as opposed to those that fail?

Much of the current literature on the inter-organizational dynamics of militant groups has focused on why they form alliances. In contrast, little has been said about potential threats to their durability that may result in their breakdown –

with what little that has been said tending to converge upon external[2] pressures to explain why some alliances endure while others break down. The literature's underlying presumption of invariability in the potential for internal[3] pressures to undermine alliance ties result in an insufficient understanding of how alliances confront challenges to maintaining alliance ties that transpire over time.

To address this gap in the literature, this dissertation draws upon relevant literature across several disciplines on alliance politics, organization theory, and management sciences, to advance a theory of alliance management for inter-organizational cooperation. The central argument of the theory is that alliance ties are less likely to break down when there is third-party involvement by state sponsors not only to provide the necessary funds and resources to establish and maintain cooperation, but also to act as a medium to institutionalize and enforce coordination mechanisms through informal or formal processes.

Research Puzzle and Argument

Existing scholarship on evaluating the life cycles of militant organizations has generally found state sponsorship to significantly contribute to their longevity and durability (Mickolus 1989). The same cannot be said when it comes to their involvement in fostering intergroup cooperation; Phillips (2019) contends that state sponsorship can incite conflict by causing significant resource gaps between groups and consequently lead to an increase in their power asymmetry. On the other hand, Lindbach (1995) contends that state involvement leads to greater inter-rebel cooperation be-

2. Exogenous factors such as the strength and efficacy of counterinsurgency measures or state repression, or the context of the conflict environment.

3. Organizational challenges including but not limited to structural (membership, operational space and time) and/or structuring (formalization, centralization) parameters.

cause sponsors can threaten to withhold financing and war material from those who are jeopardizing a cohesive rebel coalition. Relatedly, results from Blair et al. (2022) seem also to suggest that having a shared sponsor makes militant cooperation more likely, regardless of whether they pursue a rhetorical or material type of cooperation[4].

This begs the question – what impact does state sponsorship exert on the longevity of militant cooperation? The gains acquired from forming alliances with other militant groups are not necessarily exclusive; external state sponsors are also able to provide militants with arms, money, supplies, or sanctuaries – with the caveat that in exchange, they will exhibit sufficient discipline and solidarity to fulfill their patron's strategic aims (Salehyan 2010). Given this restrictive clause, one would presume there to be some form of control from the principal state as to whether the client can establish or maintain cooperative relations with other militant groups as a condition of providing material resources necessary for survival. And if it were to come down to choosing between a state sponsor or militant partnership, state sponsors would always come on top because they are capable of providing more than just the short-term tools for survival – in the form of military, financial, and political support to outmatch the resources of their incumbent regimes, establish international legitimacy, exercise leverage in negotiations, and outcompete rivals (Gade et al. 2019).

Yet it remains unclear whether external state sponsorship strengthens or weakens militant cooperation. On the one hand, works by Bapat and Bond (2012) and

4. Blair et al. distinguishes the nature of alliances to either be rhetorical – which are about expressed support for another group and exclude material exchange – versus material alliances, which are established for the exchange of specific resources like arms, territory, training, operational plans, and funding to remedy operational deficits.

Popovic (2018) argue that external leverage functions as an important inter-rebel institution that mitigates issues; such as the credible commitment problem endemic to inter-organizational cooperation, acts as a deterrent against side negotiations, and mediates conflict between rebel groups. In contrast, Tamm (2016) argues that state sponsors can also undermine rebel unity by incentivizing some rebels to challenge their rivals[5] by increasing the number of avenues militants have to support themselves, thereby reducing the leverage exerted to foster cooperation (Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood 2014). Speaking to this somewhat contradictory impact of state sponsorship on militant alliances, Gade et al. (2019)'s analysis of the Syrian civil war finds that rebels sharing a single sponsor are more likely to cooperate with one another than dyads with distinct sponsors.

This lack of consensus within the discipline alludes to the complicated nature of state sponsors and their influence on preexisting alliance ties. In this dissertation, I aim to resolve this discrepancy by evaluating the impact of state sponsorship on the durability of militant alliances, and thus contribute to our understanding of how militant networks evolve and are shaped by their associations. To this end, I argue that state sponsor involvement affords militant groups greater tactical flexibility, long-range planning, and professionalism that yields enhanced effectiveness and greater durability in their capacity to fundamentally shape both the environment within which militant organizations make their decisions and the options available to them. The resources provided by state sponsors afford militant groups the option to not have to compete for resources, proxy formal channels for communication

5. This is argued particularly to be the case when there are multiple state sponsors with competing political agendas seeking to foster their own proxy clients through patronage.

and coordination, and bolster organizational resilience. This in turn functions as a stabilizing mechanism that reduces the costs from cooperation as well as the risks from coordination that usually causes alliances to become destabilized.

Research Significance

The significance of this research lies in advancing a holistic theory applicable to the many forms and nature[6] of militant alliances, made possible by taking an organizational perspective to account for this specific brand of cooperative ties. The theory also benefits from the flexibility of building upon existing scholarship identifying mechanisms of inter-organizational dynamics within alliances to further expand and develop how they operate within the context of institutionalizing alliance ties.

Much of the recent studies geared towards understanding the durability of militant groups have benefited from sophistication in the quality of data, making it possible to conduct studies that take their behavior as an outcome of the group's internal dynamics (Byman 2014). In contrast, little has been said on how they shape inter-group dynamics; rather, it is more often the case that organizational factors are generally presumed to exert negligible effects on inter-organizational relations – alliances in particular. A case-in-point can be found in Sinno (2008), whose work presumes supra-organizational institutions – institutional structures similar to alliances that permit cooperation – to either take on the features of decentralized organizations when successful, or be insignificant as to exclude entirely from analysis if insufficient.

6. Whether the relationship falls within the range of being classified as a form of dyadic or multi-party alliances, and whether the aims and geographical composition of the alliance is transnational versus domestic in nature.

However, if the impact of internal dynamics on group behavior can be conceptualized, it would be erroneous to assume their impact on alliances to be negligible. Differential access to resources, elites, and bystander publics implies groups are affected by different cost-benefit calculations, identities, and end-goal evaluations (Gunning 2009). It would not be unreasonable to expect that an ensuing inquiry would question how and whether internal (such as management structure, leadership efficacy) or external (competitive/cooperative ties, conflict environment) forces influence inter-group interactions – to the extent of undermining inter-group cooperation (and later, the exigency of the alliance itself) due to irreconcilable differences and incompatibility issues.

Because of the increasing likelihood of better understanding organizational behavior from their imperative with the passage of time (Crenshaw 1987), any analyses that treat these variables as static may be insufficient in accurately capturing the nature of their relationship. In particular, if preference divergence creates organizational problems for terrorist groups internally (Shapiro 2013), it is also logical to presume that organizational change experienced by discrete groups within an alliance may also result in pressures to change its behavior in the context of its interaction within the alliance structure.

This discrepancy arises as a result of failing to take into consideration the evolving nature of terrorist activities. We have seen terrorist activities increasingly evolve to take on a "flexible, transnational network structure, enabled by modern technology and characterized by loose inter-connectivity both within and between groups", which more readily facilitates "terrorists to work together in funding, sharing intelligence, training, logistics, planning, and executing attacks" (Bush 2003). The

network structure of terrorist activities thus makes the preexisting examination of organizational contexts limited in their analytical scope to assess their resilience accurately.

Presuming that forming alliance ties is found to be an effective strategy for terrorist groups to overcome organizational challenges (Bacon 2018), a more holistic approach to developing counterterrorism strategies would be to focus on identifying the internal and external factors shaping the structure and durability of militant alliances – by taking on a structural approach to disseminating the transnational reach of terrorist groups and break apart the network structure of alliances.

Defining the Scope of Analysis

Militant Alliances

First of all, what kind of groups fall under the definition of "militants" exactly? Acosta (2014) finds that the "traditional categories of militant organizations have in many cases failed to capture the real-world differences between organizations and consequently have fallen short in explaining variation in militant duration and outcomes". To overcome potential selection biases that derive from arbitrary categories, he goes on to define *militant organizations* as "political organizations that use violence, and regularly employ a variety of tactical and targeting practices, defying the traditional categories assigned to them (i.e., terrorist, insurgent, rebel, etc.)." I adopt Acosta's more generalized conception of militant organizations to reduce the likelihood of a specific type of selection bias[7] – "selection by researcher" – which moves away from nominal categorical boundaries that are more likely to lead to the construction of

7. See Hug 2003 for more details.

incomplete samples.

Then what kind of cooperative relationships should be considered to be an "alliance" between militant groups? Under the traditional context of International Relations (IR) theory, Walt (1987) defines alliances as "formal or informal relationships of security cooperation between states with the purpose of counterbalancing against a common threat or power". Along similar lines, alliances formed between militant groups aim to pool resources/capabilities in the face of common threats, but differ slightly in their emphasis on logistical or operational cooperation as a way to bolster organizational capacity (Moghadam 2017b; Phillips 2019) and significantly increase their chances of survival.

However, there seems to be a lack of consensus in the discipline when it comes to defining the very nature of what constitutes an alliance. Some have opted to avoid using the term altogether in favor of less formalized definitions. Karmon (2005) uses the term *coalitions*, defined as "ideological, material, and operational cooperation between two or more terrorist organizations directed against a common enemy, which may be a state targeted by one of the member organizations or a rival ideological bloc", while Asal et al. (2016) defines alliances as "joint or complementary action for the same (intermediate) purpose, in which such action can constitute activity at the rhetorical, material or operational levels." Then there are also cooperative arrangements between militant groups that do not necessarily reach the threshold of "alliances". Moghadam (2015)'s work focuses on terrorist *cooperation*, defined as "consisting of formal or informal collaborative arrangements made in the pursuit of joint interests, where formal arrangements involve explicit agreements between the parties, while informal arrangements involve tacit agreements between the parties."

Bacon (2018) attributes this discrepancy to a lack of distinction made between different types of cooperative arrangements. Invoking Moghadam's typology of terrorist cooperation, which differentiates "low-end tactical and transactional cooperation" from "high-end mergers and strategic alliances" based on factors such as the time horizon of cooperation, degree of interdependence, the nature of cooperation, and the level of affinity among allied parties, Bacon goes on to raise a valid concern in maintaining that overarching definitions of alliances, which include dyads with different degrees of cooperative ties and arrangement types, may risk conflating different types of relationships and consequently obscure their causes. In efforts to address this potential bias, Bacon advances a more restrictive definition by requiring alliances to consist of "cooperation involving mutual expectations of some degree of coordination or consultation in the future"[8].

What sets this definition apart is its specification of a higher threshold for cooperation to delineate alliances from strategic coordination/tactical collaboration. According to Bacon (2018), while alliances within this framework require cooperation (rather than just complementary action), it does not specify its nature – whether they be ideological, material, operational, or other – nor the target or reason for cooperation, which is conducive to sidestepping possible tautological concerns over causes of alliances defining the constructs of the relationship. But more importantly, it requires alliances to involve both cooperation and expectations of future collaboration or consultation – which in doing so offers a rigorous standard to distinguish between allied and complementary behaviors, and thus avoid overestimating the frequency of terrorist alliances by equating it with cooperation alone. Such nuances

8. Taken from Barnett and Levy 1991: pg. 370; and Walt 2003: pg. 12.

provided by this definition align with the objectives of this dissertation to examine "high-end" cooperative arrangements[9] over time.

On this account, the definition of alliances for this dissertation will therefore appropriately adopt Bacon's more discriminate strategy to determine the scope of analysis, in which the type of militant alliances that will be examined in this research will be defined as *cooperative arrangements with the mutual expectations of some degree of coordination or consultation in the future*. Applying this more restrictive definition of alliances is notable in casting light on the motivations of this research – which is to examine whether inter-alliance dynamics are a function of independent or interdependent processes involving state sponsor involvement.

State Sponsorship

State sponsorship refers to a specific type of relationship within this spectrum involving the state's deliberate provision of resources and material support to militant groups that offer concrete advantages – such as money, military equipment, non-military material resources, training facilities, and safe havens. Often supporting groups that have little organizational experience, no consistent revenue, and no territorial base, the training, funds, and equipment provided by a sponsor go a long way toward significantly increasing the group's ability to fight and resist counterterrorism/insurgency efforts. And while Thaler notes that they tend to have little or nothing to gain from the militant group's success in terms of its own core security interests, sponsorship fulfills a secondary "national interest" in providing support,

9. Moghadam 2015

most commonly due to ideological or identity affinity[10]. These secondary interests include advancing their international political and strategic position, furthering their ideology, and bolstering their position at home (Byman 2007). In other words, the onset and the different varieties of state support are therefore a function of where and how material, domestic, and ideational incentives converge (San-Akca 2016).

For this dissertation, I do not make a theoretical distinction between militant alliances that started with state sponsor involvement, versus those that had state sponsors later on in the alliance. This is because the impact of state sponsorship that I theorize to have on militant alliances can only take effect when the sponsoring relationship has firmly been established. The varieties in state-militant relations tend to fall within a broad sort of spectrum that espouses variations depending on the type and degree of connection, which is determined by both their strategic interests and subsequent scope for action (Thaler 2021). Oftentimes, states pursue sponsorship despite its potential to cost the sponsoring state as much or more than sponsorship's potential benefits[11] due to the non-tangible gains such as the state obtaining plausible deniability for illegal actions (Wilner 2017), and boosts in domestic popularity in the state's prioritization of their ethnic or religious kin (Byman 2007).

However, Maoz and San-Akca (2012) contends that state sponsorship of militant groups emerges out of a "mutual and purposive decision-making process, ... where the states' decision to sponsor militant groups are affected by dissatisfaction with the status quo and the expected risk of retaliation"[12]. The "non-tangible gains" may

10. Thaler distinguishes "core security interests" to be more central to the state, whereas the "national interest" is more contested.
11. Byman and Kreps 2010; Collins 2004
12. Notably, this applies when the militant groups in question are targeting a rival of the state in

be of strategic significance such as the weakening of an adversary, limiting conflict diffusion, increasing regional influence, or securing access to geopolitical resources (Saideman 2002; Aydin 2010; Kathman 2011; Byman 2005). Because the decision to sponsor is more tied to the interest of the sponsoring state, it would not be so far-fetched as to presume that groups that are sponsored will more than likely benefit from an extended period of sponsorship, It is thus difficult to ascertain whether there may exist a sufficient theoretical distinction in the effect of state sponsorship by whether they were present at the start of the alliance as opposed to later, given how the effect of state sponsorship accumulated over time and duration.

Outline of the Dissertation

This dissertation proceeds with five additional chapters.

Chapter II introduces the theoretical framework of my argument by first introducing the prevailing understanding and insight the existing literature has on the drivers and consequences of state sponsorship. I proceed to present the theoretical mechanisms that form my theory on militant cooperation, by drawing from relevant research on interorganizational cooperation and organizational dynamics.

In chapter III and chapter IV I empirically test the key claims of my theory by first proceeding to lay out my research design by introducing the dataset and the key variables I will be using for my analysis. I then go on to highlight the estimation strategy and model parameters, before moving on to presenting the regression output and explaining the results.

question.

Chapter V delves into an illustrative case study that compares state-sponsored Hamas and its alliance ties with other Palestinian militants, with Al Qaeda's relationship with its network of allies and affiliates. In the case of Hamas, I focus on how Iran's sponsorship affected its relationship with other Palestinian militants. On the other hand, despite not being sponsored, Al Qaeda was able to overcome challenges to collective action because of the important role the leader played in establishing and maintaining its network of allies and affiliates.

I then go on to wrap up the dissertation in chapter VI by reviewing key findings and discussing their implications, as well as presenting tentative directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

THEORY OF ALLIANCE MANAGEMENT

What do the groups Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis have in common? They are all increasingly sophisticated, non-state violent organizations that are rising in power and reach in the Middle East[1]. Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya ("The Islamic Resistance Movement" in Arabic), is a Palestinian Sunni Islamist militant group with a political party that has controlled the Gaza Strip since 2006. Its charter lays out a clear goal of destroying the state of Israel and establishing Islamic law. Hezbollah, whose name means "Party of God", is a Shia Muslim organization based in Lebanon. It came along in the early 1980s and grew into a full political party now controlling parts of Lebanon. The Houthi rebels, otherwise known as Ansar Allah ("Supporters of God"), are a Shia Islamist political and military organization operating in northern Yemen, rooted in Zaydi Shiite beliefs.

1. Tara D. Sonenshine, "A triple threat in the Middle East: Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis", Opinion, The Hill, March 21, 2024.

These groups are closely aligned groups that have cooperated throughout their years of alliance. Hamas has maintained close ties with Hezbollah since the 1980s and onward. While their relationship fell through the cracks due to sectarian differences and broader regional rivalries during the Syrian conflict in 2011[2], their relationship started gradually warming again starting the first half of 2017[3] and have stayed warm ever since. Hezbollah also holds close ties with the Houthi rebels, providing them with military, political, and monetary support in addition to organizational and tactical advising[4].

Another significant commonality these three groups share is that they are all benefactors of Iranian sponsorship. Part of what is known as Iran's "Axis of Resistance" to Israel and U.S. influence in the Middle East, the Axis includes not only the Palestinian Hamas, the Hezbollah movement in Lebanon, and Yemen's Houthi militia, but also various Shi'ite Muslim armed groups in Iraq and Syria[5]. Iran's Quds Force, part of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), has served as the main point of contact with these groups to provide them with training, weaponry, and funds to promote Iranian regional objectives – which indicates Iran's ongoing efforts at improving cooperation among these forces to form a more united front against mutual enemies[6]. However, this raises the question of whether receiving Iranian sponsorship affects the relationships these groups have with each other.

2. Hanin Ghaddar, "The Marriage and Divorce of Hamas and Hezbollah," Insight & Analysis, The Wilson Center, August 26, 2013

3. Maren Koss, "Flexible Resistance: How Hezbollah and Hamas Are Mending Ties," Malcolm H. Kerr Carnegie Middle East Center, July 11, 2018.

4. Katherine Zimmerman, "Appendix B.: Hezbollah and the Houthis." *Yemen's Houthis and the Expansion of Iran's Axis of Resistance.* American Enterprise Institute, March 1, 2022.

5. "What is Iran's 'Axis of Resistance'?" Reuters, August 5, 2024

6. Kali Robinson and Will Merrow, "Iran's Regional Armed Network," Council on Foreign Relations, April 15, 2024.

Once states establish sponsorship ties with militants, a key priority for the state is to minimize the inherent risks associated with cooperation breakdown caused by "agency slack", which refers to the risk of an agent deviating from the state's objectives and pursuing their own interests – thereby jeopardizing the state's preferences (Salehyan 2010). Understood within the context of the principal-agent (PA) theory framework[7] where the state takes on the role of the "principal" and the sponsored group as the "agent", the nature of such relationships requires the principal(s) to give up some authority over outcomes when delegating to their agent(s), which are sometimes motivated by operational or strategic concerns[8]. To safeguard against renegade behavior, states establish monitoring and control mechanisms through sanctioning funds or cutting off ties completely (Shapiro 2013).

Consequently, while state sponsorship is usually a positive for militant groups, it is not without its costs. An unpopular state sponsor may harm the group's legitimacy (cf.Tamm 2020), while easy access to external resources or excessive attention to foreign audiences can lead to a loss in domestic support (Jumbert and Lanz 2013; Weinstein 2007). Access to safe haven functions as a double-edged sword, in that it can become a liability for the sponsored group if the host state fears retaliation

7. Borne out of a rational choice framework that takes social life to be a series of contracts between two or more parties (Jenson 1983; Perrow 1986), this approach presents an analytical expression of the agency relationship – where one party considers entering into a contractual agreement with another in the expectation that the latter will subsequently choose an action that produces outcomes desired by the former (Moe 1982).

8. Examples of operational concerns includes the need to increase efficiency gains from specialization while internalizing transaction costs (Salehyan 2010). Strategic concerns, on the other hand, can be concerns related to the intent to signal the credibility of their commitments to be strong, or long-lasting; in this case, delegation is purported to resolve problems of policy-making instability when the principal's power may wane or when other principals may assume greater power, thus making it possible to enact change over a longer time horizon (Byman and Kreps 2010).

from the group's targets more than it values the group[9] (Carter 2012). It would therefore be a mistake to automatically assume militant groups are in a position of zero agency; militant groups would not willingly enter into a partnership unless they can either maintain their own agency and preferences to a tolerable degree, or that they find the gains from being sponsored justify the costs from increased levels of security vulnerability.

But how does one type of relationship, such as state sponsorship, interact with another – i.e., militant cooperation? I argue in this chapter that the involvement of state sponsors overall serves to reduce the likelihood of alliance failure between militant groups by facilitating continued cooperation, mediating coordination, and mitigating friction from competition. The reason why there seems to be a general lack of consensus on how state-sponsor involvement impacts preexisting alliance ties is that until now, there have not been any efforts at theoretically distinguishing between the different modes of alliance failure. By making the distinction between alliance rupture driven by group-level processes from those driven by by dyad-level processes, I aim to reconcile a major debate in the discipline that has found the impact of state sponsorship to be contradictory. I accomplish this by disaggregating the impact of state sponsor involvement on the durability of interorganizational cooperation from its longevity predicated on organizational survival. I then go on to theorize that, while the involvement of state sponsors generally reduces the likelihood of militant alliance termination, the magnitude of which depends on the

9. Pushing back against the narrative that a safe haven does little to increase a group's ability to maintain itself internally, Berkowitz notes that nevertheless the immediate organizational benefits of safe havens strongly suggest this form of support is closer in impact to material resources than nonmaterial.

type of support provided by the sponsor, as well as the conflict environment under which the allied dyad operates.

Sponsorship & Militant Cooperation

Militant cooperation takes on a variety of forms depending on whether they are ideological, logistical, operational, or some combination of all three. The resulting relationship manifests differently on a case-by-case basis, spanning from a noncommittal relationship with a limited number of transactions to a short-term tactical partnership (Moghadam 2017b, 3). Formal alliances between militants that are long-term are considered to be strategic alliances, defined as a form of high-end logistical[10] or operational[11] cooperation functioning to bolster organizational capacity for survival.

Such partnerships usually tend to depend on a high degree of ideological affinity and are marked by a relatively high degree of trust between each other. This is exemplified by the relationship between Al Qaeda and most of its formal affiliates such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) or Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (JFS) (Moghadam 2017a, 12). Accomplished by pooling resources, transmitting knowledge and expertise, and increasing access to tactical and technological information and weaponry (Horowitz and Potter 2014), this also has the benefit of increasing the future bargaining leverage in favor of those that are under cooperative agreements (Christia 2012). Furthermore, stable alliances also function to make up for operational deficiencies – such as mobilizing resources, attracting foreign aid, and so on (Blair and Potter 2023).

10. Moghadam (2017b)
11. Phillips (2019)

Given these potential gains, it would therefore be in the best interest of militant groups to stay aligned once they enter into alliances. Yet despite such benefits, alliances between militant groups are supposedly rare, and in theory, not sustainable due to the significant challenges they present – including but not limited to elevated security risk from increased visibility, concerns of betrayal, and difficulties in institutionalizing power-sharing arrangements (Jones 2017). Furthermore, the violent and clandestine nature of militant groups makes them all the more vulnerable to steep trade-offs between efficiency and security[12] (Braun 2018), making it not only an extremely difficult task for alliances to form but an even more insurmountable feat in maintaining those alliances.

For those alliances that do endure, existing research finds that militant alliances can prescribe and constrain behavior, shape future expectations, reduce potential infighting and rivalries between groups party to the alliance, and provide reassurances of the relationship's durability (Byman 2014). These findings substantiate the potential for inter-group dynamics within alliances to be transmutative – pushing back against much of the existing literature's static treatment of alliances and the notion of these alliances as self-perpetuating (Bacon 2013). More importantly, they allude to the constantly evolving nature of the alliance themselves to address both external and internal pressures that may jeopardize the cohesion of the alliance.

Despite such flexibility, certain types of pressures invariably cause damage to cooperation, leading to a rupture in the alliance. A key takeaway from the interstate alliance[13] literature is that alliances are not permanent. In so much as there are al-

12. More widely known as the terrorist's dilemma, where the tools needed to increase the collective capacity of a group are the very tools that put these groups at risk (Shapiro 2013).

13. Otherwise known as military alliances, interstate alliances are defined as formal or informal

liances that end because they have fulfilled their purpose or because the issue/threat that the alliance aimed to neutralize overpowers or incapacitates it, there are also those that end from opportunistic abrogation[14]. What this implies is that the different modes of alliance termination are driven by different causal processes. Provided that the same logic applies to militant alliances, it would therefore be erroneous to assume that all militant alliances come to a uniform end; rather, the clandestine nature of violent organizations poses a unique set of barriers to forming alliances that may also result in different processes leading to their collapse.

Unfortunately, the mechanisms and motivations behind the dissolution of cooperation among militant groups remain largely unexamined; the few studies that do exist (such as those by Bacon (2018, 357), Mir (2018, 55), Bacon and Arsenault (2019) and Bencherif and Campana (2017)) often attribute inter-organizational distrust and mismanagement as the primary factors leading to such breakdowns (Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022). But to determine *what* precipitates or hinders the lifespan of militant cooperation, we must simultaneously consider the "*how*" – the different ways in which they fail. In her analysis of how terrorist groups end, Cronin (2006) stresses the importance of theoretically distinguishing between the different modes of group failure[15], because the likelihood of group failure, and the ways in which they occur,

relationships of security cooperation formed to counterbalance against a common threat or power (Walt 1987).

14. For more on interstate alliance breakdowns, see Leeds 2003; Christensen and Snyder 1990; Miller 2003; Berkemeier and Fuhrmann 2018; Leeds and Savun (2007) finds that interstate alliances are most vulnerable to opportunistic abrogation when there are changes to factors such as the level of external threat faced by the allies, the military capabilities of the allied states (Leeds 2003), the extent to which policy goals are shared by the allies (Christensen and Snyder 1990), and the availability of substitute allies (Miller 2003).

15. In this particular work, Cronin broadly identifies the modes of terrorist group failure to be through internal dissolution and target elimination.

are shaped by internal and external factors at varying degrees. To illustrate, while factors such as the level of resources available to a group may affect the risk of both types of failure similarly, Carter (2012) finds that the impact of state sponsorship on the likelihood of group failure may vary depending on whether it proceeds through as an internal failure or through a forceful external elimination.

Likewise, systematic identification and evaluation of factors that contribute to or damage interorganizational cooperation would necessitate that a theoretical distinction should be made between alliance ruptures driven by group-level processes (such as group collapse), from those that are by intergroup processes (such as interorganizational split). Because, much like Carter's findings on the variability of state sponsorship in precipitating group failure, I question whether the disagreements in the discipline on whether the effect of external state sponsorship strengthens or weakens militant cooperation[16] may be caused due to a lack of this conceptual differentiation. With this in mind, I now turn to present my theory in the next section, where I lay out the conditions under which state sponsorship functions to mitigate threats to alliance instability leading to its breakdown.

State Sponsors as Alliance Facilitators

Motives for inter-group conflict amongst militant organizations are heavily driven by conflict of interest resulting from differences in ideology and values, disagreements over strategy, different priorities, and overlapping ambitions (Pischedda 2020). Ideological commonality, in particular, is identified by Blair et al. (2022) to facilitate

16. Scholarly works by Bapat and Bond (2012) and Popovic (2018) find state sponsorship to strengthen militant cooperation, while Tamm (2016) and Salehyan, Siroky, and Wood (2014) argues otherwise.

durable forms of militant cooperation by lengthening the shadow of the future (Bapat and Bond 2012), facilitating supervision and enforcement (Byman 2013; Piazza 2018; Marcus 2007), providing access to common authority and social structures (Parkinson 2021), and enhancing trust (Atran, Axelrod, and Davis 2007; Maynard 2019; Walter 2017). On the other hand, shared ideologies alone cannot sufficiently account for why groups cooperate, much less form alliances. The now-infamous split between the ideologically like-minded Al Qaeda Central and the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) in 2013 illustrates this point very well.

But if alliances between groups with the same "strategic goals" (e.g., regime change) can have conflicting "organizational goals" (e.g., recruitment, funding, tactics) (Krause 2013; Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour 2012b), the other way around is also possible; cooperation between the ideologically incompatible groups Shiite Hizballah and Sunni jihadi Al Qaeda serves as an example of when operational expediency trumps the pursuit of common ideological goals (Moghadam 2017b). This is because the expected value of forming alliances is greater than not doing so, which would make it in the best interest of the parties involved to maintain cooperation for as long as they can gain from the alliance. If alliance formation is indeed a method of counterbalancing organizational weaknesses by leveraging relative strengths (Plapinger and Potter 2017), a successful alliance would be a durable[17] one, in which it functions as a strategy to reduce organizational deficiencies that threaten the organizational effectiveness or efficiency integral for its survival (Barnard 1968).

In this section, I argue that allied militant dyads that have state sponsor involve-

17. The durability of which would be contingent on all parties maintaining satisfaction over their respective gains.

ment are more likely to have enduring ties with one another in three ways. First, it is because the tangible support state sponsors provide serves to incentivize cooperation by helping militant groups absorb the costs of cooperation. Second, when allies share sponsors it better facilitates the means of coordination by institutionalizing and formalizing alliance ties. Lastly, the resources provided by state sponsors indirectly contribute to alliance durability by increasing organizational resiliency for group survival.

Subsidize Cooperation

An increasing body of research has started to examine the militant relationships in conjunction with other militant organizations, moving beyond solely concentrating on their interactions with the state. Much like countries or firms, militant groups also have evolved to establish cooperative ties, given the assumption that collective action is a rational response possible only when sufficient resources – such as legitimacy, money, facilities, and labor – are available (McCarthy and Zald 1977a). These studies explore motivations that may drive groups with a common goal to cooperate or determine that they are better off competing[18]; groups that started out allied under a common cause may end up fragmented[19], while others that were initially conflictual may decide to cooperate in face of a common threat – serving to underline the transient nature of inter-group relations between militant actors[20]. But more importantly, this indicates that there is a wide range of cooperative and competitive interactions between militant groups situated between the two extremes

18. Fjelde and Nilsson (2012), Pischedda (2018), Mendelsohn (2021), Moghadam (2017b), and Bacon (2018).
19. Bakke, Cunningham, and Seymour (2012a) and Schulhofer-Wohl (2020)
20. Christia (2012) and Schwab (2023a)

of a formal alliance and an all-out war.

When it comes to interorganizational alliances, existing literature in management sciences and organizational theory identifies two critical components of interorganizational collaboration. First is cooperation, which is defined as "the joint pursuit of an agreed-upon goal(s) in a manner corresponding to a shared understanding about contributions and payoffs" (Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov 2012). It is a viable strategy for organizations when faced with resource scarcity[21] or performance distress. Generally pursued as a response to crisis (Reid 1964) or from environmental pressures (Aldrich 1972, 7), interorganizational cooperation is particularly more likely when there is a need to access resources that are otherwise unattainable, free internal resources for alternative uses, and/or employ a more efficient use of existing resources (Schermerhorn Jr. 1975)[22].

Likewise, empirical data on militant alliances further substantiates the claim that the groups that tend to survive against all odds are mostly those that have formed partnerships (Blair et al. 2020). For example, the anti-Shiite Pakistani Deobandi group Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) requested to become allies with Al Qaeda after the fall of the Taliban and the subsequent loss of safe haven in Afghanistan – which Al Qaeda accepted (Shahzad 2011, 9). Indeed, recent studies show that cooperation yields strategic and tactical gains – such as mitigating capacity deficits (Byman 2014; Moghadam 2017b; Bacon 2018), increasing longevity (Price 2012; Phillips 2014), enhancing lethality (Asal and Rethemeyer 2008) – that not only increase their chances

21. Scarcity such as in organizational shortages of funds and manpower (Levine, White, and Paul 1963), or in facilities, services, information, and clients (Reid 1964).

22. Refer to Thompson and McEwen (1958), Levine and White (1961), Evan (1965), and Aiken and Hage (1968) for theoretical treatment in support for this hypothesis.

of survival from external threats but also from internal conflicts as well. Cooperation also helps to mitigate challenges to mobilization efforts as well (Phillips 2014, 2)[23], such as the case where al-Shabaab was able to recruit more foreign fighters after having pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda in 2009 (Moghadam 2017b, 23). Militant alliances are, therefore, a means to collectively decrease the level of threat faced to either accomplishing a durable compromise or settlement, the elimination of a subset of a rival organization(s), or becoming eliminated itself (Sinno 2008).

However, the drawbacks to interorganizational cooperation result in a certain degree of loss of decision-making autonomy. But more importantly, it levies a hefty demand in cooperation costs: this involves immediate costs of cooperation such as increased requirements for internal organizational coordination (Aiken and Hage 1968), expenditures for transportation and communication (Gueztkow 1966), and expenditures in time (Reid 1964) – necessitating the direct expenditure of scarce organizational resources to establish and/or maintain cooperation. As such, cooperation failures are rooted in conflict arising from diverging/ misaligned interests, such as those over resource-allocation decisions (Hamel 2000) or conflicting strategic objectives (Park and Ungson 2001), and may be susceptible to different sets of environmental stimuli (Koka, Madhavan, and Prescott 2006; Koza and Lewin 1998; Madhavan, Koka, and Prescott 1998). Thus, internal choices or external pressures may lead to changes in the level of interest in cooperation or direct conflict of interest and rivalry in the relationship (Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov 2012, 535). Hence, I argue that state sponsors contribute to fostering militant cooperation

23. Similarly, Klandermans and Oegema 1987, 520 finds there to be a positive impact of cooperation on the mobilization efforts for social movements as well.

by ameliorating the costly burden that comes from establishing and maintaining cooperation between militant allies.

Facilitate Coordination

A second, less identified facet of interorganizational collaboration is coordination. Broadly understood as "the linking, meshing, synchronization, or alignment of actions" (Aiken et al. 2012; Okhuysen and Bechky 2009), it is defined as "the deliberate and orderly alignment or adjustment of partners' actions to achieve jointly determined goals" (Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov 2012). The efforts made to engage in coordination is in managing the task interdependence likely to stem from allocations in the division of labor (Raveendran and Puranam 2014), in addition to managing the uncertainties from internal tasks or the external environment (Bensaou and Venkatraman 1995; Clark and Fujimoto 1991; Lawrence and Lorsch 1967; Ven, Delbecq, and Koenig 1995). It is generally understood that both higher degrees of interdependence and levels of uncertainty demand more extensive forms of coordination (Argote 1982; Galbraith 1977; Thompson 1967).

By its very definition, all alliances face coordination challenges due to task interdependence and some division of labor – necessitating coordination provisions that facilitate information exchange and joint planning engagement, so that not only does it ensure compatible timing and sequencing of actions (Palmer 1983), but also in productive combination of resources and capabilities (Das and Teng 2000a) as well. By extension, underdeveloped or nonexistent coordination procedures result in process deficiencies, which have been commonly identified by the literature on organization and strategic management to be an important factor for premature alliance termination. After allying, parties need to focus on managing alliance pro-

cesses to ensure that negligence in the relational and learning processes does not undermine alliance continuity (Tjemkes, Vos, and Burgers 2018). If alliance ties are not maintained and managed through formalized processes, the already fragile relationship becomes less enticing for militant groups to maintain. This burden becomes complicated even further by their inherent nature to be highly insular (Bacon 2017), making it less likely for alliances to continue expending precious time and resources irrespective of whatever potential benefits are expected from maintaining cooperation.

On the other hand, alliances are more durable and less likely to break down when the relationship has become institutionalized through a series of formal and/or informal processes. Institutionalization is the process by which organizations acquire identity and legitimacy, in which behavioral practices transform into norms that become embedded in organizational life (Eberlein 2011). Militant groups also need to implement such processes to institutionalize the relational ties by imbuing them with meanings and values that fall within the goals and aims of the organizations that have allied. This can be accomplished through ways such as establishing councils or committees aimed at coordinating military and political efforts, or by carrying out routine joint training practices[24].

State sponsor involvement may not only help overcome collective action problems by acting as a neutral third-party mediator, it may sometimes even be necessary to facilitate continued coordination. During the Afghan insurgency in the 1980s, the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) played a crucial role in

24. Much like how firms collaborate, coordination provides groups with the opportunity to jointly train, develop new skills, and transmit knowledge and expertise (Horowitz and Potter 2014).

helping to design a coordination structure that brought together the seven resistance political parties by keeping them stocked and getting them to fight efficiently[25]. Likewise, the support provided by the United States, France, and the United Kingdom to the National Transitional Council (NTC)[26] in Libya in 2011 facilitated coordination among a fractured network of insurgents and militia to overthrow the Qaddafi regime.

This is due to the coercive component that state sponsorship brings to its relationship with its agents. Regardless of the mutual gains earned from state support of militant organizations, the relational dynamic between militants and their sponsors fundamentally remains hierarchical. This is because the state holds more bargaining leverage in its capacity to coerce action or terminate support. Militant allies with shared sponsors are therefore more susceptible to the underlying nature of this threat to coerce further coordination if it is in the strategic interest of the shared sponsor(s). Such expectations therefore serve to function as a way to prevent parties from reneging on the alliance, leading to potential short-term cooperation becoming a long-term alliance because the shared sponsor factors into the cost-benefit analysis of maintaining or terminating cooperation.

Reinforce Organizational Resilience

Lastly, a fundamental feature of interorganizational alliances is for the allying groups to have resiliency in their organizational framework. Organizations are the vehi-

25. See Yousaf and Adkin (2001, 38–43) and Sinno (2008, 119–172) for more details.

26. Otherwise known as the Transitional National Council (TNC), the alliance comprised a diverse group of people that included: regime defectors, representative of key tribes, former prisoners, human rights activists, lawyers, intellectuals (Sawani 2013), and among others, an increasing number of expats with already established connections abroad (Chivvis 2014, 32).

cles for sustained collective action structured for the pursuit of a common mission (Mintzberg 2023, 2). They allow for formalized coordination, maintenance of discipline, minimization of free riding, efficient mobilization and distribution of resources, preservation and generation of necessary learning, and purposeful application of strategy and tactics (Sinno 2008). It also refers to internal group characteristics such as membership, policies, and structures (Weinstein 2007, 19). Here, organizational structure refers to the formal configuration between individuals and groups regarding the allocation of tasks, responsibilities, and authority within the organization (Gailbraith 1987).

When it comes to identifying the ideal organizational form for political entities, the debate comes down to two arguments: those that advance a centralized bureaucratic model versus advocates of a decentralized informal model. Centralized, bureaucratic structures provide technical expertise and coordination essential in institutional change efforts but are less effective at mobilizing "grassroots level" participation; while decentralized structures maximize personal transformation, which mobilizes grassroots level participation and ensures group maintenance, but often at the cost of strategic effectiveness (J. C. Jenkins 1983). The former is characterized as having routinized tasks, a clear division of labor, hierarchical decision-making processes, and codified membership criteria; while the latter is found to have limited resources and often managed by volunteers, have few procedures or policies, do not have routinized decision structures, adapt to meet demands, are influenced by individual leaders, and tend to have autonomous chapters (Staggenborg 1988, 1989).

Proponents of a centralized bureaucratic model[27] argue that a formalized struc-

27. Gamson (1990) and McCarthy and Zald (1977b, 1977a)

ture with a clear division of the labor maximizes mobilization by transforming diffuse commitments into clearly defined roles and that a centralized decision-making structure increases combat readiness by reducing internal conflicts (J. C. Jenkins 1983). Strategically, a centralized and inclusive structure is better suited for attaining short-range goals involving institutional change (Curtis and Zurcher 1974) in which organizational survival is not the dominant concern (J. Freeman 1979). Proponents also find bureaucratic organizations to be more successful in getting recognition as legitimate movement representatives (Gamson 1990), gaining access to established political channels (Ferree and Hess 1985), and sustaining ongoing interactions with diverse constituencies (Tarrow 1999).

On the other hand, advocates of a decentralized informal model [28] argue that decentralized groups with a minimum division of labor and integrated by informal networks and an overarching ideology are more effective, in that a segmented, decentralized structure maximizes mobilization by providing extensive interpersonal bonds which generate solidarity and reinforce ideological commitments. Strategically, this model is better for attaining personal changes (Curtis and Zurcher 1974) in orientation and attitude through recruitment and conversion in which organizational survival is a dominant concern (J. Freeman 1979). In addition, such a structure is highly adaptive, encouraging tactical experimentation, competition among subgroups, and lessened vulnerability to suppression or cooptation by authorities (J. C. Jenkins 1983), while facing fewer barriers preventing them from engaging in disruptive action (Tarrow 1999).

While terrorist organizations have been able to survive despite sweeping coun-

28. Gerlach and Hine (1970) and Piven and Cloward (1977)

terterrorism strategies due to their disaggregated, decentralized structure, those that have thrived have structures that fall somewhere between the bureaucratic and decentralized models – which affords the mobilization advantages of decentralization as well as the tactical ones of centralization (J. C. Jenkins 1983). Throughout this process, external sponsors tend to encourage centralization and formalization (Sinno 2008, 34), as well as foster bureaucratization (Mintzberg 1979, 288–297). This push by external sponsors toward internal restructuring increases organizational resiliency, which is the organizational capability to "react to and recover from duress or disturbances with minimal effects on stability and functioning[29]" and to survive long term[30], by adjusting to and absorbing strain when faced with adversity[31] (You and Williams 2023).

In the context of militant groups, this would not only include dealing with internal pressures such as collective action and principal-agent problems (Jones 2017), but it also refers to organizational threats that come from countermilitant[32] strikes such as leadership decapitation. The capacity for foreign sponsors to modify or completely reshape organizational structure comes in handy in this case because there is a lower likelihood of organizational collapse due to power vacuums or internal strife and infighting for control that is most likely to result from the loss in leadership.

29. Williams et al. 2017, 740
30. Bharma, Dani, and Burnard 2011; Ortiz-de-Mandojana and Bansal 2016
31. e.g., Bunderson and Sutcliffe 2002; Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003; Limnios et al. 2014
32. Here I use the term "countermilitancy" to conceptually encompass both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

Threats to Alliance Management

Alliance instabilities are understood as major changes or dissolution of alliances that are unplanned from the perspective of the allied parties (Inkpen and Beamish 1997). One of the frameworks coming out of the literature on strategic management and organization sciences that examine the instabilities of alliances is the internal tensions perspective. This approach states that strategic alliances are plagued internally by pairs of competing forces, such as cooperation and competition[33], where competition is defined as pursuing one's own interest at the expense of others, while cooperation is the pursuit of mutual interests and common benefits in alliances.

Interorganizational cooperation is designed to create advantages that are only obtainable through collaboration. But that does not necessarily preclude strategic alliances from competition. Rather, Das and Teng (2000b) contends that the simultaneous existence of these two opposing forces[34] is not only a salient component that characterizes the relationship, but also indispensable for a sustainable and successful alliance. Cooperation guarantees a seamless working relationship essential for joint action, while competition safeguards the loss of group-specific advantages through negligence and inattention.

The high failure rate of strategic alliances is therefore reasonably attributed to the tension between simultaneous cooperation and competition. To put it differently, strategic alliances can only be maintained if there is some kind of balance between

33. The other pairs within this framework as identified by Das and Teng are rigidity versus flexibility, and short-term versus long-term orientations.

34. To clarify, the forces of cooperation emphasizes goodwill, collective interests, and common benefits (Khanna, Gulati, and Nohria 1998), while those of competition subscribe to opportunistic behavior, zero-sum game, and private benefits (Yoshino and Rangan 1995).

the conflicting tensions. Opportunistic behavior becomes prevalent in the absence or lack of cooperation, which bars the continuation of a satisfactory partnership. When alliances start moving towards too much competition, it leads to a breakdown in the alliance. Likewise, when alliances become too cooperative, it introduces carelessness in the transference of know-how and competence. This allows for a gradual decline in the collective benefit of cooperation as there are decreasing gains out of the comparative advantage that initially got them to establish an alliance in the first place. The skewness in the balance towards too much cooperation is therefore similarly detrimental to the durability of alliances by upsetting the balance between the tensions that keep the alliance engaged and driven.

When it comes to militant alliances, the more concerning aspect of alliance termination is due to unchecked, or too much competition in the alliance. This is exacerbated by the unique circumstances that situate them to face the clandestine collective action dilemma (Braun 2018). The first component is the high-risk collective action problem where mobilization is difficult due to the high costs and odds of getting caught[35]. The second component is maintaining secrecy for these networks of collective action to be sustained because discovery by countermilitant forces not only leads to operational failure, but also results in further security threats that follow (Sullivan 2016). While more secrecy lowers the probability of discovery and makes participation more likely, the trade-off lies in the fact that the recruitment, coordination, and communication for mobilization (Loveman 1998) all significantly

35. The underground nature of militant activity necessitates the establishment of communication lines, safe houses, forged documents, intel, and the procurement of sufficient food (Finkel 2017; Parkinson 2013). Studies have found dense organizational structures and interpersonal networks to be key in solving such problems (Lenin 1970; McAdam 1998; Morris 1986; della-Porta 2013).

increase the likelihood of detection and jeopardy (Goffman 1970; Baker and Faulkner 1993).

This puts militant groups to be very selective about whether they maintain ties that have exhausted their usefulness or threaten their resource acquisition. However, the game drastically changes when state sponsors are involved in invoking security guarantees in addition to providing necessary supplies and resources that may otherwise be scarce. These guarantees are particularly effective when it comes to checking possible competition amongst allies. One of the primary internal drivers of conflict in alliances is the lack of accountability in reigning in the competitive impulse of groups to maximize their interests – to prioritize organizational gains at the cost of the alliance in the event its own survival is at risk. Such types of competitive dynamics tend to affect alliances that are based in the same region, and in particular, in cases when there have been signs of competition[36] – defined as signs of rivalry or conflict – during the alliance.

Moderate Competition in Cooperation

Cooperation failures resulting from diverging or misaligned interests are most often further exacerbated by opportunism, which is defined as economic actors' tendency to pursue self-interest irrespective of "gentlemanly agreements" or moral obligation (Williamson 1985). Opportunism tends to be especially ripe when the gains from competition outweigh the benefits from cooperation. While cooperation is recognized to be beneficial, this does not necessarily free alliances from competition (Das

36. Signs of competition are not limited to pledges of violence and other similarly hostile statements, some sporadic violence that does not appear to have been coordinated by the organizational leadership as part of a violent campaign for eradication or destruction, or evidence of antagonistic or otherwise hostile statements from group leaders.

and Teng 2000b, 85).

If located in crowded conflict environments, it becomes especially imperative to their survival that groups strategically distinguish themselves from competitors and secure adequate backing (Schwab 2023b). One way militant groups react to competition is to engage in competitive outbidding[37]. Defined as the use of escalatory acts of violence as a means to distinguish itself[38], this strategy is used when militant groups compete to secure funding and supporters by demonstrating organizational effectiveness and resolve (Bloom 2005; Kydd and Walter 2006)[39].

While such competitive dynamics lead these groups to increase the pace or scope of their attacks to gain support (Bloom 2004), outbidding tends to reflect terrorist groups' tendency to engage in activities driven by organizational considerations rather than strategic objectives (Conrad and Greene 2015). However, when groups have sponsors, the strategic and operational support provided by the state helps to ameliorate the pressures that may inevitably surface from operating in a competitive environment. This serves to not only exert an indirect effect on the decision-making process of militant groups by shaping the options available to their leaders, it also directly influences them by shaping their strategic decisions to either expand or restrict their activities (DeVore 2012) without necessarily resorting to outbidding, and thereby slipping towards dissolution.

37. Theoretical treatments of outbidding have expanded from not just being discussed within the context of civil wars and domestic political competition (Malone 2022), but now also include its application to include the study of competitive outbidding by transnational armed groups (Farrell 2020) – serving to implicitly recognize the role competition plays in the tactical choices made by militant organizations in general.

38. Oots (1989), Crenshaw (1985, 1987), and Kydd and Walter (2006)

39. There seem to be mixed results when it comes to discussing their efficacy. Refer to Crenshaw (1985), Chenoweth (2010), Findley and Young (2012), Nemeth (2014), and Conrad and Greene (2015) for empirical tests of its strategic efficacy.

This is most commonly the case when militant groups are based in close geographical proximity or fighting in the same conflict. They commonly face the reality of having to share resources and recruits. When groups rely on and seek support from the same sources (Bacon 2017) and compete in the same political market (Phillips 2015), we understand these groups to be competitive rivals[40]. Rival groups tend to treat resources as mutually exclusive because they vie for the same finite recruits, funds, or territory (Bandy and Smith 2005).

Unlike previous treatments portraying rivalry and competition in militant relationships as static, a more accurate approach would be to view them as dynamic components of interorganizational relations. Similar to any type of relationship, militant dynamics can and do change over time. Much like how people can be best friends one day, and worst enemies the next, militant allies that cooperate today can become competitive the next – particularly if they become situated to compete with each other in the same geographical area for resources and support. At this point there are most probably only two options open to the militant dyad: try to resolve their differences and transition back to being cooperative, or fail to come to terms and decide to terminate their alliance.

While it would be ideal for militant dyads to go with the first option in the long run, it is difficult for militant groups to compromise without outside assistance. However, compromising becomes a lot more feasible when state sponsors are involved due to the resources that they can provide, which helps to reduce such pressures that may come from trying to secure a finite amount of resources

40. Building upon Phillips's concept of intrafield rivalry, competitive rivalry refers to when groups are subject to "competitive exclusion" – groups that compete with other organizations draw upon the same resources (Nemeth 2014).

in overlapping conflict environments. I therefore argue that state sponsors help to mitigate threats to cooperation failure that arise from resource dependencies which run the risk of opportunism and consequently lead to an unplanned termination of the alliance.

Check Competition Through Coordination

Processes of institutionalizing cooperation in formal alliances address two challenges parties face after their initial formation. First, much like how leaders of insurgent organizations face the dual challenge of ensuring that their deployed units have the endowments needed to fight well – while also ensuring that they do not take advantage of these goods to pursue their particular interests at the expense of the organization (Worsnop 2017) – alliance members also face a similar dilemma, but face the task of artificially creating methods of socially embedding followers from different groups into the cooperative arrangement. Employing methods of institutionalizing the relational ties of the alliance therefore ensures any attempts at coordinating logistical or operational contingencies can be carried out under a unified command and control structure, reducing the likelihood of defection as well as insubordination.

Second, but more importantly, these mechanisms serve to reduce potential conflict that may arise from diverging opinions – such as how process goals should be accomplished to achieve outcome goals, or vice versa – or irreconcilable ideological divides, that may result in adverse strategies[41] undermining the alliance (Hafez 2017). While it is not improbable to institutionalize relations without third-party

41. Some strategies that are identified to mitigate the dual threats of defection and marginalization are balancing, outbidding, spoiling, defecting, and fighting.

involvement, the fact that only half out of the two-thirds of cases involving multiple groups in an insurgency succeed in establishing formalized cooperation speaks to the difficulties inherent in overcoming personal rivalries and ideological differences (Jones 2017, 106).

The impact of shared sponsors is even more direct when they are all situated in the same region. Not only does geographical proximity reduce direct costs to collective action and coordination, but it also has the effect of reducing the likelihood of coordination failure[42], which are traced to flawed design or flawed implementation of coordination mechanisms. Coordination failures are found to take the form of omissions of crucial activities, spatial or temporal misallocation of resources, and incompatibility of activities intended to be complementary (Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov 2012, 538). These issues are less likely to impede coordination for militant dyads based in the same region.

Resiliency through Leadership Efficacy

I have discussed conditions under which state sponsorship may facilitate or jeopardize intergroup alliances. But there also are militant alliances that endure without external support from state sponsors. In place of state sponsors, the alternative explanation would be that charismatic leaders, such as Osama Bin Laden, would be the glue that holds alliances together. More specifically, leadership efficacy – particularly

42. Coordination failure in economics points to situations in which economic actors would have been able to achieve better cooperative equilibria had they coordinated their actions (Cooper 1998). In general, research on coordination failure in economics tends to focus on problems that prevent actors from providing resources to a mutually beneficial joint effort – rather than problems that affect the combination or integration of resources in a joint effort. For this argument, I utilize Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov's application of the organizational theory concept of coordination failure, which emphasizes issues related to combination and integration.

the leader's influence over internal group cohesion and external relations with other groups – would strongly determine the strength and resilience of interorganizational relations. This underscores the strategic importance of decapitation strategies for militant networks that do not heavily rely on state sponsor support.

One emerging strand of research that originates from the organizational perspective to understand intergroup dynamics has focused on the role of individual leaders as a significant determinant of group outcome (Bacon and Arsenault 2019). This trend was borne out of the counterterrorism policies in the aftermaths of Al Qaida's deadly attack on September 11th, 2001, which had evolved around leadership targeting of terrorist organizations, citing their removal to more likely foster organizational collapse (Bush 2003). Otherwise known as decapitation strategies, this approach evoked a series of military operations through raids and drone strikes to target leaders of al-Qaida and other militants in the Middle East (Jordan 2014).

Some of the more renowned casualties of this strategy include Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Iraqi-born leader of the Islamic State (ISIS), whose death was predicted to result in substantial weakening – and maybe even the demise – of ISIS. This expectation was borne out of the argument that Baghdadi is irreplaceable due to his claim of lineage to the prophet Muhammad, religious credentials and education in Koranic studies, and operational success in creating an Islamic State (Jordan 2019). More recently, a United States drone strike succeeded in killing Ayman al-Zawahiri – the successor of Osama bin Laden[43] – as part of a move started by former President Barack Obama away from the use of large-scale counterinsurgency

43. The infamous founder of Al Qaida responsible for the September 11th attacks (among others), who was also killed by U.S. special operation forces in 2011.

campaigns using conventional forces in favor of intelligence-driven long-range strike operations (Dobbins 2022).

Empirical findings seem to indicate mixed results when it comes to their efficacy in inciting organizational collapse. On the one hand, proponents provide examples of groups like the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Sendero Luminoso, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and Aum Shinrikyo to illustrate how the arrest of the charismatic, central leader severely damaged the group (Bacon and Arsenault 2019, 232). Price (2012) finds that only 30% of organizations whose leaders were targeted had survived by the end of 2008 in his study of leadership decapitation on the mortality rate of 207 terrorist groups from 1970-2008. Similarly, support for leadership decapitation finds killing to be more effective in inciting group collapse (Langdon, Sarapu, and Wells 2004, 75), while capturing the leader crucially diminishes the operational effectiveness of hierarchical groups to carry out attacks (D'Alessio, Stolzenberg, and Dariano 2014, 890), and ultimately, reduce the capacity of militant networks to carry out attacks in the long term (David 2003, 118–120).

Conversely, critics go on to argue that leadership decapitation makes it easier for groups to increase recruitment and generate support for their cause[44]. The aftermath of Baghdadi's death illustrated the resilience of many militant organizations to such external shocks where, in contrast to expectations of having struck a near-fatal blow to ISIS, what followed a week later instead were announcements of a successor – indicating Baghdadi's success in institutionalizing essential organizational structures (Jordan 2019). Tominaga (2019) attributes the source of this resilience to be in experiencing repeated incidences of leadership targeting by counterterrorist forces in

44. Kaplan et al. 2005, 230, Cronin 2006, 22, and Carvin 2012.

the same regions (i.e., Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen), of the same organizations (i.e., Al-Qaeda and the Taliban) – casting further doubt on the efficacy of leadership decapitation in inducing group collapse.

While the efficacy of decapitation strategies has turned out mixed results on its capacity to facilitate organizational collapse[45], they have been shown to increase the probability of inciting alliance termination by incapacitating targeted groups, stoking fear among allies, and inducing preference divergence over strategy (Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022). Findings from Blair, Horowitz, and Potter (2022) attribute the consequences of leadership removal to trigger splits by undermining inter-organizational trust and manage to reinforce our understanding of militant leaders to play a critical role in cultivating capabilities, controlling behavior, and sustaining the trust integral to alliances.

But would the efficacy of inciting abrupt leadership change to break alliances apart still hold steadfast when there are other players involved that may facilitate stability? While leadership decapitation strategies may hold up when allied groups hold complete autonomy and agency over their goals and interests, it is questionable whether such disruption would similarly damage inter-organizational ties when the autonomy and agency of groups are tied to external forces that limit their capacity to terminate alliances. This line of inquiry directs attention to the external forces that may influence inter-organizational cooperation, most notably the involvement of state actors and its impact on militant alliances. Therefore, my analysis accounts for the impact of leadership decapitation by including it as a control variable.

45. This is primarily due to the conditions of their success being situated in organizational contexts of design and structure (i.e., the degree of bureaucratization or institutionalization) (Jordan 2014; Tominaga 2019).

CHAPTER III

SPONSORSHIP AND ALLIANCE FAILURE

In the last chapter, I argue that the involvement of state sponsors affects the longevity of alliances when it comes to militant dyads due to the hierarchical nature of state-militant power dynamics. Existing literature has moved from focusing primarily on evaluating the drivers of state-militant relationships to exploring the cooperative-competitive dynamics between militant groups. Given that the ramifications of relationships are never just localized and rather are more prone to causing a ripple effect, I assert that we should also be taking into account the impact state-militant relations have on militant-militant relations as well. The nature of transnational militant groups has evolved over the years to be more likely to take on the risks of exposure by establishing alliances, not just with other militant organizations, but with states as well. While this had the intended effect of increasing their likelihood of organizational survival, it is yet unclear how state sponsorship impacts militant cooperation.

In the previous chapter, I contend that the impact of state sponsorship has a non-negligible impact on increasing the longevity of militant alliances by providing the resources necessary to cover the costs of establishing cooperation, enforcing commitments to prevent reneging on alliance terms, and helping build organizational resilience. I now present empirical evidence for the hypotheses in support of my argument that state sponsors have a positive effect on militant alliance durability. Using comprehensive data that captures all militant relationships that range from 1971 to 2009, I first examine whether militant alliance dyads with state sponsorship are more likely to survive than those dyads that don't. I also examine whether sharing sponsors has an impact on the longevity of militant alliances. The statistical results of this analysis provide strong support for my hypotheses. State sponsorship matters when it comes to determining whether alliances between militant groups endure as opposed to breaking down. On the other hand, sharing sponsors positively affects the durability of alliances only when the allied dyad is geographically located in the same region.

Data

To ascertain whether state sponsor involvement has any bearing on militant cooperation, I draw heavily from Blair, Horowitz, and Potter (2022)'s analysis to conduct a first-stage correlation test using the Militant Group Alliances and Relationships (MGAR) data set (Blair et al. 2022). This is because the MGAR data set consists of the most overarching, comprehensive time-series data on cooperation between militant groups; specifically coding the network of ties among 2,613 militant organizations from 1950 to 2016. Constructed with the dyad-year as the unit of analysis, the data capture the dynamic quality of relationships between militant dyads that vary from

operational alliances to open rivalry and conflict. But more importantly, the relationships that are included in the data set are not only limited to those between militant groups but also with other entities, such as states. It also specifies the nature of cooperation, such as how closely linked the involved groups were and the type of support exchanged (material, training, territory, operational support and/or finances) – providing further opportunities for multifaceted testing of relationships.

The data I use for my analysis is a subset of the data from MGAR that has been paired with leadership decapitation data collected by Price (2012, 2018). Ranging from 1970 to 2008, it consists of data on 207 terrorist organizations worldwide in a group-year format. The data, which codes whether there has been a leadership turnover for the terrorist group in question, captures 204 cases of leadership decapitations and 95 other incidences of leadership exit[1]. While not all of the groups in Price's data experience some form of leadership removal, groups must have carried out at least four – out of which at least one fatal – attacks to satisfy the minimum criteria for inclusion. This serves to exclude groups that are weak and short-lived from the analysis, making it a hard test for alliance termination given that capable groups make more attractive allies.

All in all, the data sample I use for my analyses covers alliances for 519 distinct militant dyads from 1971 to 2009 in a directed dyad-year formation. Unfortunately, the lack of data on militant leadership removal beyond 2008 restricts our sample size even though data on militant alliances and state sponsorship extends further due to the necessity of testing the impact of state sponsor involvement unbiased by the impact of decapitation strategies. The data sample extends to 2009 to capture

1. Whether they'd be through natural death, expulsion, or resignation.

the impact of state sponsors and decapitation on alliance breakdowns lagged by one year.

State Sponsorship

Our primary independent variable is state sponsorship, which is a categorical indicator for whether group 1 in a group 1 – group 2 dyad is or is not state-sponsored, and whether group 1 shares state sponsorship with group 2. When it comes to defining the various forms of state support, two important dimensions must be considered: the first is whether they *directly* or *indirectly* contribute to the violence perpetuated by the militant groups they sponsor, and the second, whether such support is *intentionally* provided (San-Akca 2016). For the purpose of this analysis, we will be looking at state sponsorship that corresponds to the intentional provision of direct support – which includes the provision of a safe haven, training and training camps, funds, arms, logistics aid, and/or troops. The distribution of how the state sponsorship variable has been coded can be seen below in Table III.1.

Table III.1: Cross-tabulations of State Sponsorship and Alliance Failure

		# of Alliance Termination		
Characteristics	**Overall**, N = 7,100	**Never**, N = 3,556	**Once**, N = 3,134	**Multiple**, N = 410
State Sponsored				
No Spon	4,248 (70%)	2,426 (78%)	1,583 (61%)	239 (67%)
Grp1 Spon	1,448 (24%)	624 (20%)	709 (27%)	115 (32%)
Shared Spon	366 (6.0%)	50 (1.6%)	312 (12%)	4 (1.1%)

[1] n (%)

Alliance Termination

The primary dependent variable of interest is alliance termination, a binary indicator that denotes when an allied militant dyad ceases to be. A dyad is considered

to have terminated when either group ceases to exist; when there has been an outright alliance breakdown; or when there is no subsequent evidence of alliance continuation. As evident from the discussion in the previous chapter, I also include indicator variables that further distinguish whether the alliance termination occurred as a result of an inter-organizational split, as opposed to those that are a result of group collapse[2]. Figure III.1 illustrates the proportion of allied dyads in the data by whether a dyad had ever experienced alliance termination – and if so, which type – and whether the dyad had been state-sponsored at the time of its failure[3].

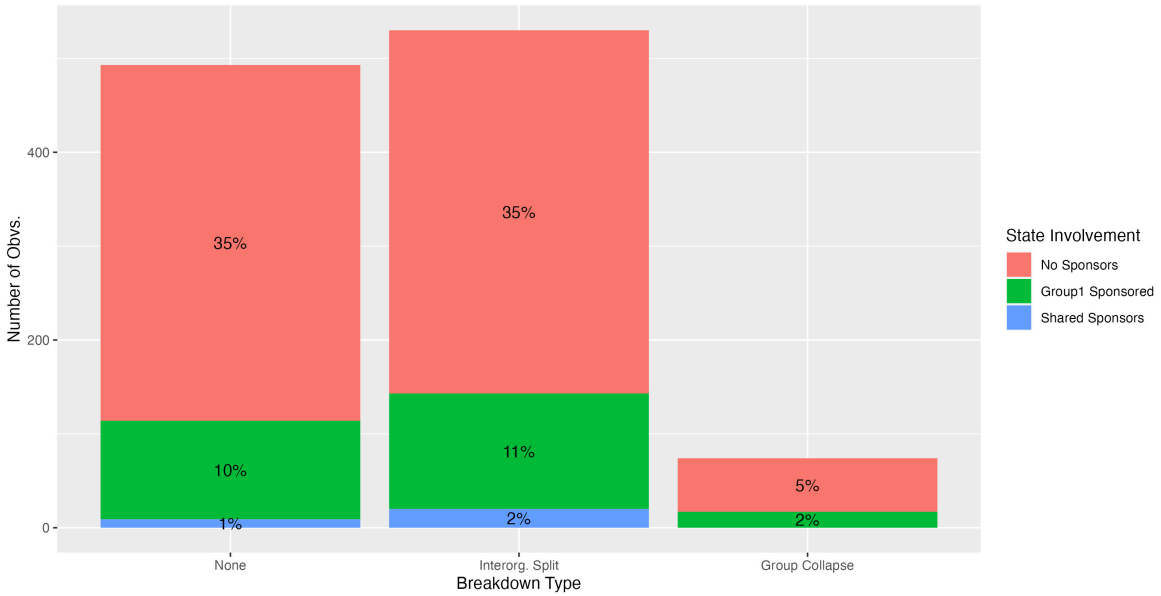


Figure III.1: Proportion of Dyad by Termination-Sponsorship Type

A caveat to the information presented in Figure III.1 is that it tends to be misleading in its reporting of zero observations under group collapse for shared sponsors. This graph captures data on the observations for a dyad's status on state sponsorship

2. See treatment in Blair, Horowitz, and Potter (2022).
3. In producing this graph, dyads with more than one failure event have been counted for by the n number of failures they experienced.

at the time of having experienced alliance failure; in other words, this means that there were no observations that have been recorded as having shared sponsors at the time of its alliance failure. This does *not* mean that the dyads that have ended their alliance from group collapse have never shared sponsors before, only that there are no dyads in the data that are recorded as having shared sponsors at the time of its breakdown. Table III.2 below shows the cross-tabulation of all the observations in the data – both for the overall aggregate and disaggregate measures of alliance termination and state sponsorship.

Table III.2: Cross-tabulations of Alliance Termination and State Sponsorship

		State Sponsorship		
Characteristics	**Overall**, N = 6,062	**No Sponsor(s)**, N = 4,248	**Group 1**, N = 1,448	**Shared**, N = 366
Alliance Termination	608 (10%)	431 (10%)	149 (10%)	28 (7.7%)
– Group Collapse	137 (2.3%)	91 (2.1%)	44 (3.0%)	2 (0.5%)
– Inter-organizational Split	554 (9.1%)	386 (9.1%)	140 (9.7%)	28 (7.7%)

[1] n (%)

Covariates

My statistical analysis also includes potential confounders that may bias the results by incorporating them into the model as controls. They broadly fall under two categories; those that fall under alliance dynamics, and those that are classified under conflict environment. I briefly describe them below, which is then followed by Table III.3, which presents the descriptive statistics for all the variables included in my analyses.

Alliance Dynamics I account for leadership decapitation to determine whether the involvement of state sponsors can function as a proxy for organizational structure and continuity – even if the leadership were to get taken out by decapitation strategies (Tominaga 2019). I also include variables for the age and age difference of the

groups in the dyad, because older groups tend to be more resilient from being better institutionalized and bureaucratized (M. Freeman 2014; Jordan 2019); this applies to group capabilities[4] as well (Christia 2012; Popovic 2018), which I account for by taking the ratio of group 1's attackers to the number of combined attacks within the alliance, using attack data taken from the Global Terrorism Database[5]. Ideology is also an important determinant of alliance composition, in that groups that share an ideology are prone to cooperate more frequently (Gade et al. 2019). Lastly, I control for the overall degree of reliance on alliances by including the number of new alliances each group has made relative to the year before (Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022).

Conflict Environment I also include variables to address potential confounders that relate to the backdrop of militant interaction. To address concerns over the impact of geographical proximity on cooperation[6], I include variables such as the logged values of inter-capital distance, population, and gross domestic capita of the country each group is based in. I also include the corresponding Polity2 scores for each country-group in the dyad to account for dynamics between regime type and terrorism. Lastly, I include controls for the Cold War and September 11th attacks back in 2003 because these two time periods have significantly altered the dynamics of state-militant and militant-militant interaction.

4. The capability ratio is defined as $\frac{\text{(Group 1 Attacks+1)}}{\text{[(Group 1 Attacks+1)+(Group 2 Attacks+1)]}}$, where the attack counts for both groups in a dyad are lagged one year, and transformed to avoid dropping dyad-year observations where neither groups conduct an attack by adding one; capability ratio with values closer to 0 indicates group 1 is weaker than group 2, whereas values closer to 1 indicates group 1 to be stronger than group 2 (Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022).

5. (START, Global Terrorism Database 1970-2020).

6. While closeness may facilitate cooperation due to lower costs and risks, it could also result in competitive outbidding dynamics (Bloom 2005).

Table III.3: Descriptive Statistics

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent Variables					
Alliance Termination	7,100	0.087	0.282	0	1
Group Collapse	7,100	0.037	0.190	0	1
Interorganizational Split	7,100	0.078	0.268	0	1
Independent Variables					
State Sponsored	6,062	0.300	0.460	0	1
Not Sponsored	4,248	-	-	-	-
Sponsored	1,448	-	-	-	-
Shared	366	-	-	-	-
Control Variables					
Leader Decapitation	6,343	0.035	0.184	0	1
Age (Group 1)	7,100	17.135	13.832	1	122
Age (Group 2)	7,100	17.135	13.832	1	122
Age Difference	7,100	11.726	12.657	0	116
Shared Ideology	7,100	0.914	0.280	0	1
Capability Ratio	5,389	0.498	0.309	0.002	0.998
New Alliance (Group 1)	6,005	0.730	1.237	0	7
New Alliance (Group 2)	6,005	0.730	1.237	0	7
Log Intercapital Distance	6,856	4.326	3.754	0.000	9.668
Log Population (Group 1)	6,361	3.879	1.709	−0.384	7.190
Log Population (Group 2)	6,361	3.879	1.709	−0.384	7.190
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	6,361	8.736	1.015	5.566	10.759
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	6,361	8.736	1.015	5.566	10.759
Polity 2 (Group 1)	6,401	4.206	6.233	−9	10
Polity 2 (Group 2)	6,401	4.206	6.233	−9	10
Cold War (1970-1989)	7,100	0.317	0.465	0	1
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	7,100	0.377	0.485	0	1

Sponsorship and Militant Cooperation

The first component of my theory introduced in the last chapter was the impact of state sponsorship on militant cooperation. I argued that militant groups with state sponsors are more likely to form alliances because the resources provided by their sponsors help to ameliorate the burden posed by both the initial costs of establishing cooperation, as well as the ongoing costs of maintaining cooperation. I test this theory by running a fixed effects panel regression on a group-year configuration of my dataset across 334 groups, where I regress my variable of interest ("State Sponsorship") on (1) the total number of allies, and (2) the number of new allies. Table III.4 presents the results from the two models.

The results show that the over-time effects of state sponsorship on militant cooperation are positive. Specifically, sponsored groups are associated with a higher number of total allies and new allies over time on average for militant groups, after controlling for leadership decapitation, age, population, GDP, and polity. Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine the magnitude of the over-time effect state sponsorship has on the total number of alliances or the number of new alliances from these results. However, what we can gather from these results is that there is a statistically significant positive effect of state sponsorship on both the total number of alliances as well as the number of new alliances, which provides evidence in favor of my theory. To determine whether this effect can be attributed to the effect of resources provided by state sponsors, I conduct additional tests, the results of which are presented in the next chapter.

Table III.4: Effect of State Sponsorship on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
State Sponsored	2.254***	0.245***
	(0.160)	(0.072)
Leader Decapitated	0.469**	0.064
	(0.190)	(0.085)
Age (Group 1)	0.047***	−0.017***
	(0.013)	(0.006)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.300	0.222
	(0.636)	(0.286)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	0.323*	−0.097
	(0.192)	(0.088)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.007	0.003
	(0.011)	(0.005)
Observations	2,662	2,622
R^2	0.127	0.033
Adjusted R^2	−0.0002	−0.111
F Statistic	56.399*** (df = 6; 2322)	12.983*** (df = 6; 2282)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Sponsorship and Alliance Durability

In the last chapter, I have argued that state sponsor involvement has an overall positive effect on the durability of militant alliances, but that the magnitude differs depending on the nature and type of sponsorship. To empirically test this claim, I run two separate tests of my model. First, I test the effect state sponsorship has on the duration of militant alliances without distinguishing the different types of sponsorship. My results shown in Table III.5 provide statistical evidence in support of my argument that state sponsorship does affect alliance termination between militant groups. Compared to dyads without state sponsors, allied militant groups with state sponsors are 23% less at risk of alliance termination overall. Results also indicate support for my secondary hypothesis on the effect of state support in preventing alliance failure from organizational collapse; sponsored groups are 51% less at risk than those that are not sponsored.

Another way to understand these results is to compare the risk scores of allied dyads based on whether they are sponsored or not. Figure III.2 plots the risk scores derived from Table III.5 for state-sponsored and non-state-sponsored dyads by the number of alliance breakdowns they have incurred. Here, risk scores are the exponentiated linear predictor of the model for my variable of interest ("state sponsorship"), holding all other variables in the model at their mean values. In other words, the ratio of risk scores would be the hazard ratio reported in my table.

For allied dyads that have not experienced alliance termination, we can see that state sponsorship results in a lower risk of alliance termination than those without sponsors. This trend continues for dyads that may have experienced one incidence

Table III.5: Sponsorship on Alliance Breakdown (Aggregate)

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored	0.77*	0.105	0.49*	0.318	0.80*	0.100
Leader Decapitated	1.36**	0.104	1.76	0.437	1.35**	0.104
Age Difference	1.02*	0.009	0.99	0.019	1.02*	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.98*	0.008	1.00	0.016	0.98*	0.008
Group 2 Age	0.98*	0.008	0.96*	0.021	0.98*	0.008
Shared Ideology	0.71***	0.089	2.37	0.595	0.67***	0.095
Capability Ratio	1.15	0.104	3.96**	0.473	1.11	0.103
New Alliances (Group 1)	1.00	0.036	1.14	0.130	1.00	0.033
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.96	0.032	0.74	0.182	0.96	0.029
Log Intercapital Distance	1.04*	0.015	1.02	0.033	1.04*	0.015
Log Population (Group 1)	1.03	0.021	0.82	0.126	1.04	0.022
Log Population (Group 2)	1.05*	0.024	0.87	0.115	1.05*	0.024
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.04	0.071	1.12	0.162	1.03	0.072
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.03	0.071	0.88	0.150	1.02	0.072
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.99	0.008	1.00	0.029	0.99	0.009
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.008	1.02	0.029	0.99	0.009
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.83*	0.083	0.39**	0.347	0.89	0.084
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.65***	0.103	0.40*	0.388	0.64***	0.109

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

of alliance failure. However, the ameliorating effect of state sponsorship on the risk of alliance termination becomes statistically insignificant when militant dyads experience two or more counts of alliance failure. This goes to show that, while state sponsorship may exert some degree of impact on reducing the risk of alliance failure, the effect does not last when the alliance goes through multiple iterations of alliance formation and breakdown.

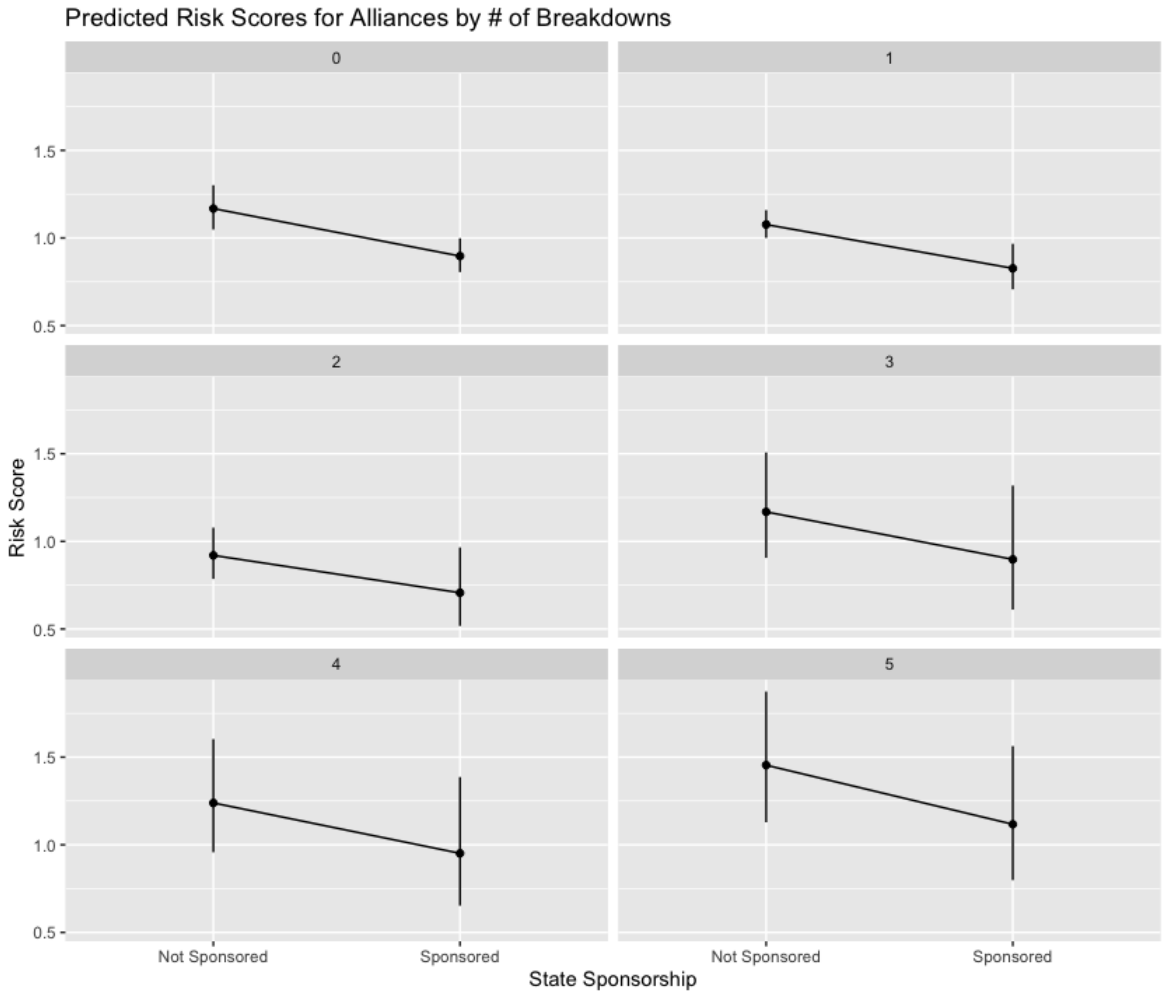


Figure III.2: Risk Scores for Allied Dyads based on Table III.5

My second test of the theory distinguishes whether the effect of sharing sponsors

significantly differs from when allied dyads do not share sponsors. In the previous chapter, I contended that sharing sponsors significantly reduces the likelihood of alliance failure because the state sponsor can function as an intermediary for cooperation and coordination. However, the model results presented in Table III.6[7] show that militant dyads with shared sponsors are approximately two times more likely to experience alliance termination compared to those without – the magnitude and statistical significance of which ends up becoming washed out when we disaggregate the model to distinguish between the different modes of alliance rupture. Such inference is rather confounding, given that it is a counterintuitive outcome that goes against the conventional understanding in the discipline when it comes to the impact shared state sponsors have on militant alliances[8].

Table III.6: Sponsorship on Alliance Breakdown (Disaggregate)

	Alliance Termination		**Group Collapse**		**Interorg. Split**	
Variables	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored						
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.77*	0.131	0.47*	0.316	0.76*	0.129
Shared Sponsor(s)	2.21*	0.309	1.12	0.978	0.95	0.098

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001
[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Another takeaway from distinguishing whether an allied dyad shares sponsors or not is illustrated by Figure III.3. Much like our results from Figure III.2, we can see that sponsored dyads have a lower risk of alliance termination than non-sponsored dyads when they have not experienced a breakdown. Similarly, while the mitigating

7. For the full model specification, refer to Table A.1 in Appendix A.
8. See, for example, Gade et al. (2019)'s analysis, which finds that rebels sharing a single sponsor are more likely to cooperate than dyads with distinct sponsors.

effect of state sponsorship also applies to militant alliances that have experienced a breakdown once before, the effect is no longer statistically significant once an alliance experiences two or more breakdowns in their relationship. Meanwhile, sharing sponsors does not yield a statistically significant risk level that differs from having no sponsors and not sharing sponsors.

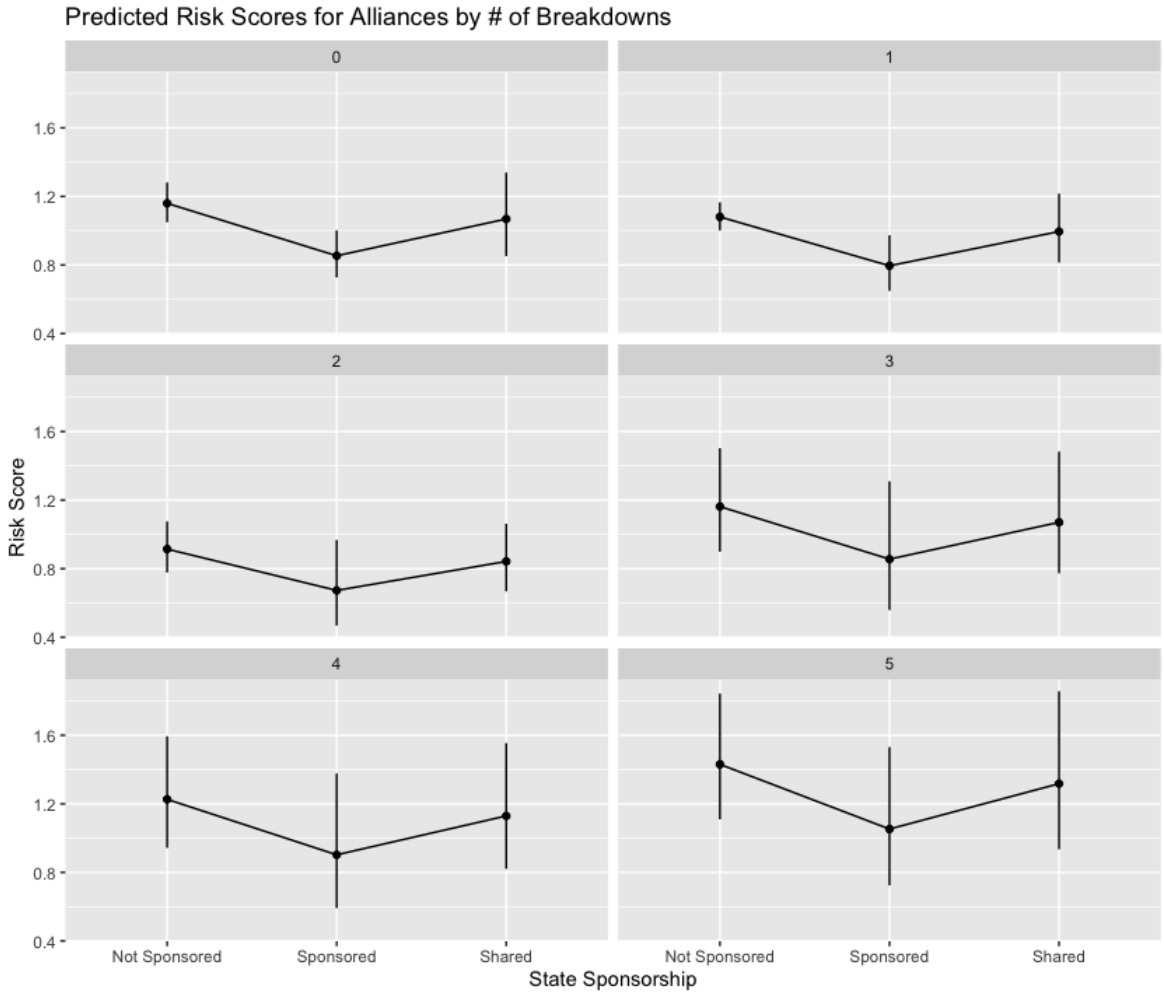


Figure III.3: Risk Scores for Allied Dyads based on Table III.6

Threats to Alliance Durability

In the last chapter, I raised the issue of competition as one of the major threats to alliance durability. This is particularly the case when alliances are based in the same region, or when they have experienced periods of competition and conflict during the duration of the alliance. In this section, I test whether state-sponsored dyads are more likely to fare better under conditions that increase the likelihood of competition. I first test my hypotheses using a combined variables approach which tests the relative risk compared to the baseline, and then run an interaction to test the difference in differences for both the same region and competitive dyads when state-sponsored as opposed to not sponsored.

Same Region

To test whether state sponsorship has a different effect on alliance durability for militant dyads based in the same region, I constructed a categorical variable that took the cross-classification of the state sponsorship and same region indicator variables. Results[9] from the first half of Table III.7 show that state-sponsored militant dyads based in the same region are 46% less at risk of alliance termination than militant dyads based in different regions with no state sponsors.

The results do not seem to significantly change when we disaggregate the effects of sharing sponsors. Taking a look at the second half of Table III.7, results show that militant allies based in the same region with state sponsorship are 51% less at risk of alliance failure compared to when they are not sponsored and are located in different regions. These results also indicate that the effect of sharing sponsors does

9. For the full model specifications, refer to Table A.2 and Table A.3 in Appendix A.

not have a significant effect on the hazard of alliance termination overall. Rather, any effect sharing sponsors may have on alliance durability is significant only when we consider alliance failure from group collapse; militant dyads based in different regions with shared sponsors are at a near-zero risk of alliance failure compared to those that are not sponsored. For same region dyads that are in the same region, they are seven times more at risk than different region dyads with no sponsors to experience group collapse.

Table III.7: Same Region Comparison

	Alliance Termination		**Group Collapse**		**Interorg. Split**	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Aggregate Model						
Different Region						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.90	0.112	1.11	0.668	0.92	0.106
Same Region						
Not Sponsored	0.82	0.110	3.27*	0.532	0.71*	0.136
Sponsored	0.54**	0.219	1.55	0.572	0.52**	0.237
Disaggregate Model						
Different Region						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.95	0.110	1.24	0.652	0.98	0.111
Shared	0.73	0.199	0.00***	0.921	0.77	0.152
Same Region						
Not Sponsored	0.83	0.108	3.37*	0.533	0.72*	0.132
Sponsored	0.49**	0.240	1.44	0.579	0.48**	0.257
Shared	0.97	0.230	7.65*	1.03	0.84	0.288

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Interaction Effect Table III.8 presents the results[10] from the model that included an interaction term for $sponsorship*region$. The left-hand column, labeled "Aggregate", lists the hazard ratios for the binary indicator variable for state sponsorship. The right-hand side, labeled "Disaggregate", presents the model results for the categorical indicator of sponsorship that distinguishes whether the dyad shares sponsors or not. Here, the quantities measure the extent to which the effect of both indicators together exceeds the product of the effects of the two states considered separately on the risk ratio scale.

Table III.8: Sponsorship X Region on Alliance Termination

	Aggregate		**Disaggregate**	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored	0.90	0.112		
Not Sponsored			—	—
Sponsored			0.95	0.110
Shared			0.73	0.198
Same Region	0.82	0.109	0.83	0.107
Controls	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
State Sponsored X Same Region	0.73	0.211		
Sponsored X Same Region			0.62**	0.229
Shared X Same Region			1.61	0.291

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Based on these results, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant, negative multiplicative interaction effect for state-sponsored, same-region dyads when we differentiate between shared and non-shared sponsorship. This provides

10. For the full model specification with the controls, please see Table A.4 in the appendix for this chapter.

some evidence to support my argument on the impact of state sponsorship on reducing pressures from competition for dyads based in the same region, but *only when* they do not share sponsors. To provide a more intuitive way of understanding these results, I plot the risk scores and corresponding confidence interval for allied dyads by calculating the exponentiated linear predictor for each combination of the focal predictors (i.e., variables in the interaction), holding all other variables in the model at their mean values.

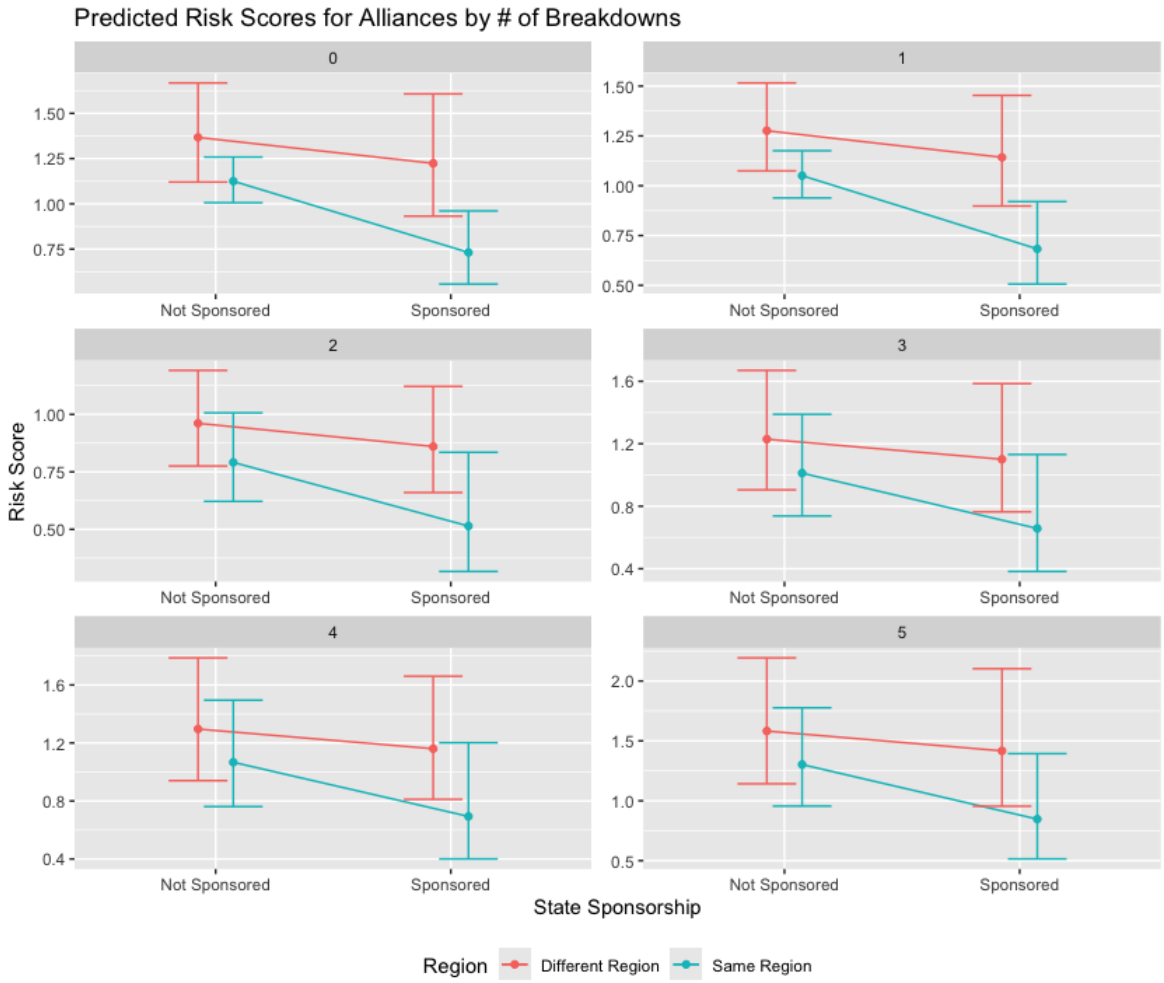


Figure III.4: Interaction Effect in Table III.8 (Aggregate)

There are several takeaways from Figure III.4 and Figure III.5. First, state-sponsored dyads based in the same region are less at risk of alliance failure when they have not yet experienced a breakdown. Congruent with our previous findings, state-sponsored alliances based in the same region that has experienced alliance failure also have a lower risk score that is statistically different from dyads based in the same region but is not sponsored. On the other hand, we find no significant difference in the risk scores for alliances irrespective of state sponsorship or regional basis for alliances with two or more incidences of alliance failure.

The second observation is that there is no significant effect of dyads having shared sponsors – regardless of whether they are based in the same or different region. While we can observe that dyads based in a different region that share sponsors tend to have a lower risk score compared to other dyads based in different regions, the effect is not statistically distinguishable. On the other hand, same-region dyads with shared sponsors have a higher risk score compared to other dyads that are based in the same region, but the effect is not statistically distinguishable, irrespective of how many, if at all, breakdowns they may have experienced.

Lastly, I find that these results illustrate some empirical support for my argument on the effect of state sponsors to ameliorate competitive pressures that come from being based in the same region because we see a statistically distinguishable regional effect for sponsored dyads when we disaggregate whether the dyad shares sponsors or not. Given that same region dyads will ultimately face situations where they will need to compete for the same resources, this has the potential to cause friction in an otherwise cooperative alliance arrangement. Tangible state support would effectively reduce the potential for such conflict should there be any competitive

urges triggered due to resource deficits. However, not only are different region dyads far less likely to face the need to compete for resources, but different regional dyads are more likely to form and maintain alliances for intangible reasons such as ideology, which leads them to be susceptible to significantly different factors that are unaffected by state sponsor involvement.

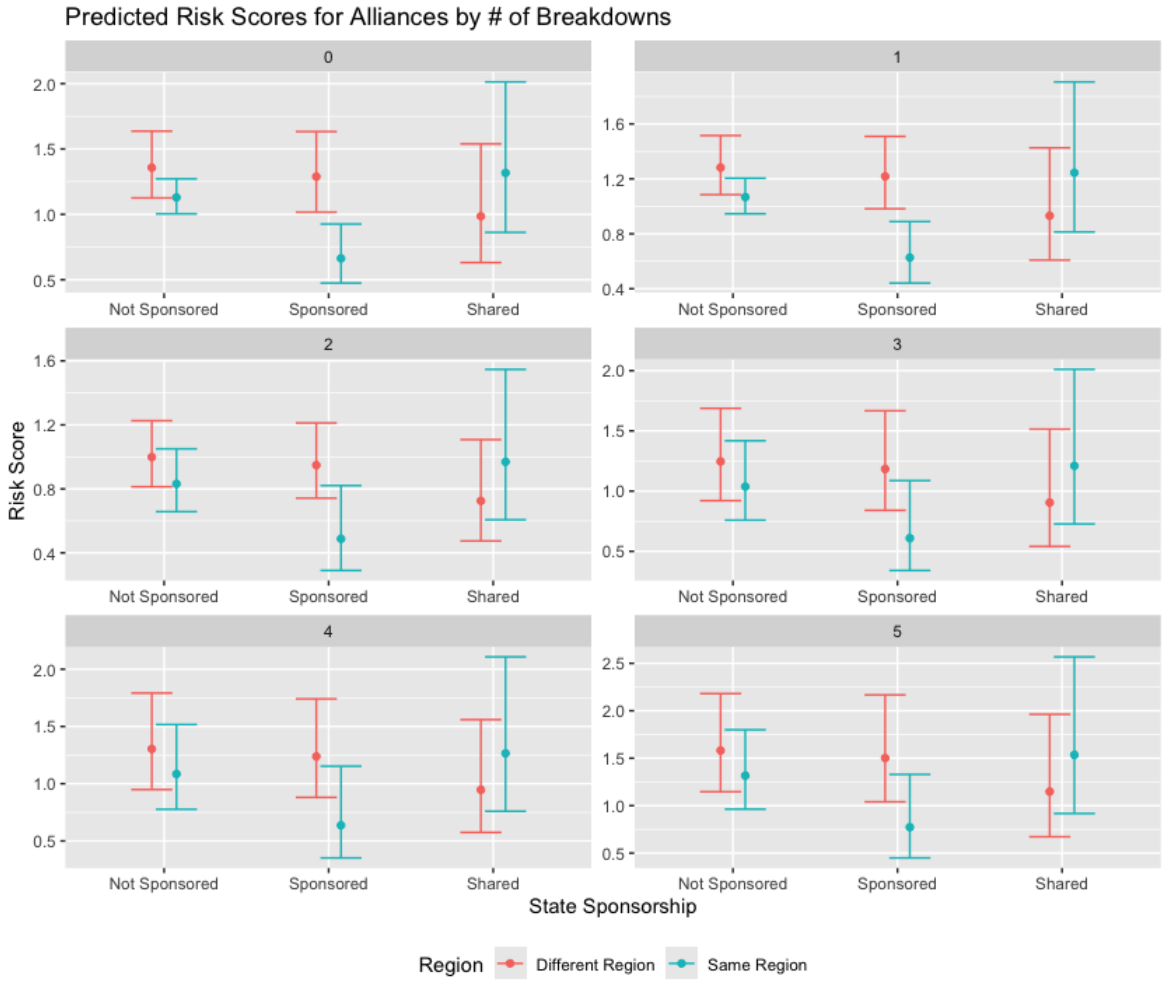


Figure III.5: Interaction Effect in Table III.8 (Disaggregate)

Competitive Alliances

Another component that increases the risk of alliance termination is if the internal dynamics between the allied dyad have changed from cooperative to competitive. Table III.9 show the model results[11] from testing whether state sponsorship helps to reduce the risk of alliance termination for militant dyads that have become competitive. To test this, I take a binary indicator variable that captures whether the relationship in a dyad-year has turned competitive (first half of Table III.9). This is the case when there have been pledges of violence and other similarly hostile statements, some sporadic violence that does not appear to have been coordinated by the organizational leadership as part of a violent campaign for eradication or destruction, or evidence of antagonistic or otherwise hostile statements from group leaders. I then ran the model with the categorical variable that cross-classified the indicator variables for state sponsorship and competition (second half of Table III.9).

While it is unsurprising to find that cooperative militant allies with state sponsors are less at risk of alliance failure, the same cannot be said for competitive dyads. My results do not show a statistically significant effect for state sponsorship on alliance durability for competitive dyads. Rather, competitive dyads with sponsors are at a 28% higher risk of alliance failure compared to cooperative dyads with no sponsors when we parse out the effect of sharing sponsors. In contrast, state-sponsored competitive dyads seem to be at near-zero risk of experiencing alliance termination through group collapse, compared to cooperative dyads with no sponsors.

We can tentatively guess as to why there are no incidences of group collapse for

11. For the full model specification, refer to Table A.5 and Table A.6 in Appendix A.

Table III.9: Sponsorship and Competitive Dyads

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Aggregate Model						
Cooperative Dyads						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.68**	0.145	0.57	0.323	0.75*	0.132
Competitive Dyads						
Not Sponsored	1.53**	0.145	8.16*	0.948	1.57**	0.142
Sponsored	1.18	0.126	0.00***	0.487	1.20	0.146
Disaggregate Model						
Cooperative Dyads						
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.65*	0.167	0.55	0.319	0.72*	0.160
Shared Sponsor(s)	0.89	0.167	1.46	0.977	0.96	0.141
Competitive Dyads						
No Sponsor(s)	1.51**	0.143	8.22*	0.947	1.54**	0.141
Grp1 Sponsored	1.28*	0.123	0.00***	0.493	1.35*	0.137
Shared Sponsor(s)	0.76	0.150	0.00***	1.09	0.68*	0.165

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

state-sponsored dyads. There could be a selection effect, in which states tend to sponsor already established groups that are not immediately faced with concerns over collapse. Or it could also be a case where state sponsorship actually does have a significant effect on building organizational resiliency to the point of negating the possibility of alliance failure from group collapse. While it is difficult to ascertain why this may be the case from the statistical results, the results seem to provide some evidence in favor of state sponsorship having a significant effect on reducing the hazard of alliance failures through group collapse.

When it comes to the effect of sharing sponsors, there seems to be no statistical evidence in support of my theory for its effect in increasing alliance durability. On one hand, the results for sharing sponsors seem to indicate a statistically significant reduction in risk in alliance termination when we disaggregate the means of alliance failure when comparing against cooperative dyads with no sponsors. Competitive dyads with shared sponsors are at a near-zero risk of experiencing group collapse compared to cooperative dyads with no sponsors, while competitive dyads with shared sponsors are at a 32% reduced risk of experiencing interorganizational split compared to cooperative dyads with no sponsors. However, the model does not observe a statistically significant effect for the effect sharing sponsors has on alliance termination, compared to not having sponsors at all. This indicates a need to further evaluate what aspect of shared sponsorship is driving the results for the different types of alliance failure, which washes out when aggregated.

Interaction Effect We find slightly different results when we observe the interaction effect between state sponsorship and competitive alliance dynamics. Table III.10 presents the results from the model that included an interaction term for

$sponsorship * competition$. Same as in the previous subsection, the left-hand column lists the hazard ratios for the binary indicator variable for state sponsorship while the right-hand side presents the model results for the categorical indicator of sponsorship that distinguishes whether the dyad shares sponsors or not. Here, the quantities measure the extent to which the effect of being state-sponsored and being a competitive allied dyad together exceeds the product of the effects of the two indicators considered separately on the risk ratio scale.

Table III.10: Sponsorship X Competition on Alliance Termination

	Aggregate		**Disaggregate**	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored	0.68**	0.145		
Not Sponsored			—	—
Sponsored			0.65*	0.167
Shared			0.89	0.166
Competition	1.53**	0.145	1.51**	0.143
Controls	⋮	⋮	⋮	⋮
State Sponsored X Competition	1.13	0.222		
Sponsored X Competition			1.30	0.228
Shared X Competition			0.57*	0.264

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

My results do not find any statistically significant effect in the interaction for state-sponsored, competitive dyads when we do not distinguish between shared and non-shared sponsorship. On the other hand, when we do make the distinction, we find a statistically significant, negative multiplicative interaction effect on the hazard ratio for dyads with shared sponsors with competitive alliance dynamics. This provides some statistical evidence to my claim on the positive impact having

shared sponsors has on the durability of alliances, but this effect seems to be statistically significant *only when* the allied dyad is experiencing conflict due to internal competitive dynamics.

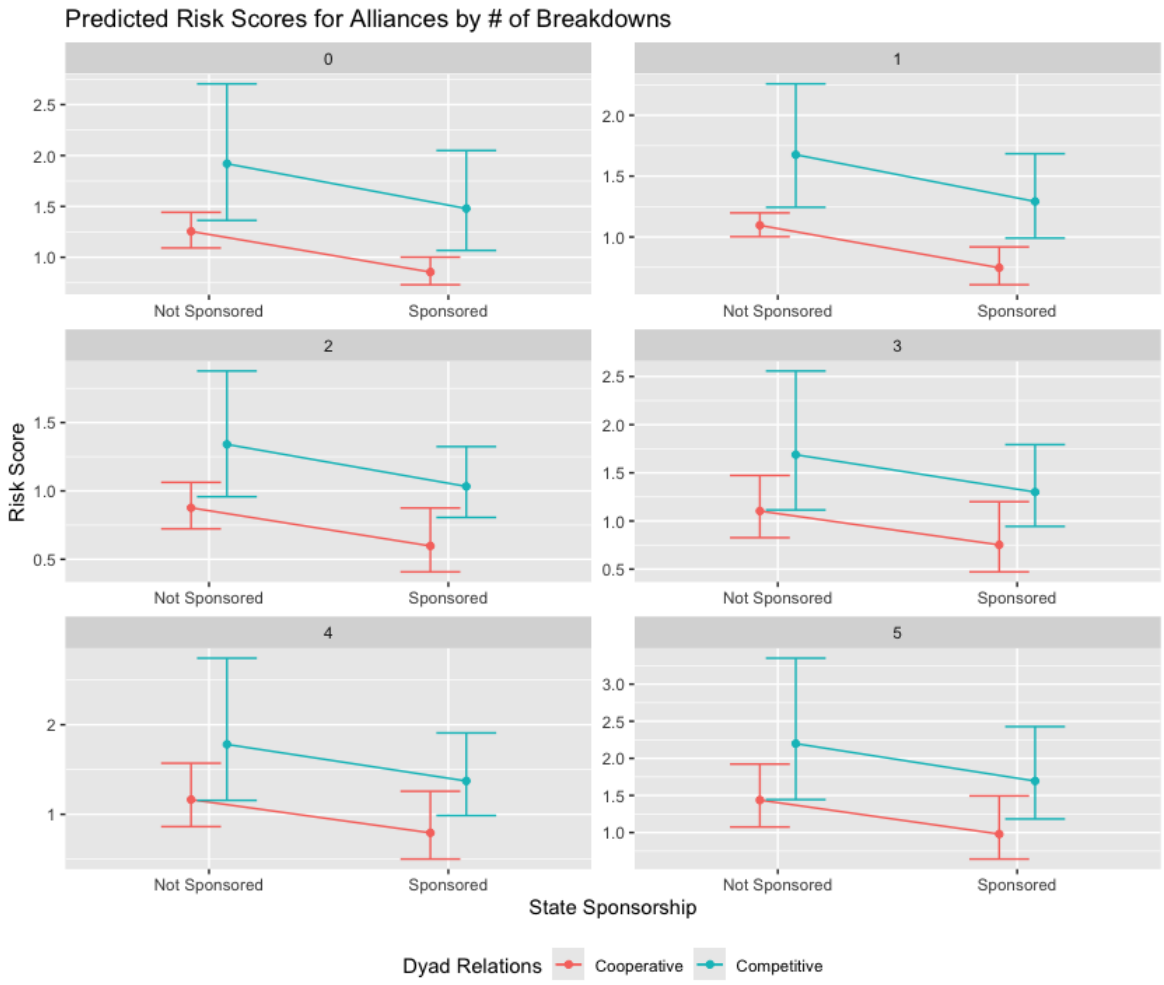


Figure III.6: Interaction Effect in Table III.10 (Aggregate)

Figure III.6 and Figure III.7 provide a visual representation of what these results represent. These graphs plot the risk scores and corresponding confidence intervals derived by calculating the exponentiated linear predictor for each combination of the focal predictors (i.e., variables in the interaction) while holding all other variables

constant at the mean. We can gather several insights from these plots. Firstly, the risk scores are different between competitive and cooperative dyads when we compare sponsored and non-sponsored dyads *only when* allied dyads have already experienced a breakdown in their alliance once. For alliances that have not experienced a breakdown, we only observe there to be different risk scores between cooperative and competitive dyads that are sponsored.

This is contrary to some of the existing theories on alliance failure due to state sponsorship – particularly those that identify increasing power asymmetries caused by state sponsor support to exacerbate the risk of alliance failure. It is not far-fetched to postulate that allied dyads that have experienced competitive alliance dynamics would have a higher risk of alliance failure from power asymmetries. However, risk scores for competitive dyads are not statistically different at significant levels between sponsored and non-sponsored dyads, while the expectation is that state-sponsored dyads would increase the risk of alliance termination particularly for competitive dyads. However, the risk of alliance termination for competitive dyads that are state-sponsored could somewhat be mitigated if we assume that a primary cause of intergroup conflict can be attributed to scarcity of resources.

Secondly, what we find in the first three graphs in Figure III.7 is that competitive dyads that are not sponsored have a higher risk score that is statistically different from competitive dyads with shared sponsors. In other words, sharing sponsors results in a lower risk of alliance termination for dyads that have escalated to competitive dynamics compared to competitive alliances with no sponsors, when dyads have not experienced alliance failure, or have experienced it up to once or twice before already. These results provide some degree of evidence in support of my argument

on the mitigating effect sharing sponsors has on reducing the risk of alliance failure for competitive dyads, compared to competitive dyads with no sponsors. But it is curious that one, this is the only case under which we have seen the effect of sharing sponsors result in a statistically different level of risk compared to other dyads, and two, the effect seems to last up to two counts of alliance failure. My theory does not yet explain why this may be, which signals further work is needed to understand what may be driving these results.

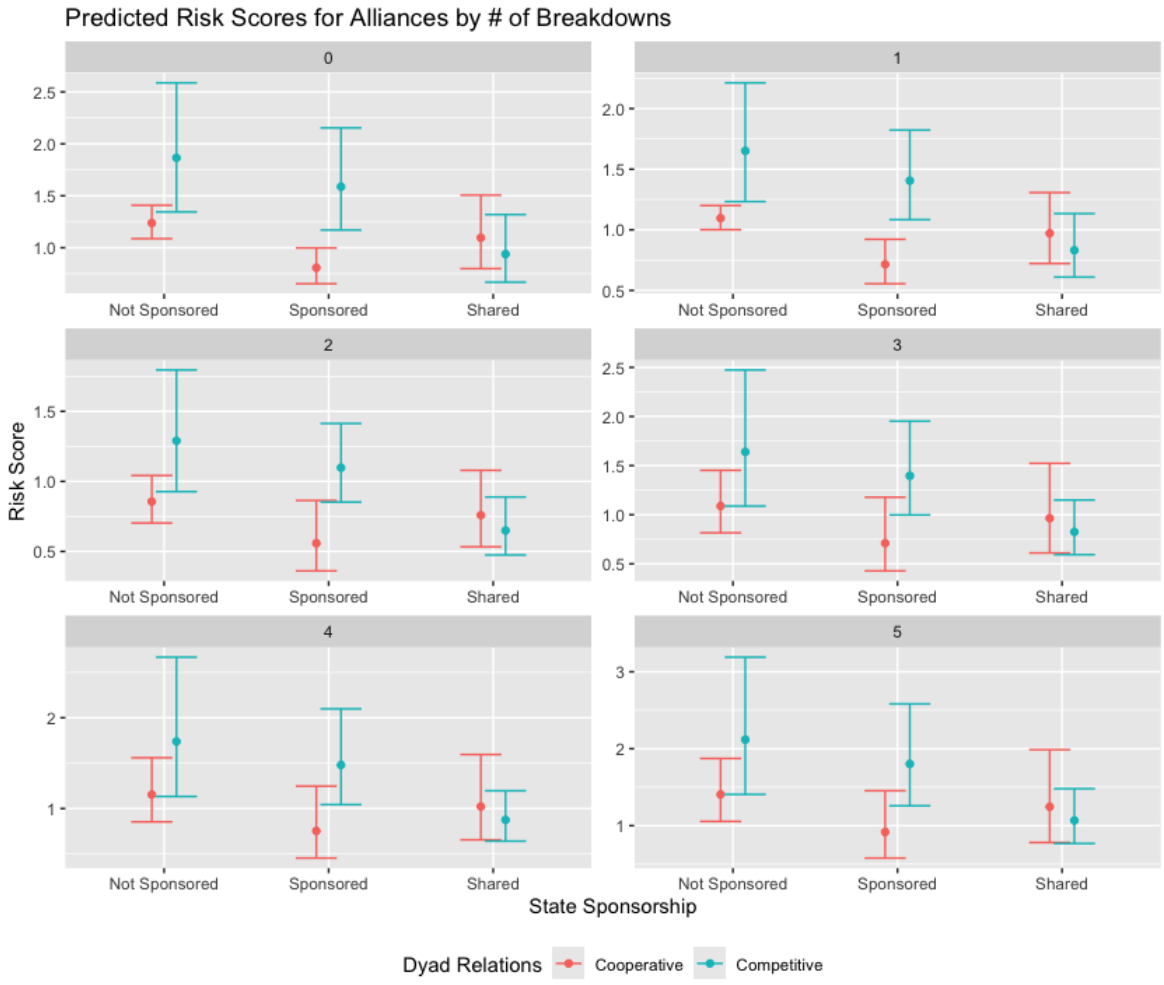


Figure III.7: Interaction Effect in Table III.10 (Disaggregate)

CHAPTER IV

VARIETIES OF STATE SUPPORT

In the last chapter, I presented empirical evidence supporting my argument that militant groups with sponsors are more likely to have enduring alliances with other militant groups compared to those without state sponsors. We have also found that contrary to popular belief, shared sponsors do not always reduce the likelihood of alliance rupture; and that rather, shared sponsors may sometimes actually increase the likelihood of alliance breakdown. In fact, it is only when alliances are more competitive than cooperative does the involvement of shared sponsors has a significant impact in reducing the risk of alliance failure by interorganizational split. Does this finding change when we take into consideration the different types of support state sponsors provide? More importantly, can we expect to see variations in whether militant cooperation further endures or terminates contingent on the different types of support provided by state sponsors?

In this chapter, I go on to further test how the presence of state sponsors affects militant cooperation by empirically testing how financial, material, operational, training, and territorial support from state sponsors impact the duration of alliances. This chapter will further proceed as follows; the next section will introduce the theoretical expectation we have on how the different types of support affect militant alliance durability, followed by a brief review of the research design. I then present and discuss the findings from the empirical analysis, followed by concluding remarks for this chapter. My findings show that the provision of financial support only exerts a significant influence in reducing the likelihood of alliance breakdown through group collapse, while the provision of material, operational, and training support reduces the likelihood of alliance termination through both group collapse and interorganizational splits. Shared sponsors, on the other hand, seem to only reduce the probability of alliance breakdown when the allied dyads are operating out of the same state, or when the allied dyad is more competitive than cooperative.

Theoretical Expectation

Much of the literature on the role and impact of state sponsorship has come from the civil war literature. Salehyan (2009) finds that the provision of safe haven by neighboring states prolongs insurgencies, while Karlén (2017) shows that external support to rebel movements increases the probability of conflict recurrence in the short term. There is also the seminal work by Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham (2011) that indicates the provision of external rebel support to be influenced by rebel group characteristics, and that external support is more likely for moderately strong groups (as opposed to very strong or very weak groups), with transnational linkages and interstate rivalries.

Yet external state support is more nuanced than just whether other states intervene or contribute troops; evaluating the impact of external support is made difficult because support can occur in many ways, come from a variety of sources, and is apt to change quickly[1]. In arguing that rebels that receive highly fungible external support (such as money and guns) are less likely to see conflict termination than rebels that do not, Sawyer, Cunningham, and Reed surmises that different types of external support influence their fighting capacity differently and that some types of support do not directly translate into what they call "war-making ability". A key takeaway from this research is that the type of support can vary over time, with different types of support being provided at certain time segments, not always by the same state sponsor(s) (Salehyan, Gleditsch, and Cunningham 2011).

Classified in terms of their "fungibility", highly fungible external support is not found to always result in an immediate or even medium-term increase in militant capability, because it depends on how such types of support are invested. Sawyer, Cunningham, and Reed (2017) illustrates this point by explaining how direct troop support and territorial support are not considered very fungible because such support can only be used for a specific purpose. Financial support, on the other hand, is considered very fungible because it can be used in a variety of ways, using it to gain operational necessities such as arms, food, and transportation, or shore up group infrastructure. Additionally, while weapons support is more fungible than other forms of support, the acquisition and maintenance of military capacity can prove to be a challenge because, in addition to maintaining supply networks, the high degree

1. To this point, Sawyer, Cunningham, and Reed further elaborates by pointing out that withdrawing financial support or intelligence and training can, and do, tend to occur rapidly and most probably with less oversight than either initiating or ending military intervention.

of dependence on unpredictable black markets to convert resources such as oil or other looted goods make it an ongoing challenge (Hazen 2013).

Similarly, I intend to test not only whether state sponsorship impacts the duration of militant alliances, but also whether there exist variations in the impact the different types of support provided have on their durability as well. Building off of insights gleaned from existing literature on the different types of support provided by external sponsors, I argue that, while the different types of tangible support by state sponsors overall reduce the likelihood of alliance breakdowns, the provision of highly fungible forms of support is more likely to reduce the likelihood of alliance breakdown than less fungible forms of support.

Although there are probably significant overlaps in how the different types of support may deter alliance rupture from group collapse as opposed to interorganizational split, this domain remains undertheorized; but generally speaking, the existing literature that focuses on evaluating the life cycles of militant organizations has mostly identified state sponsorship as a positive factor that significantly contributes to their durability (Mickolus 1989). I contend, therefore, that the provision of tangible support by state sponsors reduces the likelihood of alliance failure from group collapse.

The impact of their involvement is less clear when it comes to fostering intergroup cooperation. Phillips (2019) contends that state sponsorship can incite conflict by causing significant resource gaps between groups and consequently lead to an increase in their power asymmetry. I argue that because state sponsors are capable of covering immediate costs to cooperation, the provision of tangible support by state sponsors reduces the likelihood of interorganizational split. By extension, I surmise

that highly fungible forms of state support are more likely to reduce the likelihood of interorganizational split when provided with less fungible forms of support.

Regarding the provision of territorial support, many dispute the provision of safe haven to count as a type of resource provision that increases a group's ability to maintain itself internally[2](Carter 2012). To test this predominant view, I additionally posit whether the provision of less fungible forms of support is neither more nor less likely to increase the likelihood of interorganizational split.

Research Design

Much like the empirical tests conducted in chapter III, I plan to use the same set of observations and estimation strategy to carry out statistical tests of my hypotheses on the varieties of state support presented in this chapter. While I plan to also utilize the same set of covariates to control for potential confounders and the same set of dependent variables that captures *Alliance Termination* through *Group Collapse* and *Interorganizational Split* from the last chapter for my analysis, I will be using a different set of indicator variables, taken from the Militant Group Alliances and Relationships (MGAR) data set (Blair et al. 2022), that captures the different type of state support that was provided to group 1 in each dyad-year observation. The details on how my variables of interest were coded can be found in the next paragraph, followed by Table IV.2 which lists the descriptive statistics for all the variables used for the analysis in this chapter.

2. Refer to Salehyan (2007), Buhaug and Gates (2002), and Bapat (2007), and by extension, DeRouen, Jr. and Sobek (2004).

Different Types of State Support

To further test the hypotheses on whether different types of support have varying degrees of influence on the probability of alliance rupture, I have constructed a series of indicator variables that denote the key types of state support group 1 in a group 1–group 2 allied dyad x is provided if sponsored, and whether group 1 shares sponsor(s) with group 2. The five key primary variables of interest for this chapter are comprised of the following types of state support: financial, material, operational, training, and territorial support. The variables are coded as a categorical indicator that captures the sponsorship status of group 1 in year $t-1$ for the specific type of support in question. So if group 1 in dyad x was sponsored in year $t-1$ and is recorded to have received financial support, then they would be coded as "*Grp1 Sponsored*" for the ***Financial Support*** indicator.

Table IV.1 lists the primary variables that I constructed to capture the different types of state support, cross-tabulated with the incidences and the different modes of alliance failure that are observed in my dataset. As previously stated in chapter III, the statistics for shared sponsors under group collapse in Table IV.1 can be somewhat misleading in reporting zero observations for every type of state support listed. This table is a cross-tabulation of data for the observation recorded at the time of having experienced alliance failure. So while there were no observations that have been recorded as having shared sponsors at the time of its alliance failure, it does *not* mean that the dyads that have ended their alliance from group collapse have never shared sponsors before – only that there have not been any cases where dyads are found to have shared sponsors at the time of alliance rupture through group collapse.

Table IV.1: Cross-tabulations of State Support Type and Alliance Failure

		Type of Alliance Termination	
Characteristic	**Overall**, N = 604	**Group Collapse**, N = 74	**Interorg. Split**, N = 530
Financial Support			
No Sponsor(s)	482 (81%)	55 (82%)	427 (81%)
Grp1 Sponsored	96 (16%)	12 (18%)	84 (16%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	19 (3.2%)	0 (0%)	19 (3.6%)
Material Support			
No Sponsor(s)	491 (82%)	58 (87%)	433 (82%)
Grp1 Sponsored	85 (14%)	9 (13%)	76 (14%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	21 (3.5%)	0 (0%)	21 (4.0%)
Operational Support			
No Sponsor(s)	500 (84%)	59 (88%)	441 (83%)
Grp1 Sponsored	80 (13%)	8 (12%)	72 (14%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	17 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	17 (3.2%)
Training Support			
No Sponsor(s)	469 (79%)	55 (82%)	414 (78%)
Grp1 Sponsored	103 (17%)	12 (18%)	91 (17%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	25 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	25 (4.7%)
Territorial Support			
No Sponsor(s)	479 (80%)	51 (76%)	428 (81%)
Grp1 Sponsored	107 (18%)	16 (24%)	91 (17%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	11 (1.8%)	0 (0%)	11 (2.1%)

[1] n (%)

Table IV.2: Descriptive Statistics

	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent Variables					
Alliance Termination	7,100	0.087	0.282	0	1
Group Collapse	7,100	0.037	0.190	0	1
Interorganizational Split	7,100	0.078	0.268	0	1
Independent Variables					
Financial Support	6,062	0.200	0.400	0	1
Material Support	6,062	0.190	0.390	0	1
Operational Support	6,062	0.160	0.370	0	1
Training Support	6,062	0.220	0.410	0	1
Territorial Support	6,062	0.180	0.380	0	1
Control Variables					
Leader Decapitation	6,343	0.035	0.184	0	1
Age (Group 1)	7,100	17.135	13.832	1	122
Age (Group 2)	7,100	17.135	13.832	1	122
Age Difference	7,100	11.726	12.657	0	116
Shared Ideology	7,100	0.914	0.280	0	1
Capability Ratio	5,389	0.498	0.309	0.002	0.998
New Alliance (Group 1)	6,005	0.730	1.237	0	7
New Alliance (Group 2)	6,005	0.730	1.237	0	7
Log Intercapital Distance	6,856	4.326	3.754	0.000	9.668
Log Population (Group 1)	6,361	3.879	1.709	−0.384	7.190
Log Population (Group 2)	6,361	3.879	1.709	−0.384	7.190
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	6,361	8.736	1.015	5.566	10.759
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	6,361	8.736	1.015	5.566	10.759
Polity 2 (Group 1)	6,401	4.206	6.233	−9	10
Polity 2 (Group 2)	6,401	4.206	6.233	−9	10
Cold War (1970-1989)	7,100	0.317	0.465	0	1
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	7,100	0.377	0.485	0	1

Support Types and Militant Cooperation

The first component of my theory introduced in chapter II was the impact of state sponsorship on militant cooperation. I argued that the effect of state sponsors on militant cooperation is positive because sponsors provide resources that help to ameliorate the burden posed by both the initial costs of establishing cooperation as well as the ongoing costs of maintaining cooperation. In the last chapter, I tested this theory by running a fixed effects panel regression on a group-year configuration of my dataset across 334 groups, where I regress my variable of interest ("State Sponsorship") on (1) the total number of allies, and (2) the number of new allies.

In this section, I test whether this effect can be attributed to the effect of resources provided by state sponsors. Same as the tests from the previous chapter, I run a fixed effects panel regression on a group-year configuration of my dataset on (1) the total number of allies, and (2) the number of new allies as my dependent variables. However, my variables of interest for this chapter will be five different variables that indicate the different types of support state sponsors have provided; financial, material, operational, training, and lastly, territorial support. The results in Table IV.3 present the model coefficients for the different types of resource support provided by state sponsors. The full model specifications for all five indicators can be found in Appendix B.

The results provide further support for my theory on the positive over-time effect of state sponsorship on militant cooperation. Specifically, groups provided financial, operational, training, and territorial support are associated with a higher number of total allies and new allies over time on average for militant groups, after controlling

for leadership decapitation, age, population, GDP, and polity. The one exception to this would be material support, which is found to be positively associated with a higher number of new allies only, over time on average.

Table IV.3: Effect of Support Types on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Financial Support	1.329***	0.157*
	(0.186)	(0.081)
Material Support	0.030	1.059***
	(0.084)	(0.192)
Operational Support	0.253**	2.069***
	(0.113)	(0.256)
Training Support	0.138*	2.348***
	(0.080)	(0.177)
Territorial Support	0.294***	3.088***
	(0.087)	(0.190)
Note:	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Similar to the previous chapter, it is difficult to determine the magnitude of the over-time effects the different types of state support have on the total number of alliances or the number of new alliances from these results. However, what does stand out from these findings is that not all types of support have a statistically significant effect on both the total number of alliances as well as the number of new alliances. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the provision of territorial support is also found to have a statistically significant effect on *both* the total number

of militant allies as well as the number of new alliances. Lastly, while the different types of support seem to have a minimal effect on the total number of allies, they have a significantly positive effect on the number of new allies gained – with the exception of financial support, which has the opposite effect.

Support Types and Alliance Durability

The second component of my theory is that intergroup cooperation requires resources to secure and maintain alliances. In this section, I separately test whether different types of support from state sponsors are more likely to result in durable alliances between militant groups. Table IV.4 displays the model results for alliance termination on the five different types of tangible support state sponsors supply to groups.

Table IV.4: State Support and Alliance Termination

	All Included		Financial		Material		Operational		Training		Territorial	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Financial Support	1.38	0.223	0.75	0.182								
Material Support	0.99	0.207			0.63**	0.158						
Operational Support	0.67	0.206					0.63*	0.193				
Training Support	0.60	0.269							0.62**	0.150		
Territorial Support	1.23	0.166									0.97	0.168
Leader Decapitated	1.39**	0.106	1.36**	0.100	1.36**	0.104	1.35**	0.099	1.38**	0.109	1.35**	0.102
Age Difference	1.02*	0.008	1.02*	0.008	1.02*	0.008	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.008	1.02*	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98*	0.007	0.98**	0.008
Group 2 Age	0.98*	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98*	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98*	0.007	0.98*	0.008
Shared Ideology	0.78**	0.093	0.71***	0.092	0.75***	0.084	0.73***	0.086	0.74***	0.084	0.73***	0.088
Capability Ratio	1.13	0.088	1.11	0.107	1.14	0.101	1.13	0.101	1.17	0.100	1.07	0.086
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.99	0.042	0.99	0.039	1.01	0.036	1.01	0.038	1.00	0.035	0.97	0.039
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.97	0.031	0.96	0.032	0.96	0.032	0.96	0.033	0.97	0.031	0.96	0.031
Log Intercapital Distance	1.03*	0.012	1.03*	0.013	1.03*	0.013	1.03*	0.013	1.03*	0.013	1.04*	0.015
Log Population (Group 1)	1.01	0.021	1.04	0.023	1.01	0.020	1.03	0.021	1.01	0.020	1.04	0.023
Log Population (Group 2)	1.05	0.023	1.06*	0.024	1.05*	0.023	1.06*	0.024	1.04	0.023	1.06*	0.025
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.05	0.071	1.04	0.071	1.04	0.069	1.07	0.067	1.03	0.069	1.04	0.074
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.02	0.066	1.03	0.071	1.03	0.069	1.03	0.069	1.02	0.068	1.03	0.069
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.007	0.99	0.008	1.0	0.008	0.99	0.008	1.00	0.008	0.99	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.007	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.82*	0.079	0.85*	0.078	0.85*	0.081	0.83*	0.079	0.86	0.080	0.80*	0.087
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.66***	0.100	0.65***	0.104	0.66***	0.100	0.67***	0.100	0.65***	0.101	0.66***	0.103

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Similar to the results from the previous section, not all types of state support have the same effect on alliance durability between militant groups. Material, operational, and training types of support reduce the risk of militant alliance termination by 37% to 38% compared to dyads that are not provided such support. Meanwhile, financial and territorial support does not seem to yield any statistically significant benefits to strengthening alliance ties between militants relative to those who are not provided such types of support.

I visualize what these results signify Figure IV.1 by plotting the risk scores of the types of support found statistically significant in Table IV.4. The risk scores are the exponentiated linear predictor of the model for my variable of interest ("state sponsorship"), holding all other variables in the model at their mean values. In other words, the ratio of risk scores would be the hazard ratio reported in my table. I plot the predicted risk scores for alliances by whether they have experienced a breakdown in their alliance or not[3]. These results indicate that there is a significant difference in the level of risk between alliances that are provided material, operational, and training support by their state sponsors. Moreover, the significant difference in risk applies to alliances that have not experienced alliance failure or have experienced a breakdown once before.

What about when dyads share sponsors? Is there an independent and statistically significant effect on alliance durability for dyads receiving different types of support from their state sponsors? Does this in any way change the hazard of sponsored groups from non-sponsored groups from Table IV.4? To answer these

3. The maximum number of breakdowns that a dyad experiences in my data goes up to five, but I decided to omit the results for two or more breakdowns because they do not show statistical significance in the difference in the risk scores between the comparison groups in question.

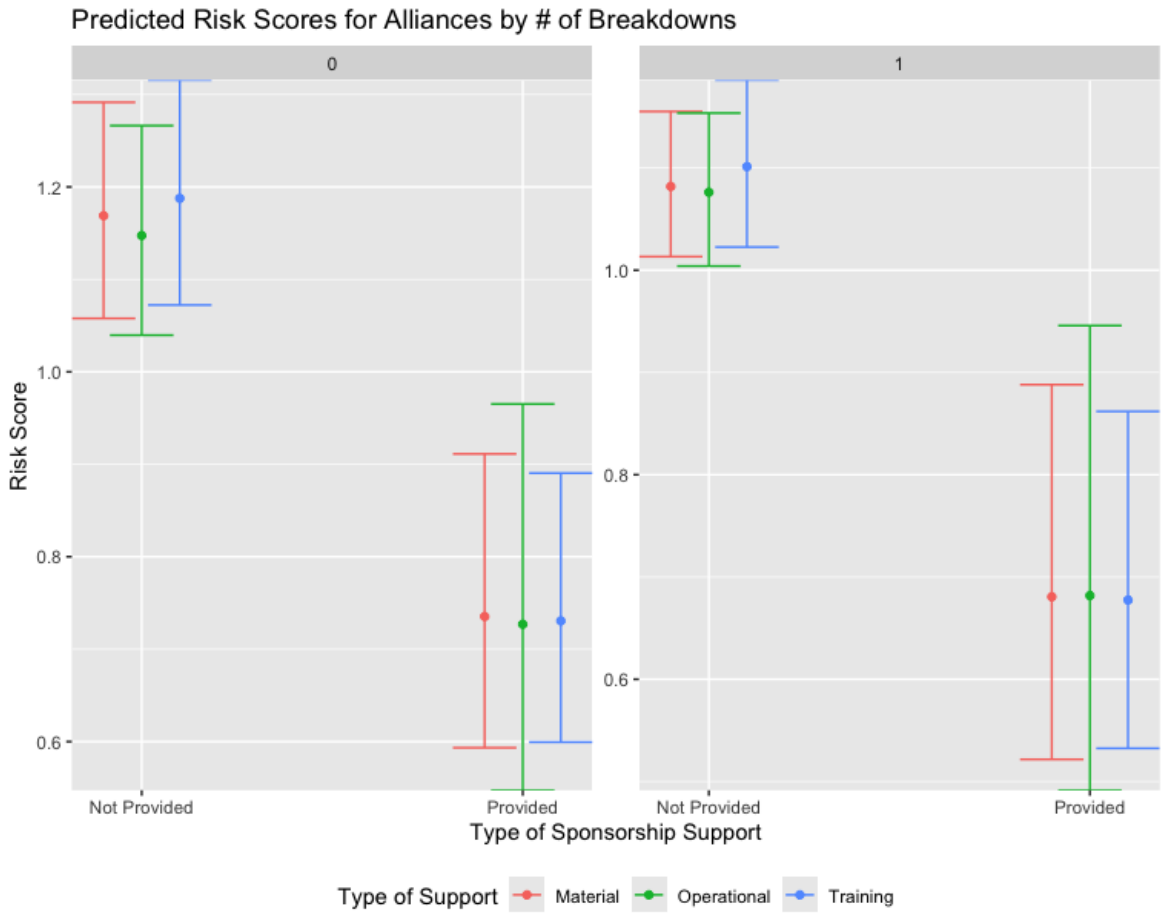


Figure IV.1: Risk Scores for Allied Dyads based on Table IV.4

questions, I conduct a secondary test of these results by rerunning the model using the categorical indicator of state sponsorship[4] against the different types of alliance termination. Table IV.5 presents the simplified version of the model results; the full model specification can be found in Appendix B.

Table IV.5: Varieties of State Support on Cooperation Breakdown

	Financial Support		Material Support		Operational Support		Training Support		Territorial Support	
Breakdown Type	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Alliance Termination										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.68	0.224	0.56**	0.215	0.54**	0.241	0.55**	0.194	0.93	0.187
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.08	0.098	0.89	0.108	1.11	0.089	0.86	0.118	1.30	0.142
Group Collapse										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.36**	0.348	0.37**	0.331	0.38*	0.390	0.49*	0.314	0.94	0.298
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.59	0.935	1.46	0.779	0.83	0.530	1.54	0.808	3.35	0.724
Interorganizationl Split										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.68	0.226	0.57**	0.214	0.54*	0.240	0.56**	0.193	0.97	0.197
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.06	0.104	0.92	0.094	1.11	0.095	0.88	0.103	1.34	0.155

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Several points of inference can be taken from these results. First, the provision of tangible support by state sponsors still sees a statistically significant effect on reducing the hazard of alliance failure compared to dyads with no sponsors – whether that may be from group collapse or interorganizational split. Similar to our results from Table IV.4, not all types of support yield statistically significant results in reducing the hazard of breakdown in alliances.

Unlike previous findings, however, financial support yields a statistically significant effect in reducing the risk of alliance termination by group collapse for sponsored groups by 64% compared to non-sponsored groups. It is not hard to postulate why this may be the case; while intergroup dynamics *can* yield such catastrophic

4. Which distinguishes whether groups are state-sponsored, share sponsors, or are not sponsored, for different types of state support.

effects as group collapse, it is also equally – if not more – likely that group collapse occurs due to internal issues that may plague militant groups at the organizational level. It is also commonly known that militant groups face internal collapse when there are insufficient resources to maintain their existence. Given the fungible nature of financial resources to also contribute to organizational stability, it is therefore unsurprising that financial support, in addition to material, operational, and training support, reduces the risk of alliance breakdown through organizational failure.

Secondly, parsing out the effect of sharing sponsors does not result in statistically significant findings for the effect of shared sponsors providing tangible support on alliance durability, regardless of the type of alliance breakdown. What has changed from parsing out the effect of sharing sponsors is that the effect of state-sponsored groups that are provided material, operational, or training support has changed. Dyads with material support are 44% less at risk of alliance termination compared to those without sponsorship. Dyads with operational support are 46% less at risk of alliance termination compared to not being sponsored, and dyads with training support are 45% less at risk of alliance termination.

But otherwise, there are no statistically significant effects of dyads having shared sponsors on the durability of their alliance. Or so it would seem – yet when we plot the risk scores of the types of support found statistically significant in Table IV.5, we find that the provision of operational support to dyads by shared sponsors results in a ***higher*** risk score that significantly differs from sponsored dyads that do not share sponsors. Moreover, this effect applies to alliances that have yet experienced alliance failure, or have already experienced a breakdown once.

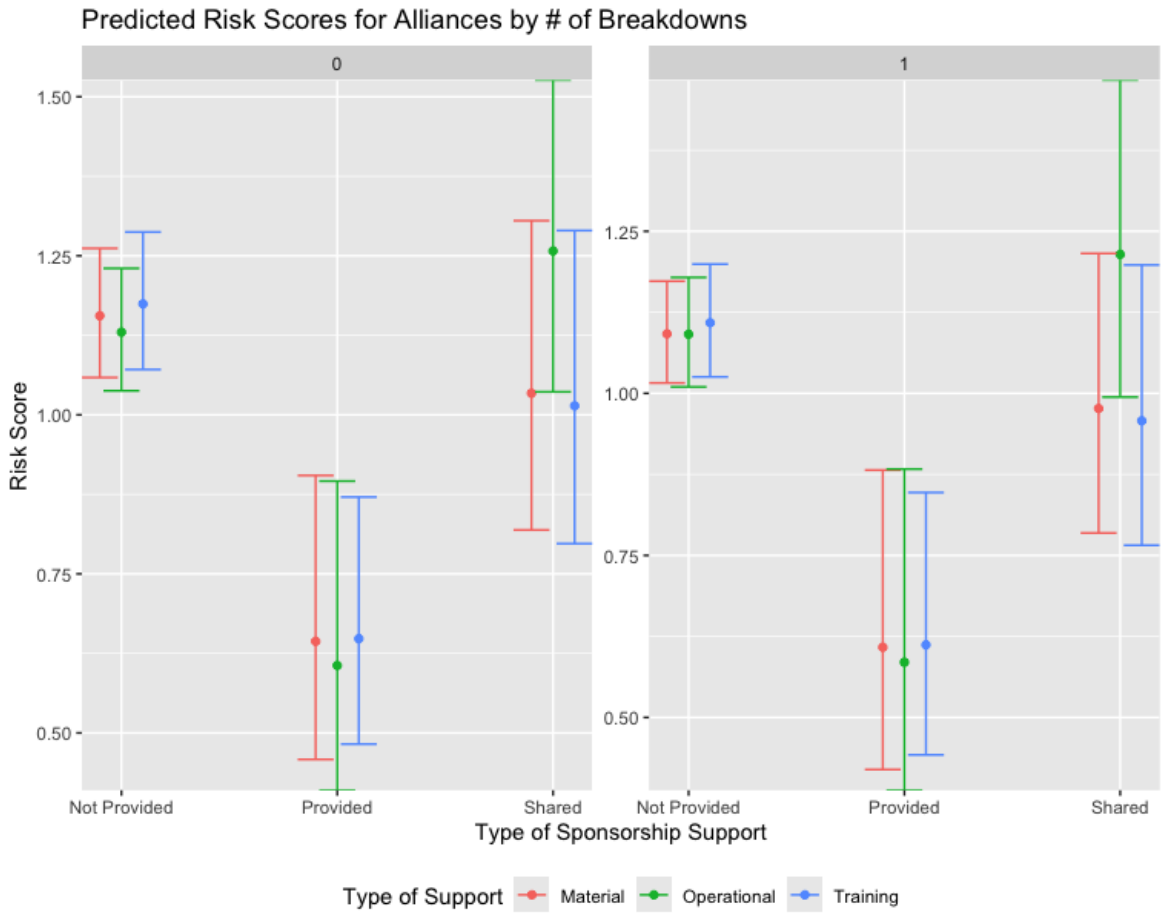


Figure IV.2: Risk Scores for Allied Dyads based on Table IV.5

Relevance of Sharing Sponsors?

Statistical analysis conducted in this and the previous chapter has repeatedly found there to be no statistically significant effect of sharing sponsors on the risk of alliance failure. However, it would be premature to conclude that sharing sponsors does not have any bearing on militant alliance dynamics and their durability. On one hand, the lack of statistical evidence could be due to the restricted data sample used for both analyses. Because the final version of the data was cut off in 2010 due to data availability issues[5], the exclusion of events and values that are already scarce may weaken statistical power in finding a significant relationship between my variables. However, a more theoretical explanation would be due to omitting a critical component from the analysis; the effect of great power dynamics, i.e., interstate competition in its impact on state-militant and subsequently, militant-militant cooperation. What these analyses have not quite been able to model is the effect of great power dynamics, i.e., interstate competition in its impact on state-militant and subsequently, militant-militant cooperation.

In the post-Cold War era, great power competition played a role in militant cooperation during periods of conflict. One prominent example is the Syrian civil war (2011 – Present), which involves Russia, Iran, and others supporting the Syrian government on one side, while the United States and its allies on the other supporting the opposition. Their involvement has been seen as a series of overlapping proxy warfare between regional and world powers (*rightly so*). But what makes them different is that proxies were relevant not just as rebels but also as counter-insurgents

5. See chapter III for more details.

(Leenders and Giustozzi 2022). Not only did sponsors include both state and non-state actors alike, but they also did not necessarily have exclusive relations with their proxies. They were also much more intensely involved with their proxies than generally expected.

Another notable example is Iran's increasing network of militant allies in the Middle East. Not only has this shaped the dynamics of cooperation between Palestinian militant organizations against Israel, but this has also led to inciting significant instability in the region overall. To evaluate how interstate competition may motivate the strategic sponsorship of militant groups by belligerent powers, I examine the ramifications of how Iranian sponsorship has affected regional alliances between cooperative and competing militant groups in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

NETWORKS OF COOPERATION

In chapter IV, I conducted a secondary empirical analysis of how state sponsorship impacts the duration of militant alliances by testing whether the effect varies by the type of tangible support sponsors provide. My results show that the effect *does* vary depending on the type of support provided and, consistent with prior findings on the subject, alliances that receive the more fungible types of support are less at risk of alliance failure. Militant dyads that share sponsors, on the other hand, are not found to have any statistically significant effect on the risk of experiencing alliance failure when provided with **any** type of tangible support. So why does the literature seem to hold conflicting views on the impact of shared sponsors in militant alliances? While some find the impact of shared sponsors to be positive (Mickolus 1989), others find it to be detrimental (Phillips 2019) or insignificant (Gade et al. 2019; Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022; Vestring, Rouse, and Rovit 2024) to militant cooperation.

My theory on militant alliances falls in line with proponents of the strengthening effect state sponsorship has on the durability of militant alliances. The logic is that external leverage functions as an important inter-rebel institution that mitigates the credible commitments problem, polices against side negotiations, and mediates conflicts between rebel groups (Bapat and Bond 2012; Popovic 2018). I argue that such institutions also facilitate better means of coordination by establishing channels of communication and accountability measures. However, statistical tests from chapter III and chapter IV do not provide sufficient evidence to back my theory; sharing sponsors does not yield a statistically significant effect in reducing the risk of alliance failure, regardless of whether they are based in different regions or are competitive dyads.

Yet, it would be premature to conclude that sharing sponsors has no significant effect on alliance durability. One crucial component that is missing from my previous analyses is the effect of interstate competition and how states choose to strategically interact and sponsor their proxies. As we have observed from the Syrian conflict, the prevalent role foreign-sponsored pro-government militias (PGMs) have played in efforts at defeating the insurgency not only highlights how principal-agent relations have ceased to be dyadic and hierarchical, but also indicates the emergence of a new type of heterarchical order that has enabled parallel hierarchies tying proxies to their sponsors fiercely in competition with one another (Leenders and Giustozzi 2022, 614). Iran (along with Hezbollah and Iraqi militias) has especially worked to actively recruit volunteers to provide PGMs in Syria with manpower both domestically and internationally[1] (620).

1. The transnational reach of these efforts are found to have targeted Shiite communities in Iran

I initially argued that sharing sponsors helps alleviate competitive tension between allied dyads that are based geographically in the same region, as well as between competitive dyads (i.e., allied dyads that have experienced periods of competition). This argument did not necessarily take into consideration the motivation of the state to care enough about whether their proxies cooperated or not. In this chapter, I empirically assess the effect of shared sponsors on militant cooperation taking into consideration the motivation of the state sponsor(s) to actively encourage cooperation amongst its proxies. I focus on conducting a comparative case study between the Palestinian movement centered around Hamas and the Jihadist movement centered around Al Qaeda in this chapter. These two sets of cases are ideal to examine analytically because not only are they both geographically located in the same region, but both movements also have cooperative and competitive networks of allies that are predominantly spread out throughout the same region.

In the case of Hamas and its allies, they have been the recipient of state sponsorship from states like Iran since its inception, and their relationship has gone through multiple phases of cooperation and competition – such as the relationship they have with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). These two groups have had a continued history of rivalry amidst cooperation since the late 1980s. What started broadly as a result of ideological differences that come from following a more secular and Palestinian nationalistic approach versus the more extremist pan-Islamism advocated by the latter[2] has led these two groups to experience periods of rising and ebbing levels of tension throughout the early 1990s even as they continued to partake in

(mostly Afghan Hazara refugees), Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Yemen.

2. "Palestinian Factions: Hamas and PIJ," The Wilson Center, November 3, 2023.

joint operations. Yet the two competing groups started showing a marked increase in coordination following the beginning of the al-Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, financially encouraged by their joint sponsor Iran (Levitt 2005).

Al Qaeda (AQ) on the other hand, is one of the oldest and largest operating jihadist militant organizations in the world. Its main objective is to seek to rid the Muslim world of foreign influence and establish Islamic governments that are Shariah-based[3]. It was founded by Osama bin Laden on August 11th 1988 after having gained experience training and organizing opposition against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The organization has then since grown to become a broad-reaching organization with a network of allies and supporters spread all over the world. AQ accomplished this by intentionally seeking out affiliate relationships to increase its operational reach, gain local expertise, and boost its legitimacy throughout the Muslim movements around the world[4].

The relationship Al Qaeda shares with its affiliates is unlike Hamas and its alliance with other Palestinian groups in its complexity; many analysts presumed the relationship to take on a principal-agent structure, where AQ core as the principal would issue commands and the affiliates as the agent would carry them out. The documents seized from the Abbottabad raid that took out bin Laden in 2011 have uncovered the relationships to be more complex (Lahoud et al. 2012), where there would sometimes be overlaps between the AQ core and the leadership of its affiliates (Byman 2014, 435). Consequently, affiliate relationships come with a variety of

3. "Dreaming of a Caliphate," The Economist, Aug 6, 2011. Daniel L. Byman, "Comparing Al Qaeda and ISIS: Different goals, different targets," Congressional testimony published by Brookings Institute, April 29, 2015. Riedel 2008, 11, 121

4. Mapping Militant Organizations. "Al Qaeda." Last modified January 1, 2019.

challenges, such as disparate priorities and ideologies, expensive managerial structures, difficulty enforcing core AQ's requests, and branding issues when affiliates act counter to AQ's official ideology and tactics (Byman 2014, 433).

While such difficulties are not unique to the AQ network, my theory makes the argument that the disaggregated network structure of Al Qaeda and its affiliates is fragile and not as sustainable as compared to the Hamas alliance network due to the absence of motivated state sponsors. The Palestinian movement comprises fully separate and independently operational militant organizations that at times cooperate and coordinate with each other. On the other hand, the network of affiliates the AQ has established makes it difficult to ascertain whether such organizational ties are operationally significant in any way. AQ may thus seem stronger and deadlier, but because they are forced to absorb the strain of maintaining the network, with no state sponsor(s) to alleviate the pressure, I contend that not only is this burdensome on AQ core but it also creates a weakness in the sustainability of such alliance structures.

The chapter will proceed as follows: first, I discuss the origin and background of Hamas, how it has funded itself, and how its relationship with Iran in particular, influenced its relationship with other militant groups in the region. I then go on to introduce the origin and background of Al Qaeda, along with its relationship with other groups and affiliates. I explain how, despite not being sponsored, it was able to overcome some difficulties because of the important role the leader played in establishing and maintaining its network of allies and affiliates. Lastly, I discuss the possible ramifications the Hamas attack has had on the jihadist movement in the region, and evaluate the likelihood of future alliances between Hamas and other

Palestinian militant groups with the Al Qaeda-led jihadist movement.

Hamas: An Introduction

Hamas, an acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya ("Islamic Resistance Movement"), is a Sunni Islamist militant movement and one of the Palestinian territories' two major political parties (Lopez et al. 2020, 239). Founded by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in 1987 after the first Intifada against the Israeli occupation, it has continued to govern more than two million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip since taking control from Fatah in 2007 (Davis 2017, 67–69). They have been designated as a terrorist organization by dozens of countries[5] – although some apply this label only to its military wing. They receive external support from states such as Iran, which provides them with material and financial support, while Turkey is reported to harbor some of their top leaders.

Hamas emerged as an outgrowth of the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. They went on to establish itself as an alternative to the secular Fatah within the Palestinian Authority (PA), which was set up after the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel entered into a peace process and were subsequently tasked to exercise limited control in the West Bank and Gaza. Ideologically positioning themselves to be a combination of Palestinian nationalism with Islamic fundamentalism, Hamas has since committed itself to eliminating Israel and establishing an all-Islamic state of Palestine in its place.

Following a forceful seizure of Gaza in 2007 after a breakdown in a Saudi-

5. These countries include, but are not limited to: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Israel, Japan, Paraguay, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.

brokered PA unity government, they have since continued to preside over as the de facto authority amidst deteriorating economic and humanitarian conditions. And while Hamas remains the preferred faction for at least 20% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza (WBG) in most polls, the extent of their domestic popularity remains uncertain[6]. WBG polls taken in late 2023 indicate a boost in Palestinian approval for Hamas in the aftermath of the conflict, but it is uncertain whether this spike in support will persist. This is because Hamas' domestic popularity tended to spike in the wake of past conflicts, but would then soon fall back to pre-conflict levels[7].

It is therefore unsurprising that Hamas is best known for its armed resistance to Israel, apparent from engaging in multiple wars sporadically from 2008 onward. This vastly differs from the approach taken by the Fatah, its rival party which dominates the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and rules in the West Bank, which has formally renounced violence – a vow that has not always been upheld during times of high Israeli-Palestinian tensions. Most recently, Hamas launched a massive surprise attack on southern Israel in October 7th of 2023, killing more than 1,200 people (both civilian and military) and taking around 240 persons more as hostages. In response, Israel has declared war on the group and indicated plans for its military to conduct a long campaign to wipe it out entirely (Robinson 2023).

6. An Arab Barometer survey taken just before October 7 found the majority of Gazans to have little or no trust in the Hamas-led government, with Palestinians in the WBG voicing more support overall for Fatah over Hamas.

7. Taken from Hamas: Background, Current Status, and U.S. Policy, drafted by the Congressional Research Service, dated December 14, 2023.

Stability from Sponsorship

Given its designation as a terrorist entity, Hamas is not privy to the official assistance provided to the PLO in the West Bank by the United States and the European Union (EU). Instead, much of the funding historically comes from Palestinian expatriates and private donors in the Persian Gulf, in addition to some Islamic charities in the West. Foreign aid generally tends to reach Gaza via the PA and UN agencies. However, the 2006-07 closing of borders by Egypt and Israel has made the movement of goodies and people in and out of the territory severely difficult.

To circumvent the blockade, Hamas collected revenue by taxing goods moving through Egypt into Gaza using a series of underground tunnels. Not only did this bring staples such as food, medication, and affordable gas for energy such as electricity, but it also brought resources such as construction materials, cash, and arms. In 2013, Abdel Fatah al-Sisi became President of Egypt, under which the Egyptian army was ordered to shut down the network of channels that breached its territory as a part of a counterterrorism campaign against the newly declared Islamic State. In 2018, Egypt started allowing Gaza limited access to commercial goods through its Salah-al-Din border, leading to earnings averaging around $12 million per month [8] from taxes for Hamas [9].

Another significant funding provider and support comes from surrounding states sympathetic to the Palestinian plight. Some have been consistently forthcoming (i.e., Iran) with their support, while others have over time gradually become sponsors.

8. This figure represents monthly estimates from 2021.
9. Taken from Backgrounder: What is Hamas?, written by Kali Robinson for Council on Foreign Relations, last updated October 31, 2023.

Hamas relied heavily on funding from states such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Sudan before their takeover of the Gaza Strip. In the case of Syria, the Assad regime provided decades of support to Hamas up until the Syrian civil war[10]. As for Qatar, they have more recently been publicly providing Hamas with monthly stipends that help pay for electricity as fuel as well as wages for the public sector – all with Israel's knowledge and acquiescence[11]. Additionally, Qatar has provided safe asylum to top political leader Ismail Haniyeh, along with several other senior Hamas leaders, who now reside in luxury[12]. Furthermore, Qatar has been able to leverage its unique relationship with Hamas to facilitate hostage negotiations in the aftermath of October 7th, and has gone on to publicly indicate its openness to reconsidering Hamas' continued presence in Doha[13] (Margolin and Levitt 2023).

But no other state sponsor has been as staunch of a supporter of Hamas as Iran has been. Hamas has been the recipient of significant financial and other tangible forms of support from Iran in particular since its formation in 1987. Assessments by the Canadian Secret Intelligence Service (CSIS) have found Iran to have been transferring funds to Hamas that fell somewhere between $3 million to $18 million a year in 2002 (Levitt 2023). The Coalition forces' deposition of Iraq's Saddam Hussein ended the provision of generous Iraqi grants to the families of Palestinians killed, wounded, or jailed in attacks on Israelis. This was about the time when Iran's funding of

10. "State Sponsors of Terrorism" in "Country Reports on Terrorism 2010", United States Department of State, August 18, 2011; Fares Akram, "Hamas Leader Abandons Longtime Base in Damascus", *New York Times*, January 27, 2012.

11. Hadeel Al Sayegh, John O'Donnell, and Elizabeth Howcroft, "Who funds Hamas? A global network of crypto, cash and charities", Reuters, October 16, 2023.

12. Evan Dyer, "How tiny Qatar hosts the leaders of Hamas without consequences", CBC News, October 18, 2023.

13. Humeyra Pamuk, "Qatar open to reconsidering Hamas presence in Qatar, US official says", Reuters, October 27, 2023.

Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations noticeably started to increase significantly[14].

In fear of being bound to Tehran's expectations and instructions, Hamas was reluctant to accept too much money in its earlier years as a way to guard its operational independence. Unfortunately, the assassination of Hamas leader Abdul Aziz Rantisi in mid-April 2004 changed their tune. Following on the heels of the assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Rantisi's death consequently made Hamas look weak and without any clear leadership. As a response, Hamas leader Khaled Mishal, who was located in Damascus at the time, reportedly sought an increase in funding from Iran as well as a direct channel to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corp (IRGC). This action was in an attempt to contain the impact of the loss of both Yassin and Rantisi, in addition to reinvigorating Hamas operational cells[15].

Once they successfully took over the Gaza Strip, they were no longer as reliant on funding from Iran as they were before the takeover. However, Iran remained a source of significant financial support over the years. Iranian funds have covered operational costs such as weapons, intelligence, sanctuary, safe haven, operational space, and training. They have also covered long-term organizational costs such as leadership, ideology, human resources and recruitment, media, propaganda, public relations, and publicity (Clarke 2015, 102–111). The exception was during the Syrian civil war when Tehran and Hamas leaders were in disagreement over the backing of Bashar al-Assad's regime. But even when Hamas broke with the Assad regime

14. Ze'ev Schieff, "Iran and Hezbollah Trying to Undermine Renewed Peace Efforts", *Haaretz*, December 5, 2004.

15. Matthew Levitt, "Combating the Networks of Illicit Finance and Terrorism", Testimony submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, 118th Congress, October 26, 2023.

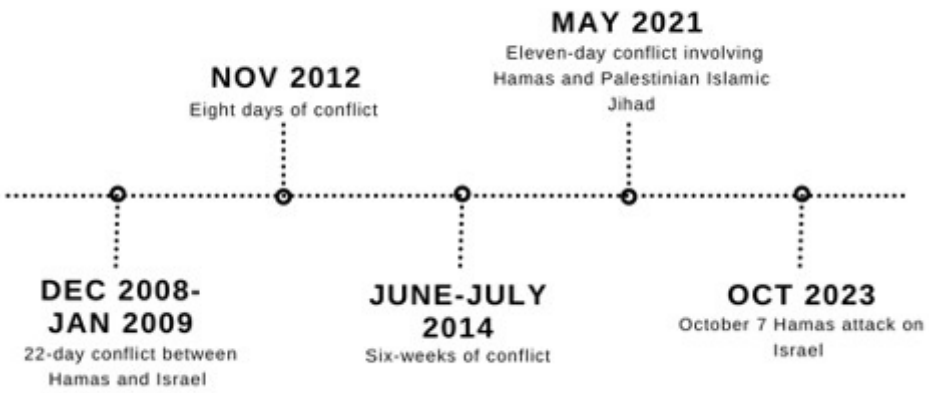


Figure V.1: Israel-Hamas Conflicts Since 2007 (Margolin and Levitt 2023)

during the Syrian civil war, Iran continued to maintain funding for their military activities, only cutting funding for the political bureau in dissatisfaction[16].

The wide range of tangible and active support provided by all the state sponsors, but most especially by Iran, has built up Hamas as the capable and deadly militant organization that we recognize it to be today. The consistent and generous financing provided by Iran has served to sustain the group and build up the group's militant capabilities over time. The capacity Hamas has built to carry out the series of attacks over time against Israel, including the most recent events that occurred on October 7th has been enabled by Iran's terrorist training programs and its consistent effort to arm Hamas over the years.

16. Matthew Levitt, "The Hamas-Iran Relationship," *The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune*, November 2023.

Network of Allies

The consequences of Iran's sponsorship were evident not in Hamas losing operational independence – as they had initially feared – but in the alliances it formed with other militant organizations. An exemplary illustration of this point is the most recent Hamas attack on Israel last October that triggered the 2023 Israel-Hamas armed conflict. The assault commenced in the early hours of October 7th, with Gaza launching thousands of rockets targeting southern Israel. Heavily armed forces made their way through gaping holes in Israel's once highly-vaunted border fence and started gunning down both civilian and military targets[17]. Israel's coast was also ambushed by seaborn divers and small boats[18]. Casualties mounted up to around 1,200 Israeli deaths and 3,500 wounded, with over 240 taken hostage[19]. Reports of rape, beheadings, and torture soon followed[20]. Given the scope, brutality, and audacious nature of the attacks – in addition to the weapons systems deployed – indicated the extensive degree of planning, destructiveness, and capability that was unexpected by analysts[21].

17. Bill Hutchinson, "Israel-Hamas conflict: Timeline and key developments," ABC News, October 18, 2023.

18. Stephen Sorace, "Israeli Navy unit repels Hamas terrorists infiltrating by sea on morning of attack, IDF video shows," Fox News, October 16, 2023; Abdelali Ragad, Richard Irvine-Brown, Benedict Garman and Sean Seddon, "How Hamas built a force to attack Israel on 7 October," BBC, November 27, 2023.

19. "Israel-Hamas war live updates: 2 hostages released by Hamas are American Israeli citizens," NBC News, October 20, 2023; Cassadra Vinograd and Isabel Kershner, "Israel's Attackers Took More Than 200 Hostages. Here's What We Know About Them," *New York Times*, October 24, 2023; "Israel revises death toll from Oct. 7 Hamas assault, dropping it from 1,400 to 1,200," *Times of Israel*, November 11, 2023; Cassandra Vinograd and Isabel Kershner, "Israel's Attackers Took About 240 Hostages. Here's What to Know About Them," *New York Times*, November 20, 2023.

20. "Israeli forensic teams describe signs of torture, abuse," Reuters, October 15, 2023; "Images of the Mass Kidnapping of Israelis by Hamas," *Atlantic*, October 9, 2023; Georgina Lee, "What is a war crime and did Hamas commit war crimes in its attack on Israel?" Channel 4, October 11, 2023.

21. Armin Rosen, "How Hamas Fooled the Experts," *Tablet Magazine*, October 12, 2023.

Other than the gunmen from several smaller Palestinian factions, the majority of the fighters who partook in the attack on Israel were affiliated with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). The relationship between Hamas and the PIJ has always vacillated between cooperation and competition. Both groups originated from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and share a common goal in the destruction of Israel to replace it with a Palestinian state with an Islamic government. But unlike Hamas, the PIJ refuses to negotiate or engage in diplomacy; they also prioritize militant activity, whereas Hamas functions as a political party that provides social services and has a military wing[22]. Ideologically, the PIJ identifies with the Iranian concept of *waliyat al faqih*[23], which Hamas rejects.

Table V.1: Known Militant Allies of Hamas (1987-2017)

Name	Relations	Cooperation	Competition
Abu Al-Rish Brigades	2005-2014	2005-2014	X
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade	2000-2012	2001-2012	2000
Asbat Al-Ansar	2004-2014	2004-2014	X
Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)	2000-2011	2000-2011	X
Hizballah	1987-2016	1987-2016	X
Jenin Martyrs Brigades	2003-2016	2003-2016	X
Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)	1980-2016	1988-2012	1980-1987; 2013-2016
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	1987-2014	1987-2005	2006-2014

Despite major differences in ideology and approach, both Hamas and PIJ have sought to set aside their differences to cooperate on militant activity and coordinate

22. Marie Slavicek, "Unlike Hamas, Islamic Jihad has no desire to exercise political power," *Le Monde*, August 10, 2022.
23. This concept entrusts governance to clerics led by a supreme jurisprudent.

attacks. They have consistently made efforts to stay on good terms even after instances of having engaged in isolated violence against each other (e.g., PIJ resuming cooperation three days after cutting off ties with Hamas after the death of PIJ rocket unit commander Raed Jundiya by the Hamas police, June 2013[24]). In September 2013, Hamas and PIJ formed a joint command to coordinate activities in Gaza[25], and in May 2018, the PIJ and Hamas vowed to work together in a joint statement issued against Israel[26] (Levin 2023).

Hamas and PIJ's continual efforts at working through their differences can be explained by the extensive financial, military, and political support generously provided to them by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The motivation behind Iran's support for the Palestinian cause has been partly ideological due to the religious significance Jerusalem holds for Muslims[27]. Over the years since the late 1980s however, concerns relating to realpolitik in the region have caused Iran to support Palestinian armed groups from a strategic standpoint. Perceiving Israel (and by proxy, the United States) as the greatest threat to its national security and domestic stability, providing support for Palestinian armed groups became an integral part of its regional security policy to contain and preoccupy Israel. This change in viewpoint shifted priorities to value a group's willingness to confront Israel over a group's Islamic credentials (or lack thereof).

24. Elhanan Miller, "Islamic Jihad ends three-day schism with Hamas," *Times of Israel*, June 26, 2013.
25. Elhanan Miller, "Hamas and Islamic Jihad to form joint command," *Times of Israel*, September 17, 2013.
26. Adnan Abu Amer, "Are Palestinian armed factions forming joint army?" Al-Monitor, June 8, 2018.
27. Their involvement is further justified in accordance with their 1979 constitution, which affirms Iran's duty to spread the revolution and assist "the dispossessed" around the world.

Main/Political Group	Military Section/Sub-Organization	Details	Ideological/Political Background	JOR Affiliate	Oct. 7 Participant
Hamas	The Martyr Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (Kata'ib al-Shahid Izz al-Din al-Qassam)	In the 1990s and early 2000s, Hamas was active in planning and orchestrating suicide bombings. Hamas is the largest faction in Gaza and currently leads the area's governing apparatus. The group promotes Muslim Brotherhood style Islamism.	Mainstream Islamist	O	O
Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Harakat al-Jihad al-Islamiyyah fi Falistine; PIJ)	The Quds Brigade (Saraya al-Quds)	With close links to Khomeinist ideology, PIJ has primarily focused on violent activities in the Palestinian territories and Israel. In the 1990s2000s, the group carried out dozens of suicide bombings. PIJ is the second largest faction in Gaza after Hamas, in terms of size and weapons supplies.	Mainstream Islamist	O	O
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)	The Martyr Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades (Kata'ib al-Shahid Abu Ali Mustafa)	The leftist PFLP group pioneered airline hijacking attacks in the 1970s. Despite occassionally working with the Palestinian Authority, the Marxist group has often rejected peace negotiations with Israel and has continued its militancy.	Leftist	O	O
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC)	The Martyr Ahmed Jibril Brigades (Kata'ib al-Shahid Ahmed Jibril)	Primarily based in Syria and Lebanon, the leftist PFLP-GC's heyday was in the 1970s-80s. It often engaged in fratricidal conflicts with other Palestinian groups in that period. It is a close ally and proxy of the Assad regime in Damascus with a more limited presence in the Palestinian territories.	Leftist	O	O
Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)	The National Resistance Brigades - Forces of the Martyr Umar al-Qasim (Kata'ib al-Muqawama al-Watania - Quwet al-Shahid Umar al-Qasim)	Splitting from the PFLP, the DFLP is a smaller Marxist group with a presence in Gaza and the West Bank. The DFLP has had a mixed relationship with the Palestinian Authority and has often worked against it.	Leftist	O	O
The Popular Resistance Committees (Lijan al-Muqawama al-Sha'abiyah; PRC)	The Nasir Salah al-Din Brigades (Alawia al-Nasir Salah al-din)	Formed out of a splinter from the Gaza-based sections of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. The PRC has been involved in major operations including the 2005 assassination of Palestinian Authority advisor Musa Arafat and the 2006 kidnapping of Gilad Shalit.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	O
Palestinian Freedom Movement (Harakat al-Ahrar al-Falastinia)	Brigade of the Supporters (Kata'ib al-Ansar)	A splinter from the Fatah Movement, the Palestinian Freedom Movement is primarily based in Gaza and was formed out of pro-Hamas Islamist militant elements of Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade linked to Khaled Abu Hilal.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	Unclear
al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Kata'ib Shuhada al-Aqsa)	Storm Forces/Army (Quwet/Jaysh al-Asifa)	An element that emerged into the public in the 2010s from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Gaza. Despite claiming to be representative of Fatah, the Storm Forces were officially cast as splinters by the Fatah Movement.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	Unclear/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade did Participate
al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Kata'ib Shuhada al-Aqsa)	Martyr Abd al-Qader al-Husayni Brigades (Kata'ib al-Shahid Abd al-Qader al-Husyani)	One of the factions of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade with ties to Iran. The group operates in the West Bank, but is its primary area of operations has been in Gaza.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	Unclear/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade did Participate
al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Kata'ib Shuhada al-Aqsa)	The Martyr Nidal Amoudi Brigades (Kata'ib/Liwa al-Shahid Nidhal al-Amoudi)	With a presence in the West Bank and Gaza, this section of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade trumpets its links to Fatah, despite the 2007 PA Presidential Decree to disarm all militia groups. In 2021, the group called on the Palestinian Authority security services to target Israeli forces.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	Unclear/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade did Participate
al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade (Kata'ib Shuhada al-Aqsa)	Groups of the Martyr Ayman Jawda (Majmuat al-Shahid Ayman Jawda)	An element of the Gaza-based al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. In 2005, the group vowed to continue suicide bombings in Israel.It has maintained close links to Hamas and PIJ.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	Unclear/Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade did Participate
Holy Warrior Movement (Harakat al-Mujahideen)	The Holy Warrior Brigades (Kata'ib al-Mujahideen)	Officially founded in 2006 from splinter elements from Fatah and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. The group filmed its members with the beheaded bodies of Israeli soldiers on October 7, 2023.	Islamist Fatah Splinter	O	O
The Movement of the Patient (Harakat Sabireen)		Splintered from PIJ in 2014-2015, the Gaza-based Shi'a Islamist group caused ire for Hamas and PIJ. It received increased funding from Iran, just as PIJ and Hamas lost their Iranian funding. The Movement launched small rocket attacks against Israeli targets and was generally repressed by Hamas.	PIJ Splinter/Shi'a Islamist		

Table V.2: Iran-Backed Palestinian Organizations (Smyth 2023, 36)

As a result, this has led Iran to support a plethora of secular, leftist, and Sunni Islamist groups, despite its own ideological standing as a self-styled Islamic Shia republic[28]. To cultivate and build a network of Palestinian proxies, Iran mobilized the Lebanese Hezbollah as a key go-between to create and maintain relationships – much like they did with Iraqi Shi'a militias to confront U.S. forces in the years after 2003 in Iraq[29]. In carrying out this strategic initiative, Iran has been able to rely on Hezbollah as their medium of influence due to the sizable Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon, geographical proximity to the conflict area, and Hezbollah's loyalty and reputation to its leadership role within the "Islamic Resistance" against Israel.

Additionally, further efforts at proxy-building included the sponsorship of Palestinian groups by providing them with heavy financial incentives[30], weapons supply[31], propaganda support[32], and facilitating the formation of unified umbrella groups to foment greater cooperation amongst proxy groups[33] (Smyth 2023). The flip side of this coin lies in the reality that, as much as Iran is forthcoming with such benefits, they can just as easily be taken away if those a part of the proxy network do

28. Erik Skare, "Iran, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad: A marriage of convenience", Commentary, *European Council on Foreign Relations*, December 18, 2023.

29. "Treasury Designates Hizballah Commander Responsible for American Deaths in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, November 19, 2012.

30. Scott Glover, Curt Devine, Majlie de Puy Kamp, and Scott Bronstein, "'They're opportunistic and adaptive': How Hamas is using cryptocurrency to raise funds," CNN, October 12, 2023.

31. Michael Evans, "How Iran's tech and homemade weapons gave Hamas power to strike Israel," *The Times* (London), October 11, 2023; Fabian Hinz, "Iran Transfers Rockets to Palestinian Groups," Wilson Center, May 19, 2021; Nakissa Jahanbani, Muhammad Najjar, Benjamin Johnson, Caleb Benjamin, and Muhammad al-'Ubaydi, "Iranian Drone Proliferation is Scaling Up and Turning More Lethal," War on the Rocks, September 9, 2023.

32. Yonah Jeremy Bob, "Iran-Hezbollah help Hamas, Islamic Jihad trounce Israel with propaganda – exclusive," *Jerusalem Post*, December 6, 2021.

33. Nancy Ezzeddine and Hamidreza Azizi, "Iran's Increasingly Decentralized Axis of Resistance," War on the Rocks, July 14, 2022.

not conform to Tehran's vision. Setting aside their differences and making efforts at cooperation will thus be a more viable strategy for groups like Hamas and the PIJ, given the extensive support package Iran has been providing to them.

Furthermore, the Hamas-led October 7 attack also involved at least four other Palestinian armed groups – Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades, Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, Omar Al-Qasim Forces, and the Mujahideen Brigades[34] in addition to the PIJ. While these groups draw from a broad ideological spectrum that ranges from hard-line Islamism to relative secularism, they all share a common willingness to use violence against Israel. But more importantly, most are also beneficiaries of Iran.

Al Qaeda: An Introduction

Al Qaeda (AQ, alt. Al Qaida or Al Qa'eda) is a transnational Sunni Islamist terrorist organization composed of a core group of operatives and leadership that is largely based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, with a network of affiliates around the world. The group rose to global prominence after perpetrating the September 11, 2001, attacks (9/11) in the United States[35]. AQ was originally set up as a supranational organization with global objectives that were primarily aimed at harming the collective West – the United States, Europe, Russia, and Israel – and freeing the Islamic world from Western domination. Today, it has evolved into a decentralized, networked transnational terrorist organization with no permanent headquarters and financially funded through diverse channels of donations, smuggling, kidnapping for ransom, and drug and arms trafficking (Vasiliev and Zherlitsyna 2022, S1243).

34. Abdelali Ragad, Richard Irvine-Brown, Benedict Garman and Sean Seddon, "How Hamas built a force to attack Israel on 7 October," BBC, November 27, 2023.
35. Taken from Al Qaeda: Background, Current Status, and U.S. Policy, drafted by the Congressional Research Service, dated May 6th, 2024.

Ideologically, while the global jihadist movement overall does not share the same ideology, the dominant ideology that is espoused by groups such as Al Qaeda is a distinct strand of militant Sunni Islamism. It reflects the notion that the only way to protect the Islamic world is through violent *jihad*[36]. Interestingly, while the totalitarian ideology of jihad itself is a closed system, there is flexibility within the group that allows for controversy over strategy, tactics, and other important issues. This not only allows for tolerance over internal disagreements and debate among its members and leadership, but it has also made the group adaptable and resilient against splintering. For example, in the 1980s when there was an ideological divergence between those who wanted to go after the "far enemy" (the West) versus those who wanted to focus more on local-level interests such as targeting "apostate" regimes throughout the Muslim world, Al Qaeda strategically resolved the conflict by pursuing both goals simultaneously (Vasiliev and Zherlitsyna 2022, S1242).

Network of Affiliates

The counterterrorism response in the event of 9/11 led to a more decentralized jihadist movement, making it difficult for Al Qaeda to manage its brand. While it was able to trust allies such as Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) to act on its behalf, there were more instances where Al Qaeda was being associated with acts and actors that sometimes they did not even condone. It also sought to secure its position as the leader of the jihadist movement in the wake of its losses, especially after the Iraq invasion by the United States (Bacon 2018, 184).

36. Originally meaning the struggle in defense of Islam and the spread of Prophet Muhammad's teachings throughout the world, the idea was gradually radicalized into the militant connotation we now know it to be today.

To this end, Al Qaeda started establishing affiliate relationships, where existing organizations pledge allegiance to the authority of bin Laden and take on the Al Qaeda label, thereby committing to an alliance (Byman 2014, 435). What is unique about this type of relationship is that affiliates tend to retain their operational independence; so while there is at times some level of personnel integration (particularly at the top) among affiliates, they do *not* consent to be controlled by Al Qaeda. Rather, what affiliates have agreed to is the traditional form of an alliance, involving cooperation and consultation with Al Qaeda. However, one way this type of relationship differs from conventional alliances is by creating an extra layer of protection that comes with being endorsed by and publicly adopting the AQ name. This allows for their affiliates to receive reputational benefits associated with the AQ brand which goes to bolster their resource mobilization capability (Bacon 2018, 185).

Al Qaeda's relationship with affiliates in the 1990s was not the same as those that were established in the wake of the U.S.-led Iraq offensive in 2003. Groups associated with Al Qaeda in the 1990s refer to local organizations that bin Laden supported by providing training to bring down local regimes in their own countries. But in the aftermath of the Afghanistan invasion led by an American-led coalition in October 2001, groups such as the Jama'ah Islamiyah (JI) in Southeast Asia, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) of the Philippines, Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HuJI), and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) expanded their target range to include international targets on behalf of Al Qaeda. They also partook in attacks and plots including carrying out AQ directives such as the Bali bombings by JI in October 2002 and the planned attack on the U.S. Embassy in Manila in 2004[37]. Sometimes they provided

37. Zachary Abuza, Balik Terrorism: The Return of the Abu Sayyaf, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S.

Table V.3: List of Known AQ Allies and Affiliates

Group Name	Year	Status
Lashkar-e-Taiba	1990	Allies
Haqqani Network	1991	Allies
Abu Sayyaf Group	1994	Affiliates
Al Jama'a al-Islamiya	1995	Affiliates
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	1998	Affiliates
Jema'ah Islamiyah	1998	Affiliates
Egyptian Islamic Jihad	1998	Mergers
Harakat-ul-Mujahedeen	1998	Allies
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	1998	Affiliates
Al Qaeda in Yemen	2000	Affiliates
Ansar al-Islam	2002	Allies
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	2003	Allies
Al Qaeda in Iraq/The Islamic State	2004	Affiliates
Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group	2004	Affiliates
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	2006	Affiliates
Al Qaeda Kurdish Battalions	2007	Affiliates
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	2008	Allies
Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	2009	Affiliates
Al Shabaab	2009	Affiliates
Lashkar-e-Zil	2009	Affiliates
Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (Formerly Jabhat al-Nusra)	2012	Affiliates
The Those Who Sign in Blood Brigade	2012	Allies
Al Murabitoun	2013	Allies
Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent	2014	Affiliates

operational support and logistical aid for other AQ plots, such as operatives of Lashkar-e-Taiba partaking in the shoe bombing incident on American Airlines flight 63 from Paris to Miami, and the foiled attack on Australia's only nuclear power plant in 2003 – with or without the knowledge of their group leaders (Gunaratna and Oreg 2010, 1051).

It is only in years since the 2003 Iraq initiative that we have seen the formalization of Al Qaeda's affiliate connections to what we know today. There does not seem to be a unitary process for becoming an affiliate: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) took years before becoming official, while Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) only took several months. Al Shabaab did not take on a formal AQ label, while others incorporated the AQ label into their name. Additionally, there are groups that are *not* considered as affiliates, but are important allies of Al Qaeda – such as the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, among other groups in the Afghanistan-Pakistan area. While they regularly cooperate with AQ, share training and logistics facilities, and assist operations in general[38], they do not swear fealty or take the label, with a separate and distinct leadership structure from Al Qaeda (Byman 2014, 436).

Sources of Alliance Stability

Hamas: Iranian Sponsorship

Iran providing multifaceted support not only bridged ideological gaps among various Palestinian armed groups but also encouraged them to overcome their instinct

Army War College, September 2005.

38. Zachary Laub, Jayshree Bajoria, and Jonathan Masters, "Pakistan's New Generation of Terrorists," Backgrounder, Council on Foreign Relations, November 18, 2013; Aaron Y. Zelin, "Know Your Ansar Al-Sharia," *Foreign Policy*, September 21, 2012.

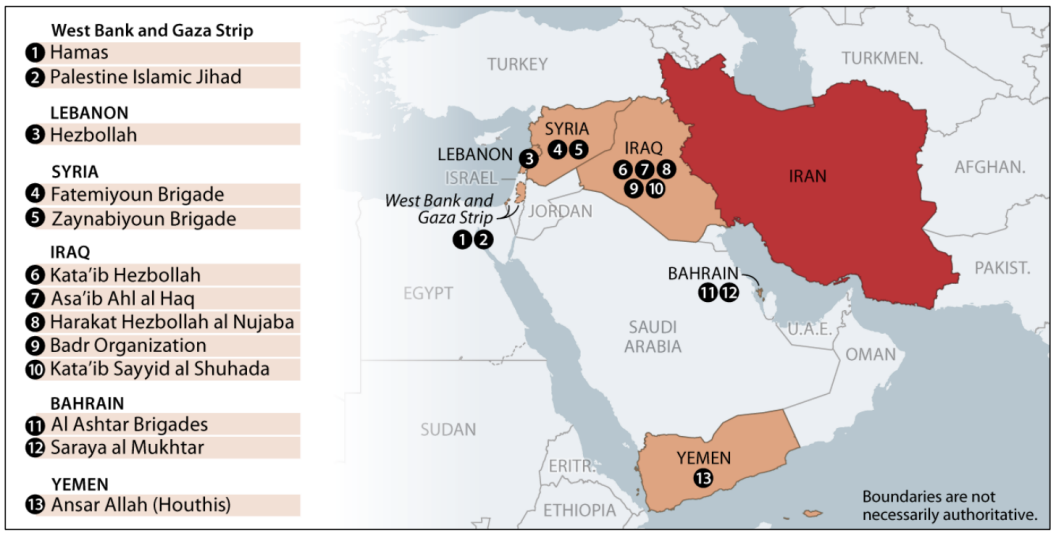
to prioritize their own survival and cooperate with other groups typically viewed as their competition. What we can ascertain from the October 7 attacks is that, while Iran was not directly involved[39], the following quote from Jake Sullivan[40] seems to reflect the general consensus that this would not have been possible without support from Iran:

> "[W]e have said since the beginning that Iran is complicit in this attack in a broad sense because they have provided the lion's share of the funding for the military wing of Hamas, they have provided training, they have provided capabilities, they have provided support, and they have had engagement and contact with Hamas over years and years."

Moreover, Iran has been able to build a network of proxies that are strategically located throughout the Middle East as we can see in Figure V.2[41]. The establishment of this "axis of resistance" has significant ramifications for both the Israel-Hamas war as well as for political stability in the broader Middle East. It is not unreasonable to assume that, given Hezbollah's longstanding ties with Hamas, they will most likely enter the war if it is in the best interest of Tehran's strategic objective in the event Israel were to launch a ground assault in Gaza.

There is a historical precedent in Hezbollah involvement when clashes between Israel and Hamas triggered Hezbollah attacks in the north during the summer of 2006. Hezbollah had an arsenal of about 15,000 missiles during the 2006 Lebanon

39. Olivia Gates, "U.S. intelligence indicates Iranian officials surprised by Hamas attack on Israel," CBS News, October 11, 2023.
40. White House, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan," October 10, 2023.
41. Zanotti, Sharpe, and Blanchard 2023, 38



Source: CRS, based on various open sources.

Figure V.2: Regional Map of Selected Iran-Allied Groups

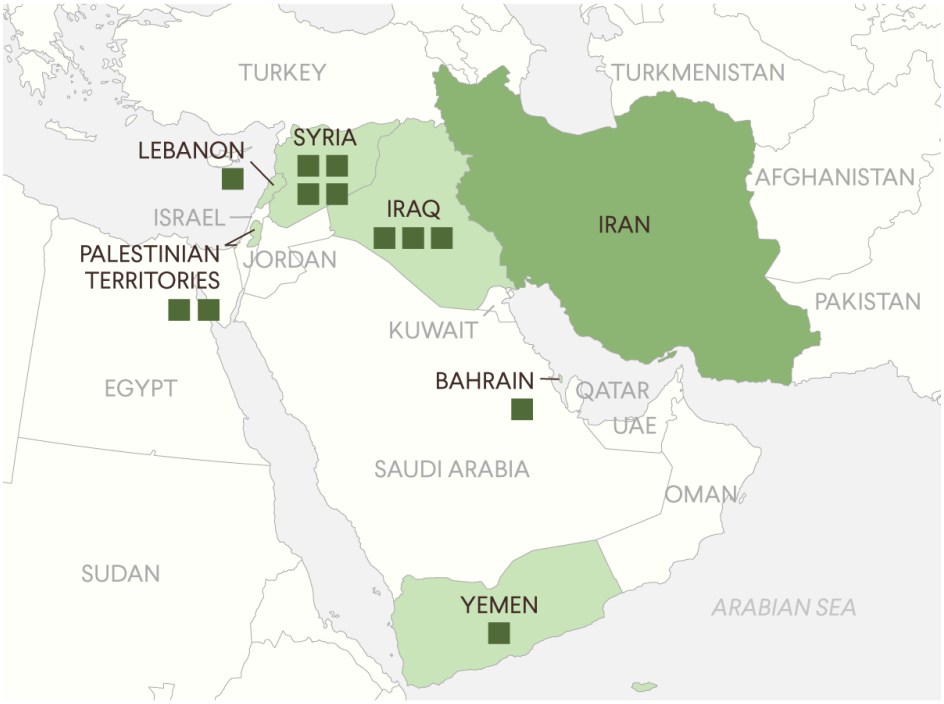
War, provided for by Iran and Syria, which was then used to wreak havoc on the north of Israel. Today, Hezbollah has an arsenal of missiles that are believed to be ten times that amount – which are both more accurate and can travel greater distances (Hoffman 2023).

The consequences of Iranian sponsorship have proven to be binding for militant cooperation in the region. Iran's sponsorship has not only opened up opportunities for these militant organizations to establish formal alliances but has also facilitated a means of joint coordination through Tehran's involvement. The ongoing conflict has provided the impetus to strengthen the bonds between members of the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance", in which the unification of this bloc has ensured that any party will be supported by the others and protected against future Israeli aggression[42].

42. Abbas Assi, "Hezbollah and the Israel-Hamas War: Repercussions for Lebanon," CSIS, November 16, 2023.

Iran's Regional Affiliates

Notable Iran-backed militias as of October 2023



Main area of activity	Militia	Iranian influence	Estimated size
BAHRAIN	Al-Ashtar Brigades	Strong	Unknown
IRAQ	Kata'ib Hezbollah	Strong	20,000–30,000
	Badr Organization	Strong	10,000–30,000
	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq	Strong	5,000–15,000
LEBANON	Hezbollah	Strong	30,000–45,000
PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES	Hamas	Moderate	30,000–40,000
	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	Moderate	1,000–15,000
SYRIA	Fatemiyoun Brigade	Strong	10,000–15,000
	Zainabiyoun Brigade	Strong	2,000–5,000
	Quwat al-Ridha	Strong	3,000–3,500
	Baqir Brigade	Strong	3,000
YEMEN	Houthi movement	Moderate	10,000–30,000

Sources: Financial Times; International Institute for Strategic Studies; CFR research.

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Al Qaeda: Strong Leadership

Rarely is it the case that the interests of the parent organization (Al Qaeda) and its affiliates align perfectly. Some of the common problems cited are that an affiliate may falsely claim credit for a job, shirk responsibilities, pursue its own preferences, and otherwise act in counter to the wishes of the parent organization (Byman 2014, 443). They are also capable of damaging the brand image, as Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) had done with its incessant sectarian targeting of Iraqi Shiites (Vasiliev and Zherlitsyna 2022, S1244). In such cases, the parent organization is forced to spend resources like time and money to monitor and manage its affiliates. Given that affiliates are separate and independent entities, there is a greater likelihood of preference divergence, which comes with attempts at exerting influence over the parent organization's preferences and lobbying for more resources (Hawkins and Jacoby 2006).

Despite the absence of state sponsorship, Al Qaeda has been relatively successful in building and maintaining a network of alliances and affiliates. This success is attributed to the leadership of Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born founder and leader of Al Qaeda from 1988 until his death by U.S. special operations forces in May 2011. This is due to the overarching responsibility the leader has over all facets of AQ's activities. The leader, otherwise known as the *Amir*, possesses religious, operational, and logistical authority over AQ activities – with heavy involvement in operational, strategic, and tactical planning as well as logistical and organizational planning. The *Amir* is in charge of approving the annual work plan and budget, as well as making necessary modifications as needed depending on new developments. The leader is also responsible for handling the internal functioning of the group as well as the

management of ranking personnel in the organization[43] (Gunaratna and Oreg 2010, 1054).

Critics of leadership decapitation strategies have long argued that killing leaders has the potential to motivate recruitment through martyrdom (Cronin 2006, 22) and is an ineffective long-term strategy overall (Jordan 2009, 720) due to its potential to install a more dangerous successor (B. M. Jenkins 1987, 7, 8). While the death of bin Laden did not result in the organizational collapse of Al Qaeda as proponents of leadership decapitation predicted, its' aftermath disrupted the activities and functions of the organization long-term by resulting in a less capable leader coming to take charge over an already weakened group. Bin Laden was a capable leader in the way he was able to manage relations and conflicts to build the Al Qaeda brand (Byman and Pollack 2001, 135). Ayman al-Zawahiri[44], bin Laden's deputy and successor, ran the day-to-day operations of the organization after 9/11[45] and greatly complemented bin Laden[46]. Yet, al-Zawahiri's inability to manage conflict was one of the primary reasons Al Qaeda was unable to successfully mitigate the conflict between al Nusra and ISIS – leading to the now infamous alliance rupture and a rival that eclipsed Al Qaeda (Bacon and Arsenault 2019, 233).

In the absence of state sponsors, Al Qaeda has nevertheless been successful in overcoming issues of adverse selection, where agents under stress can claim align-

43. Here, management involves the nominations, promotions, and manning of all senior positions within Al Qaeda.

44. A longtime second-in-command of Al Qaeda, he became the group's leader in 2011 when bin Laden was killed. Some credit Zawahiri with controlling the group's strategy while bin Laden acted as the figurehead (Cragin 2014, 804). Others call Zawahiri the ideological mastermind behind AQ, coming from a family of politicians and religious scholars (Riedel 2008, 17). He was killed in a U.S. drone strike in Afghanistan on July 31st 2022.

45. Scott-Clark and Levy 2017, 157.

46. Wright 2006, 127.

ment to gain benefits rather than for the pursuit of their own goals. It takes competent and efficient leadership to successfully leverage integration, where senior managers will need to maintain an active role in ensuring continued integration. At the same time, they will need to stay mindful of other organizational problems that may arise, such as cultural clashes that can create unexpected barriers (Vestring, Rouse, and Rovit 2004, 15). Al Qaeda's unique organizational structure capable of providing flexibility within the strict hierarchical system also worked in its favor to allow for mobilization within its ranks. In the event of sudden arrests and eliminations, the flexible structure enabled the movement of members between different committees and units under short notice of time (Gunaratna and Oreg 2010, 1064).

Yet, this makes the Al Qaeda brand highly vulnerable to fracture in case of a major security breach – particularly when it relies heavily on the charismatic personality of the leader to keep the network of affiliates and allies cohesive. When al-Zawahiri succeeded bin Laden, he did not opt to fundamentally change Al Qaeda; rather, he reinforced bin Laden's vision and embraced a global mission that prioritized the U.S. over a narrow focus on Egypt (Bacon and Grimm 2022). Primarily through its affiliates, Al Qaeda under al-Zawahiri has been able to expand its reach geographically, increase its strength in places like Yemen, Syria, and sub-Saharan Africa, and remain a leader within the jihadist movement. At present, it also enjoys safe haven in Afghanistan under the Taliban[47]. However, the U.S. Intelligence Community finds that it lacks the capacity to conduct major transnational attacks – once a hallmark of the Al Qaeda approach[48].

47. Lynne O'Donnell, "Al Qaeda Is Back – and Thriving – in Afghanistan," Analysis, Foreign Policy, March 22, 2024.

48. Taken from Terrorist Groups in Afghanistan, drafted by the Congressional Research Service,

Regional Spillover Effect

Heterophily is defined as the degree to which pairs of individuals who are different in certain attributes attract each other for interaction (Rogers 2003). Should we be concerned about the possibility of an inter-movement cooperation between the Palestinian and Jihadi movements, and what consequences that would have for security in the region? Since October 2023, Iran has encouraged and enabled its various proxies and partners – including Hezbollah, Iranian-backed groups in Iraq and Syria, and the Huthis in Yemen – to conduct strikes against Israeli or U.S. interests in the region. Complying with Iran's wishes, Hezbollah has continued to conduct attacks along Israel's northern border to tie down Israeli forces as they seek to eliminate Hamas in Gaza. Hezbollah is calibrating this pressure on Israel from the north while trying to avoid a broader war that would devastate Hezbollah and Lebanon[49] (ODNI 2024, 24). We have also seen Yemen's rebel Houthi movement enabled by support from Tehran to fire missiles toward Israel and attack commercial ships with alleged Israeli ties in the Red Sea – actions the Houthis declared to be a show of solidarity with Hamas (Robinson and Merrow 2024).

The Hamas attack has been encouraging individuals to conduct acts of antisemitic and Islamophobic terror worldwide. It has also been galvanizing individuals to leverage the Palestinian plight for recruitment and inspiration to conduct attacks (ODNI 2024, 25). The ripple effect does not stop there: another complication brought

dated April 2, 2024.

49. Jeffrey Feltman and Kevin Huggard, "On Hezbollah, Lebanon, and the risk of escalation," Commentary, The Brookings Institution, November 17, 2023; Jane Arraf, "Why Hezbollah and Israel haven't plunged into all-out war,", NPR, December 19, 2023; Dan Sagalyn, Zeba Warsi, Sonia Kopelev, and Ethan Dodd, "Escalating tensions between Israel and Hezbollah grow fears of wider outbreak of war," PBS News Hour, December 28, 2023.

on by the October 7 attacks is the response it incited amongst a broad range of Islamist extremists. Hamas' October 7 surprise attack on Israel provided a platform around the world to reinvigorate recruitment and propaganda for several jihadist groups. Sunni violent extremist organizations – including Haya'at Tahrir al-Sham, the Taliban, and al-Qaeda – were quick to declare their solidarity with jihad against Israel and the Jews (Winter 2024). For example, the following is a message released by al-Qaeda in support of action against the "West" [50]:

> "This deliberate and repeatedly targeting of civilian places, like mosques, schools, markets and hospitals, by the Zionists-American Coalition are manifestations of an extremely evil psyche that is overflowing with hatred and contem[...] This false and immoral play was carried out by the cowardly Zionist army in Al-Shifa Hospital after killing pre-mature babies, the sick, the wounded, and the displaced, and after they and the Americans screamed and wailed that this hospital was the centre of the jihadis leadership in Gaza. Then it became clear after all this blatant quackery that there was no trace of a single gunman in it. Their real intention was to destroy magnetic imaging devices and the like, which are used to diagnose the life of a wounded person, and by which the life is preserved. The missiles that are burning our proud brothers in Gaza comes from the American and European bases that are sitting on our chests and sitting on out land[...]"

50. "Al-Qaeda Invokes Memory of Benghazi in Summoning Muslims to Attack U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Revenge for Gaza," SITE Intelligence Group, November 20, 2023; Tricia Bacon, "The Jihadist Landscape Amidst Israel-Hamas War: Five Critical Factors," Analysis, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, December 7, 2023.

However, there were also significant differences in the statements issued by these parties. Notably, while some groups specifically named Hamas in their congratulatory statements, others referred only to the Palestinian people in general. This exemplifies the ambivalent take on Hamas – a nationalist Islamist group – that the Salafi-jihadists seem to hold, given their view on nationalism to be a pernicious Western innovation[51]. Al Qaeda quickly attempted to use the October 7 attack to inspire members of its regional branches and lone actors to take action in Europe and North America. The Islamic State (ISIS), on the other hand, has taken to directly criticizing Hamas and has been much more bellicose in threatening and calling for violence[52] against Jewish and Western interests around the world[53].

This is because Al Qaeda and Hamas diverge on affiliations, tactics, and goals. The dynamic between these two groups is influenced by a delicate equilibrium of strategic pragmatism[54] and unwavering commitment[55] to ideological principles, closely tied to the goals and tactics utilized to attain them. These differences incited much tension and confrontations between the two entities. Given its global jihadist agenda, al-Qaeda has criticized Hamas on numerous occasions for its affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, relations with Iran and Hezbollah, and participation in elections – which al-Qaeda deems to be un-Islamic (Paz 2011). Moreover, differences over nationalism (Stenersen 2020) and views about the international system in

51. Guy Fiennes, "Islamist groups unite around Israel attack, diverge on Hamas," Institute for Strategic Dialogue, November 6, 2023.
52. Lucas Webber and Colin P. Clarke, "How the Islamic State Propaganda Machine is Exploiting the Israel-Hamas Conflict ," Irregular Warfare Initiative, November 21, 2023.
53. Peter Smith and Lucas Webber, "The Israel-Hamas War and Resurgent Jihadist Threats to Europe and the United States," Lawfare, February 18, 2024.
54. Colin P. Clarke and Barak Mendelsohn, "Al Qaeda's Ruthless Pragmatism Makes It More Dangerous Than the Islamic State," Commentary, RAND Corporation, October 27, 2016.
55. Habeck 2010

general further isolate these organizations' tactics and territorial ambitions[56].

As this divergence seems to signify, the Sunni jihadist movement, including Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and their affiliates, is unlikely to shape the trajectory of the conflict in Gaza[57]. Neither groups are currently allied with Hamas. Neither are they (and their affiliates) well-positioned to carry out attacks in Israel or participate in the fighting in Gaza. Participating in the Gaza conflict will be unlike those times in Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan, where foreign jihadists could travel and directly participate, collaborate with local insurgents, and shape the conflicts from within to a varying degree (Bacon 2023).

However, this does not completely preclude the possibility of cooperation between Al Qaeda core and its affiliates, and Palestinian groups. Given the increasing number of Palestinian Sunni Islamist groups such as the "Lions' Den[58]", this has led to an increasing presence of jihadism within the Palestinian territories. Furthermore, Iran continues to offer passive forms of sponsorship to Al Qaeda allowing them to facilitate its terrorist activities by transferring funds and fighters to South Asia, Syria, and elsewhere[59]. In particular, al-Zawahiri's successor, Saif al-Adel also has a prior and ongoing history of working with Iran and Hezbollah stretching back to the early 1990s[60]. This not only signals the possibility of future alliances among extremist fac-

56. Mark Berlin, Sara Harmouch, and Vladimir Rauta, "The Extremist Domino Effect of October 7," Irregular Warfare Initiative, November 14, 2023.

57. Cole Bunzel, "Gaza and Global Jihad: Why the Hamas-Israel War Is Unlikely to Revive ISIS and al Qaeda," *Foreign Affairs*, November 2, 2023.

58. Lions' Den is a Palestinian armed group thought to have grown out of what is known as the 'Nablus Battalion' – a local umbrella group comprising of Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. Lions' Den is likely to still benefit from coordination and cooperation with these groups.

59. "Iran Continues To Offer Safe Haven To Al-Qaeda, US Confirms," Iran International Newsroom, February 27, 2024.

60. Thomas Joscelyn, "Al-Qaeda's "De Facto" Leader is Protected by Iran," *Nexus*, The Program on

tions that go beyond the immediate issue presented by the Gaza conflict, but it also indicates how Iran can expand its potential influence in transitioning from a passive supporter to a more overt sponsoring of Al Qaeda. The preexisting relationship between Iran and the current leader of Al Qaeda may provide the stepping stone for further Iranian involvement in providing the necessary resources and unifying stability required to strengthen the AQ network and bolster its capacity.

Extremism at George Washington University, February 2023.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, my goal was to assess whether the engagement of state sponsors affects the longevity of militant alliances. The short answer is that indeed, state-sponsored groups are less at risk of experiencing premature alliance failure. This is unsurprising, considering that the resources provided by state sponsors go a long way in strengthening organizational resiliency against countermilitancy and covering up-front and hidden costs involved in sustained cooperation.

The answer to this question becomes less clear when considering the impact of shared sponsors on militant alliances. Some find shared state sponsorship to enforce cooperation (Bapat and Bond 2012; Popovic 2018), while others find their involvement to be incendiary to alliance structures (Phillips 2019). Then there is Blair, Horowitz, and Potter, who finds no effect of shared state sponsorship on the probability of alliance termination. Rather, they suggest that shared sponsorship

is more important when it comes to alliance formation (Bapat and Bond 2012) than when it comes to alliance durability (Blair, Horowitz, and Potter 2022, 931). So which narrative is right?

As it turns out, shared sponsors do all of the above – as in, the involvement of shared sponsors sometimes does facilitate coordination, while at other times it increases the hazard of alliance failure. There are also other times when having shared sponsors has a negligible effect on the relative risk of alliance termination. My empirical findings showed that the effect of having shared sponsors varies depending on three key factors: first is whether we are looking at the effect on alliance termination overall, without distinguishing between the different modes of alliance failure. In this case, having shared sponsors increases the risk of alliance termination by two-fold compared to militant dyads that are not sponsored. But if we are to distinguish between the different modes of alliance breakdown, we do not find there to be any statistically significant effect on the hazard of alliance durability. This applies irrespective of whether we look at alliance termination through group collapse or interorganizational split.

A second major factor is whether the alliance in question is mostly a cooperative dyad, or has experienced periods of competition. Cooperative dyads that have experienced periods of competition are defined as competitive dyads during the period they have shown rival or competitive tendencies[1]. We find that shared sponsors significantly decrease the likelihood of alliance failure when assessing the

1. More specifically, militant dyads are coded as competitive alliances when there have been pledges of violence and other similarly hostile statements, some sporadic violence that does not appear to have been coordinated by the organizational leadership as part of a violent campaign for eradication or destruction, or evidence of antagonistic or otherwise hostile statements from group leaders during periods of cooperation.

risk of termination specifically from interorganizational split. Otherwise, shared sponsors do not exert any statistically significant effect on the hazard for alliance termination overall, regardless of whether they are wholly cooperative dyads in contrast to competitive dyads.

Lastly, a third crucial factor is whether the militant dyad operates within the same region or out of different regions. I did not find any statistical evidence in support of the positive effect sharing sponsors has on the durability of alliances for regional dyads. However, when we take into consideration the motivation behind state sponsors to encourage cooperation between its proxies, we find that even the most competitive of alliances can coordinate with deadly efficiency and accuracy. This analysis highlighted another important component of state sponsorship and militant alliances; interstate competition and great power/regional power dynamics.

To better illustrate this point, I conducted a case study that compares the Palestinian movement with the Jihadi movement. For the Palestinian case, I focus on Hamas and the impact of having a sponsor like Iran, which has a network of other militant groups they sponsor. Iran's sponsorship included an extensive financial and logistical support package that culminated up to $100 million annually in combined support to Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (Jablonski, Soliday, and Winter 2023). This not only enabled the PIJ to engage Israel in rocket fire in August 2022, but also led to the catastrophic success of the October 7 attacks the following year.

Given the competitive dynamics that have been the cornerstone of the Hamas-PIJ relations, the influence Iran exerted over its proxies by structuring them into a

more cohesive coordinating unit has contributed to increasing their deadliness and extremism (Smyth 2023, 35). While Iran may have allowed for a level of operational autonomy among its proxies, they were expected to behave within the scope of Tehran's wishes. As such, they were expected to cooperate and coordinate with other groups that made up Iran's network of proxies. This provides evidence to support how regional state sponsors directly influence the relations militant groups build with other militants, resulting in sustained cooperation and coordination that would otherwise be unlikely.

For the jihadi movement, I focused on Al Qaeda and its network of affiliates to contrast with the state-sponsored Hamas and its allies. In the case of Al Qaeda, we observed the absence of a motivated state sponsor(s), but they were still able to create a network of allies and affiliates that went beyond the Middle East. I contend that they were able to accomplish this because they had a charismatic and competent leader who grew the alliance network through a cult of personality, which started faltering when the said leader was taken out through decapitation strikes. Not only did this highlight the type of militant networks that were susceptible to decapitation strategies, but it also served to highlight the rather fleeting and fragile nature of networks driven by charismatic leadership.

Research Implications

The findings of this dissertation have three distinct implications for our understanding of militant cooperation. First is that shared sponsors do have the capacity to impact the durability of militant alliances, but they do so under specific conditions, as outlined above. This helps to reconcile the inconsistency in the literature's under-

standing of how shared sponsors impact inter-militant relationships. By empirically testing the different environmental conditions under which militant groups operate, we were able to establish a more nuanced understanding of how shared sponsors constrain militant behavior in terms of their interaction with other militant organizations.

Secondly, as the case of the Hamas-Iranian connection demonstrates, not all militant alliances are conjoined by the same mechanism. Hamas and its allies are interfused by the systemic network of proxies created and funneled by Iran. On the other hand, the jihadist movement is more disaggregated in its inclusion of multiple actors pursuing dissimilar objectives and using diverse strategies (Mendelsohn 2024, 2). The uniting factor amongst Sunni jihadis into viewing themselves as components of a singular movement is not only their belief in an armed jihad being an instrumental necessity to restore 'Islamic' glory and help oppressed Muslims, but also has intrinsic value in and of itself[2]. Unfortunately, this makes them vulnerable to resource deficiencies, weak capacity, and susceptible to infighting (4).

These are not the same set of vulnerabilities the Palestinian militants suffer from. Rather, they are empowered by Iranian support. As we can gauge from the October 7 attack, armed capabilities such as a variety of UAV designs, rockets, demolition charges, and other munitions were smuggled into Gaza with Iranian support, which were used to deadly effect on Israeli vehicles, buildings, civilian houses, and observation posts[3]. The Palestinian proxies that participated in the attack were able

2. Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, "O Our People Respond to the Caller of Allah," Pieter Van Ostaeyen's Blog, June 23, 2015.

3. Oded Yaron, "Hamas Drone Assault Surprised Israel, Using Russia-Ukraine War Tactics," Haaretz, October 9, 2023; Ryan Brobst, Bradley Bowman, and Mike Daum, "Hamas used Iranian-

to amass the firepower, messaging know-how, and high-tech equipment necessary through their supplier, Iran. The financial aid provided by Iran not only kept Hamas in operation as a governing entity in Gaza, it also funneled Hamas' militant apparatus[4].

What we can infer from this insight is that what makes Hamas and other Palestinian militants strong, is what inevitably makes them weak. While it may appear as though Iran allows for operational autonomy to its proxies, they are still held accountable to the larger strategic objective set by Tehran. If deemed insufficiently obedient, Tehran may punish them by severing ties and support entirely or, orchestrating divisions to weaken or coerce them into compliance (Smyth 2023, 35). This has made the Palestinian groups vulnerable to increasing Iranian influence via Iran's weapons, money, and political support – consequently leading to a growing loss in strategic and political autonomy. But this reliance also functions as a double-edged sword in that if they were to lose Iran as their sponsor, the ties between most of the groups that collaborated with Hamas for the October 7 attack would most likely weaken and disintegrate.

On a broader level, this research highlights the importance of not treating all militant alliances the same – rather, bilateral alliances are more prone to cluster into different networks dominated by different processes. Therefore, strategies to combat violent extremism must be tailored to exploit the vulnerabilities of each network cluster specifically. This seems to be in line with what the State Department has identified to be its focus in its annual rundown of counterterrorism challenges and

produced weapons in October 7 terror attack in Israel," Long War Journal, October 19, 2023.

4. Dan De Luce and Lisa Cavazuti, "Gaza is plagued by poverty, but Hamas has no shortage of cash. Where does it come from?" NBC News, October 25, 2023.

achievements: the jihadist exploitation of undergoverned spaces, Iran's continued sponsorship of regional terrorist groups, and the threats posed by violent extremism (Jablonski, Soliday, and Winter 2023).

However, that does not imply that these network clusters should be perceived as disaggregated patches each with a separate list of countermeasures in dealing with them. The war in Gaza in the event of Hamas' October 7 attack sparked concerns over the resurgence of jihadi terrorism (Hamming 2022, 27–28). There has been an uptick in lone wolf attacks by jihadis, and it is more than likely that the war will be able to boost recruitment for jihadi groups that can persuasively link their cause to the plight of the Palestinians (Mendelsohn 2024, 8).

It would be an over-exaggeration to state that the Palestinian cause will significantly affect the jihadi movement, and vice versa; the relationship between Hamas and jihadi groups has tended to be civil at best, and at times, hostile, due to Hamas' Muslim Brotherhood association[5]. But given the increasing jihadi presence through newly formed Palestinian Sunni Islamist groups, it is important to be cognizant of how these alliance clusters are never completely isolated. Instead, we should be alert and cautious of the potential consequences that such overlap could cause in affecting one another[6].

Limitations

What I aimed to accomplish throughout this project was to explore the influence of state sponsors on the longevity of militant alliances. In the process, I hoped to

5. Refer to Lynch 2010; Mendelsohn 2009 for more details.
6. For more details on the Gaza crisis' possible spillover effects into the rest of the region, particularly Iraq and Syria, see Tabler 2023.

reconcile the differences the discipline held on how sharing sponsors affects alliance durability, There are however several limitations that this project suffers from.

Firstly, the analysis conducted for this project faced data availability issues that led to a restricted data sample. For my analysis, I used data from the Militant Group Alliances and Relationships (MGAR) dataset by Blair et al. (2022). MGAR provides the most comprehensive global, time-series data on cooperation between militant groups, where it codes the network of relationships among 2,613 militant groups between 1950 and 2016. The dataset also includes time-series data on militant groups and their state sponsors, which details the content of state sponsorship provided. Unfortunately, the final version of the data sample used for analysis was cut off in 2010. This is because Price's original data on leadership decapitation compiles data on 207 terrorist groups across all conflicts and regions from 1970 to 2008. The final version of the data therefore covers alliances for all years from 1971 to 2009[7]. However, there have been significant developments since, such as the rise of the Islamic State in 2012, in addition to many successful leadership decapitation strikes – most notably Osama bin Laden (2011), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (2019), and Ayman al-Zawahiri (2022). To test whether these results hold even after the drastic changes that have occurred in the realm of violent extremism, this analysis needs further refinement by collecting additional data on cases of leadership decapitation up to the present.

Secondly, my results are vulnerable to potential concerns over regional or country-specific effects to drive the results. My empirical tests differentiate between militant

7. The data extends up to 2009 instead of stopping at 2008 because this allows us to capture the effect of leadership decapitation lagged one year on alliance breakdown.

allies based in the same region and those operating in different regions. I make a theoretical argument that justifies the need to test this distinction by contending that alliances competing for the same resources within a crowded conflict environment are more likely to benefit from having state sponsors. The support provided by state sponsors will not only help ameliorate the costs of inter-group cooperation, but it will also help to reduce the organizational instinct to succumb to competition with its allies. My models indicate that the impact of state sponsors varies significantly depending on whether they operate from the same region or different regions. However, this does not preclude the possibility of the results being driven by the effects of specific regions or countries. One straightforward approach to address this concern would be to incorporate regional and country-fixed effects into the analysis to account for variations specific to each region or country.

Directions for Future Research

One of the significant findings from this research is that the importance of a relationship does not necessarily imply its merit on its own. Instead, the quality and durability of the relationship are determined by the environment in which it exists and the context surrounding the relationship. The empirical analysis I employed for this project utilized a dyadic approach, in which the unit of analysis is the bilateral relationship between two separate groups. The limitation of this approach is that it falls short of relating micro-level interactions to macro-level patterns beyond the dyadic tie in question. A remedy to this obstacle was posed by Granovetter (1973), who argued strongly for the application of social network analysis as a means to bridge the micro-macro divide.

According to Wasserman and Faust (2022, 4), "[T]he social network perspective encompasses theories, models, and applications that are expressed in terms of relational concepts or processes. That is, relations defined by linkages among units are a fundamental component of network theories." In addition, Wasserman and Faust identify the following principles to underlie the social network analysis approach:

- Actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units;
- Relational ties (linkages) between actors are channels for transfer or "flow" of resources (either material or nonmaterial);
- Network models focusing on individuals view the network structural environment as providing opportunities for or constraints on individual action; and
- Network models conceptualize structure (social, economic, political, and so forth) as lasting patterns of relations among actors.

Other than the fact that my research agenda focuses on militant organizations as the actors instead of the individual, these principles are precisely the foundational blocks that inform this research agenda. In other words, the application of social network analysis to the study of militant interactions with the state and non-state actors has the potential to uncover novel insights into how alliance structures vary. Are the weaknesses in the jihadi movement due to an absence of state sponsor involvement? Or are there structural mechanisms that compensate for its absence? Would the Palestinian movement crumble without Iran serving as its linchpin? To what degree does the Iranian network of proxies provide opportunities or constraints on autonomous action? Addressing these questions would not only enhance the contribution of this research agenda to understanding militant cooperation but also offer

valuable insights into shaping countermilitant policies to combat various networks of violent extremism.

Concluding Remarks

Concerns over great power competition have increasingly shaped the last several years due to the rising China and the belligerent Russia. However, even if the current era of international relations is returning to the realm of great power conflict, with wealthy and powerful states vying for status and power, the lessons from the Cold War show that such conflicts may not necessarily be primarily between the great powers. From Vietnam to Afghanistan, Cold War conflicts were fought on a variety of different battlefields, with proxy actors carrying the lion's share of the burden. We would be unwise to forget the lessons of such conflicts, with small state and non-state actors playing an out-sized role. Therefore, the alliance structures of such actors are still of continued relevance and importance. My work can provide valuable insights into the ways in which small and non-state powers can impact the major conflicts of our time.

APPENDIX A

FOR CHAPTER 3

Estimation Strategy

My interest lies in modeling the effect of state sponsorship on the time to militant alliance termination to empirically assess my hypotheses. The observations in my data contain instances of repeated alliance formation and termination. Given the nature of alliances to be shaped by previous interactions, I employ the use of the conditional frailty gap-time Cox model, which models the risk of observing alliance failure based on when it had last occurred. Introduced by Box-Steffensmeier and Boef (2006)[1], this modeling approach combines the gap-time formulation with a restricted risk set, and event-specific baseline hazards – bypassing the need to make parametric assumptions regarding the shape of the baseline hazard. As for the

1. Also see treatment in Box-Steffensmeier, Boef, and Joyce (2007) for discussions on modeling event dependence and heterogeneity, and Box-Steffensmeier, Linn, and Smidth (2014) for discussions on model robustness.

within-subject correlations, they are controlled for in the model with a random effect. These specifications allow for the likelihood of both event dependence and unobserved heterogeneity to significantly contribute to the hazard rate of an allied dyad's risk of experiencing repeated alliance breakdowns.

The hazard of dyad i (λ_{ik}) experiencing kth number of alliance termination is given by[2]

$$\lambda_{ik}(t) = \lambda_{0k}(t - t_{k-1}) \exp^{\beta X_{ik} + Y_{ik} + \omega_i}, \tag{A.1}$$

where λ_{0k} is the baseline hazard rate, and $(t - t_{k-1})$ specifies the model's gap-time formulation so that the hazard captures the risk for kth instance of alliance termination since the $(k-1)$th breakdown. The term βX_{ik} gives the effect parameters for a dyad's risk of experiencing alliance failure when state-sponsored. The vector of covariates is captured by the term Y_{ik} (Wienke 2011, 226), and the gamma-distributed ω_i contains a vector of the dyad-specific random effects or frailties. The standard errors for all models are clustered by dyads, and tied events are handled using the Efron approximation method (Therneau and Grambsch 2000).

Kaplan Meier Plots

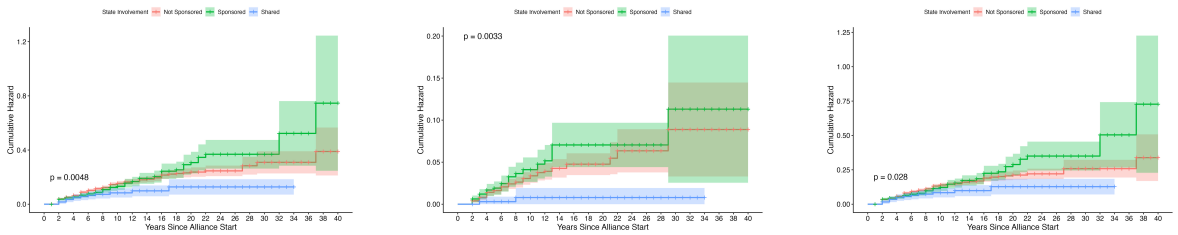
Figure A.1 presents the Kaplan-Meier failure plots and the p-values from nonparametric log-rank tests, which offer a preliminary, model-free assessment method to

2. The partial likelihood for this model, conditional on the frailties, is given by

$$L(\beta) = \prod_{i=1}^{n} \prod_{k=1}^{K} \left(\frac{\exp^{\beta X_{ik} + Y_{ik} + \omega_i}}{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{k=1}^{K} Z_{ik} \exp^{\beta X_{ik} + Y_{ik} + \omega_i}} \right)^{\delta_{ik}},$$

where the censoring variable δ is equal to 1 if observed and 0 if censored, and Z is an at-risk indicator that equals 1 when the dyad is at risk for alliance termination k and 0 otherwise.

compare the cumulative rates of alliance failure across different groups of interest. While all three figures show the cumulative hazard of alliance termination as a function of time (in years), Figure A.1a plots the cumulative hazard of alliance failure for dyads with state sponsors, shared sponsors, and without state sponsors. Figures A.1b and A.1c, on the other hand, depict the cumulative hazard for dyads at risk of alliance termination through group collapse and interorganizational split respectively. The p-values indicate whether we can reject the null hypothesis of no statistical difference in the survival probability between the groups.



(a) Alliance Termination **(b)** Group Collapse **(c)** Interorg. Split

Figure A.1: Cumulative Hazard of State Sponsorship on Alliance Breakdown

The p-values presented in all three figures seem to find a statistically significant difference in the cumulative hazard of alliance failure depending on whether Group 1 has no state sponsors, has state sponsors, or shares sponsors with Group 2. But although the Kaplan-Meier method is useful as a preliminary test of hypotheses, the inability to take in many explanatory variables makes it vulnerable to omitted variable bias – which could significantly affect the survival time of a particular group or groups. In the next section, I present the results of my analysis on whether state-sponsored groups are more or less likely to have enduring alliances with other militant organizations.

List of Tables & Figures

Table A.1: State Sponsorship on Alliance Breakdown (Full Model)

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Variables	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored						
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.77*	0.131	0.47*	0.316	0.76*	0.129
Shared Sponsor(s)	2.21*	0.309	1.12	0.978	0.95	0.098
Leader Decapitated	1.09	0.279	1.76	0.437	1.36**	0.106
Shared Ideology	0.88	0.183	2.51	0.554	0.68***	0.092
Capability Ratio	0.96	0.187	4.01**	0.477	1.12	0.106
New Alliances (Group 1)	1.15**	0.052	1.14	0.130	1.00	0.033
New Alliances (Group 2)	1.10	0.050	0.74	0.182	0.96	0.029
Age Difference	0.99*	0.006	0.99	0.019	1.02*	0.008
Group 1 Age	1.00	0.005	1.00	0.016	0.98*	0.008
Group 2 Age	1.00	0.005	0.96*	0.021	0.98*	0.008
Log Intercapital Distance	1.01	0.014	1.02	0.033	1.04*	0.014
Log Population (Group 1)	1.00	0.042	0.82	0.126	1.04	0.022
Log Population (Group 2)	1.01	0.042	0.87	0.115	1.06*	0.025
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	0.89	0.092	1.12	0.162	1.03	0.071
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	0.91	0.092	0.88	0.151	1.02	0.070
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.02	0.012	1.00	0.029	0.99	0.009
Polity 2 (Group 2)	1.02	0.013	1.02	0.029	0.99	0.009
Cold War (1970-1989)	1.54**	0.166	0.38**	0.354	0.88	0.083
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	1.10	0.153	0.40*	0.388	0.65***	0.110

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.2: Same Region Comparison – Aggregated

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Different Region						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.90	0.112	1.11	0.668	0.92	0.106
Same Region						
Not Sponsored	0.82	0.110	3.27*	0.532	0.71*	0.136
Sponsored	0.54**	0.219	1.55	0.572	0.52**	0.237
Leader Decapitated	1.28*	0.098	1.42	0.471	1.23*	0.101
Age Difference	1.02*	0.009	1.00	0.019	1.03**	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.010	1.00	0.017	0.97**	0.010
Group 2 Age	0.97**	0.009	0.96	0.022	0.97**	0.010
Shared Ideology	0.66***	0.112	2.30	0.611	0.62***	0.113
Capability Ratio	1.13	0.118	3.29*	0.477	1.06	0.115
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.96	0.040	1.14	0.130	0.96	0.033
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.93	0.036	0.77	0.175	0.93*	0.031
Log Intercapital Distance	1.01	0.014	1.09*	0.040	1.00	0.016
Log Population (Group 1)	1.04	0.024	0.85	0.138	1.06*	0.024
Log Population (Group 2)	1.07**	0.025	0.88	0.128	1.08**	0.025
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.06	0.069	1.08	0.186	1.05	0.067
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.06	0.068	0.99	0.171	1.04	0.066
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.007	0.98	0.032	1.00	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.008	1.0	0.030	1.00	0.008
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.74*	0.124	0.38*	0.374	0.87	0.118
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.65***	0.120	0.42*	0.393	0.66**	0.132

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.3: Same Region Comparison – Disaggregated

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Different Region						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.95	0.110	1.24	0.652	0.98	0.111
Shared	0.73	0.199	0.00***	0.921	0.77	0.152
Same Region						
Not Sponsored	0.83	0.108	3.37*	0.533	0.72*	0.132
Sponsored	0.49**	0.240	1.44	0.579	0.48**	0.257
Shared	0.97	0.230	7.65*	1.03	0.84	0.288
Leader Decapitated	1.22*	0.087	1.31	0.478	1.18	0.089
Age Difference	1.02*	0.008	1.00	0.019	1.03**	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.009	1.00	0.017	0.97**	0.009
Group 2 Age	0.98**	0.009	0.96	0.022	0.97**	0.009
Shared Ideology	0.70**	0.112	2.60	0.556	0.66***	0.116
Capability Ratio	1.14	0.118	3.35*	0.477	1.07	0.116
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.97	0.040	1.12	0.127	0.96	0.034
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.94	0.037	0.76	0.169	0.94*	0.031
Log Intercapital Distance	1.01	0.014	1.10*	0.041	1.00	0.015
Log Population (Group 1)	1.03	0.023	0.85	0.142	1.06*	0.024
Log Population (Group 2)	1.06*	0.024	0.87	0.131	1.07**	0.024
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.06	0.066	1.08	0.185	1.05	0.065
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.06	0.065	0.99	0.171	1.03	0.064
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.007	0.99	0.032	1.00	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	1.0	0.007	1.00	0.031	1.00	0.008
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.73*	0.126	0.38*	0.377	0.85	0.119
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.65***	0.118	0.43*	0.391	0.67**	0.130

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.4: Sponsorship*Region on Alliance Termination – Full Model

	Aggregate		Disaggregate	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored	0.90	0.112		
Not Sponsored			—	—
Sponsored			0.95	0.110
Shared			0.73	0.198
Same Region	0.82	0.109	0.83	0.107
Leader Decapitated	1.28*	0.097	1.22*	0.087
Age Difference	1.02*	0.009	1.02*	0.008
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.010	0.98**	0.009
Group 2 Age	0.97**	0.009	0.98**	0.009
Shared Ideology	0.66***	0.112	0.70**	0.111
Capability Ratio	1.13	0.117	1.14	0.117
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.96	0.040	0.97	0.040
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.93	0.036	0.94	0.037
Log Intercapital Distance	1.01	0.014	1.01	0.014
Log Population (Group 1)	1.04	0.024	1.03	0.023
Log Population (Group 2)	1.07**	0.025	1.06*	0.024
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.06	0.068	1.06	0.065
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.06	0.067	1.06	0.064
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.007	1.00	0.007
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.008	1.0	0.007
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.75*	0.124	0.73*	0.126
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.65***	0.120	0.65***	0.118
State Sponsored X Same Region	0.73	0.211		
Sponsored X Same Region			0.62**	0.229
Shared X Same Region			1.61	0.291

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.5: Sponsorship and Competition

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Cooperative Dyads						
Not Sponsored	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sponsored	0.68**	0.145	0.57	0.323	0.75*	0.132
Competitive Dyads						
Not Sponsored	1.53**	0.145	8.16*	0.948	1.57**	0.142
Sponsored	1.18	0.126	0.00***	0.487	1.20	0.146
Leader Decapitated	1.44**	0.115	1.43	0.467	1.41**	0.112
Age Difference	1.02*	0.010	0.99	0.019	1.03**	0.011
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.010	1.00	0.016	0.97**	0.010
Group 2 Age	0.97**	0.009	0.96*	0.021	0.97**	0.010
Shared Ideology	0.69***	0.109	2.29	0.605	0.64***	0.116
Capability Ratio	1.16	0.118	3.32*	0.473	1.08	0.116
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.99	0.042	1.17	0.129	0.98	0.037
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.93	0.039	0.78	0.178	0.94	0.034
Log Intercapital Distance	1.06**	0.020	1.03	0.035	1.06**	0.020
Log Population (Group 1)	1.05	0.026	0.84	0.129	1.07*	0.026
Log Population (Group 2)	1.08**	0.030	0.87	0.119	1.09**	0.029
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.05	0.072	1.11	0.172	1.04	0.073
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.04	0.074	0.93	0.152	1.02	0.073
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.008	0.99	0.029	1.00	0.009
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.009	1.00	0.029	1.00	0.009
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.80	0.119	0.36**	0.371	0.92	0.120
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.67***	0.118	0.42*	0.392	0.68**	0.132

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.6: Sponsorship and Competitive Alliances

	Alliance Termination		Group Collapse		Interorg. Split	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
Cooperative Dyads						
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.65*	0.167	0.55	0.319	0.72*	0.160
Shared Sponsor(s)	0.89	0.167	1.46	0.977	0.96	0.141
Competitive Dyads						
No Sponsor(s)	1.51**	0.143	8.22*	0.947	1.54**	0.141
Grp1 Sponsored	1.28*	0.123	0.00***	0.493	1.35*	0.137
Shared Sponsor(s)	0.76	0.150	0.00***	1.09	0.68*	0.165
Leader Decapitated	1.44**	0.116	1.42	0.466	1.42**	0.112
Age Difference	1.02*	0.009	0.99	0.019	1.03**	0.010
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.009	1.00	0.016	0.97**	0.010
Group 2 Age	0.97**	0.009	0.96*	0.021	0.97**	0.010
Shared Ideology	0.66***	0.116	2.45	0.562	0.60***	0.128
Capability Ratio	1.17	0.118	3.36*	0.476	1.09	0.117
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.98	0.043	1.17	0.129	0.98	0.037
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.92	0.040	0.78	0.177	0.93*	0.034
Log Intercapital Distance	1.06**	0.018	1.03	0.035	1.06**	0.019
Log Population (Group 1)	1.05	0.026	0.83	0.129	1.07**	0.026
Log Population (Group 2)	1.09**	0.031	0.87	0.120	1.10**	0.030
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.06	0.070	1.11	0.171	1.05	0.070
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.06	0.072	0.93	0.152	1.03	0.071
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.008	0.99	0.029	1.00	0.009
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.009	1.00	0.029	1.00	0.009
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.79	0.119	0.35**	0.378	0.92	0.120
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.67***	0.120	0.42*	0.392	0.68**	0.134

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table A.7: Sponsorship X Competition on Alliance Termination – Full Model

	Aggregate		Disaggregate	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored	0.68**	0.145		
Not Sponsored			—	—
Sponsored			0.65*	0.167
Shared			0.89	0.166
Competition	1.53**	0.145	1.51**	0.143
Leader Decapitated	1.44**	0.114	1.44**	0.115
Age Difference	1.02*	0.010	1.02*	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.97**	0.010	0.97**	0.009
Group 2 Age	0.97**	0.009	0.97**	0.009
Shared Ideology	0.69***	0.109	0.66***	0.116
Capability Ratio	1.16	0.118	1.17	0.117
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.99	0.042	0.98	0.043
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.93	0.039	0.92	0.040
Log Intercapital Distance	1.06**	0.020	1.06**	0.018
Log Population (Group 1)	1.05	0.026	1.05	0.026
Log Population (Group 2)	1.08**	0.030	1.09**	0.031
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.05	0.072	1.06	0.070
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.04	0.074	1.06	0.071
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.008	1.00	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.80	0.119	0.79	0.119
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.67***	0.118	0.67***	0.120
State Sponsored X Competition	1.13	0.222		
Sponsored X Competition			1.30	0.228
Shared X Competition			0.57**	0.264

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

APPENDIX B

FOR CHAPTER 4

List of Tables

Table B.1: Cross-tabulations of Types of Support and Alliance Failure

		# of Alliance Termination		
Characteristics	**Overall**, N = 7,100	**Never**, N = 3,556	**Once**, N = 3,134	**Multiple**, N = 410
Financial Support				
No Sponsor(s)	4,833 (80%)	2,659 (86%)	1,911 (73%)	263 (73%)
Grp1 Sponsored	931 (15%)	393 (13%)	443 (17%)	95 (27%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	298 (4.9%)	48 (1.5%)	250 (9.6%)	0 (0%)
Material Support				
No Sponsor(s)	4,904 (81%)	2,686 (87%)	1,959 (75%)	259 (72%)
Grp1 Sponsored	880 (15%)	366 (12%)	419 (16%)	95 (27%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	278 (4.6%)	48 (1.5%)	226 (8.7%)	4 (1.1%)
Operational Support				
No Sponsor(s)	5,073 (84%)	2,769 (89%)	2,042 (78%)	262 (73%)
Grp1 Sponsored	765 (13%)	303 (9.8%)	367 (14%)	95 (27%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	224 (3.7%)	28 (0.9%)	195 (7.5%)	1 (0.3%)
Training Support				
No Sponsor(s)	4,758 (78%)	2,669 (86%)	1,836 (71%)	253 (71%)
Grp1 Sponsored	995 (16%)	393 (13%)	501 (19%)	101 (28%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	309 (5.1%)	38 (1.2%)	267 (10%)	4 (1.1%)
Territorial Support				
No Sponsor(s)	4,996 (82%)	2,692 (87%)	2,027 (78%)	277 (77%)
Grp1 Sponsored	909 (15%)	370 (12%)	458 (18%)	81 (23%)
Shared Sponsor(s)	157 (2.6%)	38 (1.2%)	119 (4.6%)	0 (0%)

[1] n (%)

Table B.2: Effect of Financial Support on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Fin. Sponsored	1.329***	0.157*
	(0.186)	(0.081)
Leader Decapitated	0.515***	0.069
	(0.196)	(0.085)
Age (Group 1)	0.047***	−0.017***
	(0.013)	(0.006)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.154	0.204
	(0.663)	(0.290)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	0.375*	−0.093
	(0.199)	(0.088)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.009	0.004
	(0.011)	(0.005)
Observations	2,662	2,622
R^2	0.073	0.030
Adjusted R^2	−0.062	−0.114
F Statistic	30.431*** (df = 6; 2322)	11.657*** (df = 6; 2282)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.3: Effect of Material Support on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Mat. Sponsored	0.030	1.059***
	(0.084)	(0.192)
Leader Decapitated	0.072	0.518***
	(0.085)	(0.197)
Age (Group 1)	−0.019***	0.045***
	(0.006)	(0.013)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.277	0.286
	(0.291)	(0.667)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	−0.105	0.335*
	(0.088)	(0.199)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.003	0.007
	(0.005)	(0.011)
Observations	2,622	2,662
R^2	0.028	0.065
Adjusted R^2	−0.116	−0.072
F Statistic	11.044*** (df = 6; 2282)	26.802*** (df = 6; 2322)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.4: Effect of Operational Support on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Op. Sponsored	0.253**	2.069***
	(0.113)	(0.256)
Leader Decapitated	0.072	0.539***
	(0.085)	(0.195)
Age (Group 1)	−0.018***	0.041***
	(0.006)	(0.013)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.235	0.484
	(0.287)	(0.654)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	−0.102	0.271
	(0.088)	(0.197)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.004	0.011
	(0.005)	(0.011)
Observations	2,622	2,662
R^2	0.030	0.079
Adjusted R^2	−0.114	−0.056
F Statistic	11.881*** (df = 6; 2282)	32.995*** (df = 6; 2322)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.5: Effect of Training Support on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Train. Sponsored	0.138*	2.348***
	(0.080)	(0.177)
Leader Decapitated	0.069	0.475**
	(0.085)	(0.191)
Age (Group 1)	−0.018***	0.050***
	(0.006)	(0.013)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.230	−0.133
	(0.289)	(0.642)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	−0.104	0.287
	(0.088)	(0.193)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.004	0.012
	(0.005)	(0.011)
Observations	2,622	2,662
R^2	0.029	0.119
Adjusted R^2	−0.115	−0.009
F Statistic	11.532*** (df = 6; 2282)	52.439*** (df = 6; 2322)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.6: Effect of Territorial Support on Militant Allies

	Dependent variable:	
	Total Allies	New Allies
	(1)	(2)
Terr. Sponsored	0.294***	3.088***
	(0.087)	(0.190)
Leader Decapitated	0.067	0.489***
	(0.085)	(0.188)
Age (Group 1)	−0.020***	0.025**
	(0.006)	(0.012)
Log Population (Group 1)	0.321	1.273**
	(0.286)	(0.627)
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	−0.092	0.375**
	(0.088)	(0.190)
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.003	0.008
	(0.005)	(0.011)
Observations	2,622	2,662
R^2	0.033	0.149
Adjusted R^2	−0.111	0.025
F Statistic	12.982*** (df = 6; 2282)	67.974*** (df = 6; 2322)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table B.7: Varieties of State Support and Alliance Termination

	Financial Support		Material Support		Operational Support		Training Support		Territorial Support	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.68	0.224	0.56**	0.215	0.54**	0.241	0.55**	0.194	0.93	0.187
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.08	0.098	0.89	0.108	1.11	0.089	0.86	0.118	1.30	0.142
Leader Decapitated	1.37**	0.100	1.37**	0.104	1.40**	0.108	1.40**	0.113	1.34**	0.103
Age Difference	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.007	1.01*	0.006	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.009
Group 1 Age	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.006	0.98**	0.006	0.98*	0.007	0.98**	0.009
Group 2 Age	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.006	0.98**	0.006	0.98*	0.006	0.98*	0.009
Shared Ideology	0.74***	0.085	0.76***	0.081	0.75***	0.081	0.76***	0.081	0.73***	0.088
Capability Ratio	1.11	0.107	1.16	0.103	1.16	0.102	1.19	0.102	1.08	0.088
New Alliances (Group 1)	0.99	0.039	1.01	0.036	1.02	0.038	1.00	0.035	0.97	0.040
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.96	0.032	0.96	0.032	0.95	0.033	0.97	0.031	0.96	0.032
Log Intercapital Distance	1.03*	0.013	1.03*	0.011	1.03*	0.012	1.03*	0.012	1.04*	0.015
Log Population (Group 1)	1.03	0.022	1.01	0.020	1.03	0.021	1.01	0.019	1.04	0.023
Log Population (Group 2)	1.06*	0.023	1.05*	0.023	1.05*	0.023	1.05	0.023	1.06*	0.026
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.04	0.068	1.05	0.067	1.07	0.064	1.04	0.066	1.04	0.075
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.03	0.068	1.03	0.066	1.03	0.064	1.03	0.065	1.03	0.071
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	1.00	0.008	0.99	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008	0.99	0.008
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.85*	0.079	0.84*	0.079	0.83*	0.076	0.85*	0.078	0.80*	0.089
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.66***	0.104	0.67***	0.099	0.68***	0.100	0.66***	0.100	0.66***	0.104

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table B.8: Varieties of State Support – Group Collapse

	Financial Support		Material Support		Operational Support		Training Support		Territorial Support	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.36**	0.348	0.37**	0.331	0.38*	0.390	0.49*	0.314	0.94	0.298
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.59	0.935	1.46	0.779	0.83	0.530	1.54	0.808	3.35	0.724
Leader Decapitated	1.65	0.430	1.64	0.429	1.60	0.439	1.65	0.432	1.65	0.446
Age Difference	0.99	0.019	0.99	0.019	0.99	0.019	0.99	0.019	1.00	0.018
Group 1 Age	1.00	0.016	1.00	0.016	1.00	0.016	1.00	0.016	1.00	0.015
Group 2 Age	0.96*	0.021	0.96*	0.021	0.96*	0.021	0.96*	0.021	0.96*	0.020
Shared Ideology	2.76	0.564	2.74	0.570	2.55	0.602	2.65	0.567	2.54	0.544
Capability Ratio	3.89**	0.453	3.89**	0.446	3.29**	0.446	3.73**	0.453	3.13*	0.451
New Alliances (Group 1)	1.15	0.144	1.15	0.142	1.15	0.142	1.12	0.139	1.05	0.130
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.76	0.182	0.76	0.184	0.76	0.184	0.76	0.183	0.77	0.182
Log Intercapital Distance	1.01	0.035	1.01	0.034	1.02	0.034	1.01	0.034	1.02	0.035
Log Population (Group 1)	0.82	0.133	0.81	0.132	0.85	0.130	0.82	0.130	0.84	0.130
Log Population (Group 2)	0.87	0.117	0.87	0.116	0.88	0.116	0.87	0.114	0.88	0.116
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.10	0.171	1.09	0.169	1.22	0.178	1.12	0.166	1.12	0.166
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	0.91	0.153	0.91	0.151	0.90	0.153	0.90	0.150	0.91	0.152
Polity 2 (Group 1)	1.00	0.029	1.00	0.029	0.99	0.029	1.00	0.029	0.99	0.030
Polity 2 (Group 2)	1.01	0.026	1.01	0.026	1.00	0.026	1.01	0.026	1.01	0.027
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.38**	0.356	0.37**	0.343	0.36**	0.335	0.37**	0.342	0.34***	0.330
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.41*	0.391	0.42*	0.390	0.42*	0.395	0.42*	0.389	0.43*	0.392

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

Table B.9: Varieties of State Support – Interorg. Split

	Financial Support		Material Support		Operational Support		Training Support		Territorial Support	
Characteristic	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**	**HR**	**SE**
State Sponsored										
No Sponsor(s)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grp1 Sponsored	0.68	0.226	0.57**	0.214	0.54*	0.240	0.56**	0.193	0.97	0.197
Shared Sponsor(s)	1.06	0.104	0.92	0.094	1.11	0.095	0.88	0.103	1.34	0.155
Leader Decapitated	1.37**	0.103	1.37**	0.107	1.41**	0.112	1.40**	0.117	1.34**	0.103
Age Difference	1.02*	0.008	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.007	1.02*	0.010
Group 1 Age	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.006	0.98*	0.007	0.98**	0.009
Group 2 Age	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.007	0.98**	0.006	0.98*	0.007	0.98*	0.009
Shared Ideology	0.69***	0.092	0.71***	0.086	0.70***	0.087	0.71***	0.085	0.68***	0.096
Capability Ratio	1.09	0.107	1.13	0.103	1.14	0.104	1.16	0.102	1.05	0.089
New Alliances (Group 1)	1.00	0.037	1.01	0.034	1.02	0.035	1.01	0.032	0.97	0.037
New Alliances (Group 2)	0.96	0.030	0.96	0.029	0.96	0.030	0.97	0.028	0.96	0.029
Log Intercapital Distance	1.03*	0.013	1.03*	0.012	1.03*	0.012	1.03*	0.012	1.04*	0.016
Log Population (Group 1)	1.04	0.022	1.02	0.021	1.04	0.021	1.02	0.020	1.05*	0.024
Log Population (Group 2)	1.06*	0.024	1.05*	0.023	1.06*	0.023	1.05*	0.023	1.06*	0.026
Log GDP/Capita (Group 1)	1.03	0.069	1.04	0.069	1.07	0.066	1.03	0.068	1.03	0.079
Log GDP/Capita (Group 2)	1.02	0.068	1.02	0.066	1.02	0.064	1.02	0.065	1.02	0.072
Polity 2 (Group 1)	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009	1.00	0.009	0.99	0.008
Polity 2 (Group 2)	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.009	0.99	0.008
Cold War (1970-1989)	0.89	0.081	0.88	0.079	0.87	0.076	0.89	0.080	0.85	0.090
Post 9/11 (2002-2009)	0.64***	0.110	0.65***	0.104	0.66***	0.106	0.64***	0.105	0.64***	0.111

[1] *p<0.05;* ***p<0.01;*** p<0.001

[2] HR = Hazard Ratio, SE = Standard Error

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