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The Faces of the Adversary

Although Britain had bravely confronted almost thirty years of Irish Republican Army terrorism, the July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks were a challenge of a different order. On that bloody day, Shehzad Tanweer, Hasib Hussain, Jamal Lindsay, and Mohammad Sidique Khan blew themselves up in four attacks on London's subway and bus network, killing fifty-two and injuring several hundred.

The attack had all the hallmarks of an al-Qa'ida strike: they were simultaneous, bloody, and suicidal. Al-Jazeera broadcast a videotape of Khan, the apparent leader of the bombers. After his death the video declared his attack was to punish the British government for "atrocities against my people all over the world"—a speech bin Ladin could have written. One year after the attacks, al-Jazeera broadcast a message Shehzad Tanweer taped before the bombing, in which he explained his killings: "For the non-Muslims in Britain, you may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government who in turn have and still continue to this day continue to oppress our mothers and children, brothers and sisters from the east to the west in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Chechnya." The security services had earlier identified Khan as a radical worth monitoring but did not fully investigate him because they lacked sufficient resources.

Several of the killers had gone to Pakistan and probably made contact with al-Qa'ida members there, and the perpetrators admired

the master terrorist and embraced his goals.[1] But despite the similarities of the attacks to previous al-Qa'ida strikes, bin Ladin and his lieutenants did not orchestrate the minutiae of this plot, as they did past spectaculars.

Perhaps even more worrisome than the attack itself were the revelations about radicalism within the British Muslim community. In contrast to 9/11, the attackers were homegrown rather than infiltrators. Three of the bombers were of Pakistani origin but born and raised in the United Kingdom; Jamal Lindsay was also a British national but had been born in Jamaica. All four of the bombers were integrated into the local community. The attempted follow-on attacks of July 21, 2005 (which failed to kill anyone), were carried out by Muslims born in Africa who had lived in the United Kingdom since they were children.

London hosts a wide range of figures associated with radical groups, exploiting Britain's freedom and tradition of tolerance to sow hatred around the world. Much of the Muslim population has little loyalty to the British government and feels no sense of being "British." A poll in the *Telegraph* of London even found that four in ten British Muslims want Islamic law implemented in the United Kingdom, and another report found that a fifth of those British Muslims surveyed felt "some sympathy" for the bombers.[2] The problem, it seems, is not just a small group of fanatics but also the broader community's support for their radical activities.

The London attacks—and similar strikes in Madrid, Bali, and Iraq, among other places—are successors to 9/11 even though bin Ladin and al-Qa'ida's direct role is more limited. The difference between reality and perception lies in defining al-Qa'ida. When the definition of al-Qa'ida is extended to include the wide range of radicals who share one or many of bin Ladin's goals, al-Qa'ida is indeed an organization of vast proportions. However, such an expanded view of the adversary must also recognize that the larger movement has many weaknesses not found among bin Ladin's core followers.

So what exactly is al-Qa'ida? Some accounts suggest al-Qa'ida includes tens or even hundreds of thousands of angry Muslims, all of whom are bent on the destruction of the United States and its way

of life. Al-Qa'ida itself encourages such confusion: they link their organization to a broad range of local groups around the world, and they shamelessly take responsibility for local successes to enhance their own global standing.

Yet it is a mistake to see al-Qa'ida and those who support parts of its agenda as a monolith. Although bin Ladin successfully united a fractious set of terrorists and cast himself as the Robin Hood of the Muslim world, he does not command a unified army.

Bin Ladin created a global movement in the years before 9/11 but has not led his troops to victory in the aftermath.

Al-Qa'ida vs. America

If Americans were asked today to identify their number one enemy, most would name Osama bin Ladin. But they might be surprised to learn that the core followers loyal to bin Ladin number only in the hundreds.[3] Al-Qa'ida's ability to inflict devastating damage conjures up an image of a gargantuan organization, when it is really quite small.

The al-Qa'ida core is a daunting but also perplexing organization. It is unlike any enemy America has ever faced. In the United States, al-Qa'ida is seen as the vicious perpetrator of the 9/11 attacks and brutal assaults on civilians. But in much of the Muslim world al-Qa'ida is seen as the champion of beleaguered Chechens, Palestinians, Kashmiris, and other oppressed Muslim groups. The al-Qa'ida core is devoted to terrorism and skilled operations as well as simple participation in guerrilla war. Al-Qa'ida is an organization that promotes a sweeping agenda of revolution. It is neither nihilistic nor utopian, but its adherents neither wish to negotiate nor accommodate.

The exact nature of al-Qa'ida's objectives remains in dispute, particularly with regard to the United States. Two camps have emerged. The analytic community maintains that al-Qa'ida's objectives are bound up in U.S. Middle East policy: in particular, the U.S. security presence in Iraq and other Persian Gulf states and U.S. support for Israel. According to this view, al-Qa'ida is using terrorism to achieve concrete goals, such as driving the United States out of

Muslim lands. Politicians, on the other hand, portray an existential struggle against Western values. As President Bush noted in his address to Congress on September 21, 2001, "They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other. . . . These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life."[4]

Resolving this debate is vital for informed policy. Hatred caused by U.S. policy implies that certain changes—a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq or a strong push for a Palestinian-Israeli peace—could hinder al-Qa'ida efforts to recruit new terrorists. If, however, al-Qa'ida can never be appeased, there is no incentive for the United States to change its policies. A closer look reveals that al-Qa'ida has both a long list of concrete grievances and exploits a broad social critique. The grievance list is so long as to make appeasement exceptionally difficult (and it would be a mistake, even if the list were shorter). But because the grievances are melded with other social and historic grievances, appeasement becomes effectively impossible.

Al-Qa'ida's rage is deep but not inchoate. Their complaints against the United States include the following:

- *A blasphemous military presence*. Trespassing on the heart of the holy land is the ultimate American sin. Stationing U.S. and Western forces in the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula near Muslim holy sites, demonstrates America's desire to subjugate Islam.[5]
- *The destruction—and now enslavement—of Iraq*. In jihadists' eyes the presence of more than a hundred thousand U.S. troops in Iraq is part of an overall U.S. plot to occupy the entire Muslim world. The United States, they claim, has long sought to crush Iraq. Bin Ladin's February 23, 1998, statement claimed that the United States had long intended "to destroy Iraq, the most powerful neighboring Arab state." In the process, the United States has engaged in deliberate cruelty, allowing 1 million innocent Iraqis to die under sanctions.[6] The subsequent U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq appeared to confirm Bin Ladin's prophecy.

- *A blinding bias toward Israel*. The United States is creating and nurturing the Jewish state as part of a modern-day colonial venture. As Fu'ad Husayn, a Jordanian expert on al-Qa'ida, argues, "Islamist jihadists believe that the state of Israel is the head of the spear that the West planted in the heart of the Islamic world."[7]
- *Support for a range of corrupt regimes in the Muslim world*. The United States props up regimes that oppress and impoverish Muslims. According to bin Ladin and other al-Qa'ida leaders, only two countries have approached proper Islamic standards: the Taliban's Afghanistan, and the Sudan, when Hassan al-Turabi held influence. Others were at best disappointing and at worst, apostates.
- *Subordination of the Muslim world*. In general, the United States seeks to undermine any effort by a Muslim nation to gain strength. In bin Ladin's words, the West seeks to "keep Muslims weak and incapable of defending themselves."[8] Thus the United States opposes Pakistan's nuclear program while endorsing India's.
- *Creation of a hegemonic international system*. Bin Ladin blames not only the United States, but also the structure it has created to ensure its dominance. Thus, even bodies like the United Nations are part of the problem. In 2004, bin Ladin offered a reward for the killing of UN secretary-general Kofi Annan: "And as for the United Nations," he said, "it is nothing but an instrument of the Zionist crusade hiding behind works of charity . . . therefore, whoever kills Kofi Annan or the president of the UN mission in Iraq or its representatives such as Lakhdar Brahimi, then he will be given a prize of ten thousand grams of gold."[9]
- *A willingness to tolerate, or even inflict, Muslim deaths* in struggles around the world. Al-Qa'ida's list would include Chechnya, Kashmir, Indonesia, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, the Philippines, and Xinjiang Province in China, among others.

A careful look at this list, exaggerated and shrill as it is, shows that it is not completely baseless. The United States is indeed a

proud friend of Israel, it does occupy Iraq, and it often hesitated to intervene when Muslim lives were at risk.

Prioritizing the above grievances is difficult. Indeed, the specific order varies according to which al-Qa'ida member is telling the tale. For some, the true U.S. crime is backing Mubarak's brutality in Egypt, while for others U.S. troops in Iraq or support for Israel are the ultimate sins. It is also worth recognizing what is not on this list. Peter Bergen states that these grievances are political. Bin Ladin "does not rail against the pernicious effects of Hollywood movies, or against Madonna's midriff, or against the pornography protected by the U.S Constitution. Nor does he inveigh against the drug and alcohol culture of the West, or its tolerance for homosexuals. He leaves that kind of material to the American Christian fundamentalist Jerry Falwell."[10] Many of the issues that have risen to the fore in Europe since 9/11 are not part of al-Qa'ida's focus. Bin Ladin said nothing about the "blasphemous" film of Dutch director Theo Van Gogh, the producer of the movie that graphically criticized the treatment of women under Islam.

Instead, bin Ladin's grievances are focused on power—who possesses it; why it is used; and, in his judgment, how it is abused.

Indeed, al-Qa'ida's mix of specific grievances and cosmic injustice creates a self-fulfilling prophecy. America's numerous sins prove its inherent corruption, which, in turn, taints any U.S. gesture that might appear to be pro-Muslim. The United States is damned either way: when we delayed intervention in the Balkans, we were accused of condoning Muslim deaths; when we intervened in Somalia, we were charged with pursuing imperialist ambitions.[11] The U.S. attempt to broker a Middle East peace is similarly interpreted as an attempt to force docile Muslim regimes to legitimate Zionist imperialism rather than as a step forward in the Palestinian cause.

According to former CIA official Michael Scheuer, what al-Qa'ida seeks from America is unconditional surrender—a withdrawal of all forms of military, political, and cultural influence from the Muslim world.[12] Any concessions the United States might grant regarding Israel or Iraq would be touted as milestones on al-Qa'ida's path to victory rather than a means of negotiation. In other words, no matter what we do, al-Qa'ida will attempt more violence.

Successful attacks show the world that the movement is strong and determined. Negotiation is almost impossible because of the vast scope of al-Qa'ida's grievances and its even broader agenda of rectifying humiliation. Al-Qa'ida glorification of jihad as a solution renders appeasement as difficult in theory as it is in practice.

It is also hard to imagine any reconciliation that would satisfy al-Qa'ida because of the broad emotional issues in its agenda: namely, their strong quest for revenge. In the 1990s, this revenge was theoretical, based largely on perceived slights to the Muslim world and the jihadist movement. Now al-Qa'ida's thirst for vengeance is personal. The American response that followed 9/11 resulted in the death and arrest of thousands of jihadists, many of whom were friends and family of al-Qa'ida members. The speeches of bin Ladin and his number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri, from the 1990s suggest that their vendetta is driven by the increasing success of U.S. counterterrorism crackdowns.

A New Approach to Jihad

Though many Muslims share al-Qa'ida's grievances, their agenda is different from that of most Islamist groups, even violent ones. Radical Islamist groups sought first to overthrow the "near enemy"—secular and repressive Arab regimes. But bin Ladin and his followers turned this idea on its head. He declared instead that the "far enemy"—the United States—was the first to be confronted. Ending U.S. hegemony, he argues, will produce the collapse of pro-Western regimes in the Muslim world. As bin Ladin remarked, "If we cut off the head of America, the kingdoms in the Arab world will cease to exist."[13]

Jihad is a central concept in this struggle. Radical Islamists reject one common interpretation of jihad as an individual's spiritual struggle against his baser instincts. The radicals interpret jihad as actual warfare. In their eyes, jihad is as much a pillar of faith as the time-honored customs of fasting during Ramadan and praying five times a day. Bin Ladin claims that all Muslims must participate as best they can; it is not enough for selected members of the community to do so. Indeed, the radicals take this concept of jihad

to new heights, arguing that war can be declared against Muslims who are insufficiently pious, particularly Muslim rulers.[14]

Al-Qa'ida is often cast as a *salafist* organization. The word *salaf* means predecessors or ancestors, with an implication that they were righteous. *Salafism* is a reference to the earliest generations of Islam, and its current adherents believe that only the prophet Mohammad and the following two generations of Muslims practiced Islam in the appropriate manner. Subsequent years saw the steady intrusion of practices that are not truly Islamic. Salafists stress that the Koran and established oral traditions are enough to derive law and moral behavior. They oppose anything that smacks of polytheism, superstition, or theological (not technological!) innovation. They reject Shi'ism, Sufism, the veneration of past leaders, religious pluralism, attempts to creatively interpret the Koran, and the attempt to reconcile Islam with Western values. Wahhabism, the dominant credo in Saudi Arabia, is one strand of salafism.[15]

To label al-Qa'ida as a "salafist" organization, however, simplifies complex theological and political divisions within this community. Most salafis stress religious activism. They believe in spreading God's word and focusing on education and self-purification, not engaging in politics.[16] Indeed, many salafis view the intrusion of politics as an inherently corrupting force because it leads to a focus on life outside religion and creates divisions among the faithful. This belief has led to tension between salafis and another, and much larger, bloc: the political Islamists. "Political Islam" is a vast term encompassing any political group that believes Islam should play an important role in law, society, and government. Salafists have often criticized mainstream Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood for their acceptance of Muslims who are not sufficiently pious and for engaging in the political process.[17] Zawahiri even wrote a brutal polemic, "The Bitter Harvest," in which he accuses the Muslim Brotherhood of being unbelievers because they placed man before God in their embrace of democracy.[18] There are even divisions within the salafist movement, and the jihadi element that espouses violence appears to be a minority.

Despite these doctrinal differences, the borders between the salafis and more political groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood

and jihadist organizations such as al-Qa'ida are porous. Individuals often move back and forth among the various groups, depending on the stature of individual leaders and whether the various paths proffered appear to promise the hope of change.

The salafists attracted to al-Qa'ida share their belief that strikes against the United States are justified because the United States subjugated Muslim lands and dishonored their people. They see themselves as acting defensively against a country that wishes to destroy them. This distinction between the offensive and the defensive is more than just semantics. Muslim scholars argue that the defense of Islam is a duty that all individuals must fulfill. For example, bin Ladin's teacher Abdallah Azzam declared that "jihad is every man's duty" if foreigners seize Muslim lands.[19] In a video that circulated in the Middle East in the months before September 2001, bin Ladin declared, "If you don't fight you will be punished by God."[20]

Al-Qa'ida's structure is as unusual as its agenda and ideology. Unlike many radical groups that have a single purpose, al-Qa'ida cadres assume a variety of functions. Its organizational structure reflects its multipurpose nature. Bin Ladin and his senior leaders set the strategic agenda, but there is no clear rule on how the agenda will be implemented. At times bin Ladin acted as a micromanager: in 1993, for example, he reportedly pointed to a map of the U.S. embassy in Kenya and told the operative where the truck bomb should go. Yet at other times he allowed local groups tremendous freedom to plan their attacks.

Though al-Qa'ida has demonstrated a capability for lethal terrorist attacks on a global scale, terrorism is not necessarily its primary function. Al-Qa'ida sees itself as a missionary organization. It issues propaganda against the al-Saud and other Arab regimes, spreading its particular interpretation of Islam throughout the Arab world, raising the consciousness of Muslims worldwide. And it seeks to influence the agendas of other terrorist groups by making them more anti-American and less inclined to compromise with secular states.

For many years, the bulk of al-Qa'ida's violent activities went into training and supporting guerrilla fighters who fought with the

Taliban against their opponents. Similarly, al-Qa'ida has backed Islamist insurgencies and terrorist groups in Tajikistan, Kashmir, Bosnia, Dagestan, Xinjiang, Yemen, Jordan, the Philippines, Chechnya, Indonesia, former Soviet Georgia, Algeria, and elsewhere in the world, acting, according to Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, two former U.S. government counterterrorism officials, as the "quartermaster for jihad."[21]

Al-Qa'ida's fund-raising approach is also unusual for a terrorist group. Most successful groups rely on their local supporters for money, or they supply creature comforts such as a bed to sleep in or food for the night to members on the run. Others rob banks or traffic drugs to raise money for their cause. Although al-Qa'ida's operatives have dabbled in these methods, the organization relies primarily on sympathetic donors within the Islamist community. (Funding for the core organization has declined since 9/11.) The Muslim nongovernmental organization (NGO) network is particularly important. NGOs are a means of raising money, but they also are valuable for giving activists jobs, channeling money, and acquiring necessary documents. Al-Qa'ida has taken advantage of Western police and security forces' reluctance (particularly before September 11) to investigate any charity.[22]

Al-Qa'ida enjoys its status as the world's most dangerous terrorist group. New recruits sign up to its local affiliates every day. Its success is only partially due to its agenda and its fundraising capacity. Al-Qa'ida's ability to tap into broader resentment in the Muslim world ensures it of a steady stream of supporters, even as governments step up efforts to crush it. Yet other organizations share some of these advantages. Why then has al-Qa'ida developed into such a powerful organization?

The strongest pillar of al-Qa'ida's structure is its members. Scheuer notes, "Bin Laden's organization is larger, more ethnically diverse, more geographically dispersed, younger, richer, better educated, better led, and more military trained and combat experienced" than other terrorist groups in history.[23] Al-Qa'ida is an organization composed of elites. Those not capable of leadership are not recruited, unless they possess some other useful skill. Its membership is diverse: constituents come from many different countries. Because members

blend in easily with populations on every continent, they can easily engage in global operations. Al-Qa'ida uses its elite core well by establishing committees of specialists, ranging from military operations to public relations.

A second strength is al-Qa'ida's high level of operational security. All terrorist groups need to keep their operations covert. Without secrecy they would not survive.[24] They need to ensure that police and intelligence services do not place a spy in their midst. They must be wary of having their phones tapped. Terrorism scholar David Rapoport notes that approximately 90 percent of all terrorist groups collapse within a year, and only half of the hardy remainder make it through another decade.[25] Al-Qa'ida has avoided this fate by focusing intensely on operational security. All operatives are ordered to blend in with local populations. Members are told to be wary of intelligence and police services, to speak only in code, and to avoid mentioning specifics unless absolutely necessary. For example, one member of the cell in Kenya that carried out the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi in 1998 noted, "We, the East Africa cell members, do not want to know about the operations plan since we are just implementers."[26] Similarly, bin Ladin has said that the September 11 hijackers did not know the details of their mission until "just before they boarded the planes."[27]

Yet another of Al-Qa'ida's strengths is its skill in adapting to changing circumstances. It has shown an ability to revise its methods and structure in response to setbacks or failures. As it plotted global operations, al-Qa'ida often drew on several regional hubs and allowed local groups to carry the banner in its name. But it proved willing to shift these hubs, moving responsibilities from one country to another according to the changing security environment. One of its manuals, *Declaration of Jihad against the Country's Tyrants*, calls for evaluating operations after they are carried out in order to learn from them. This willingness to confront mistakes gives the organization the ability to recuperate quickly from an operation gone awry or from successful government counterterrorist measures. Al-Qa'ida leaders do not rely only on faith to move their agenda forward. Terrorism analyst Rohan Gunaratna recalls hearing from one jihadist that "Bin Laden trusted in God but tied the camel tight."[28]

Al-Qa'ida seems to have an endless chain of leaders. Like a salamander regrowing its lost limb, the organization quickly finds a replacement for those fallen on the battlefront. Al-Qa'ida's number three leader, Mohammad Atef, was killed in Afghanistan, and the next three replacements—Abu Zubaydah, Khalid Shaykh Mohammad, and Abu Farraj al-Libbi—were captured in Pakistan after intensive searches. Yet the organization continues to thrive even after these major losses.

In contrast to the eagerness of most terrorists, al-Qa'ida's leaders are unusually patient. Al-Qa'ida is willing to promote operations that take years to bear fruit, such as the September 11 attacks and the 1998 embassy bombings. To bolster their long-term position, the organization painstakingly penetrates local military and intelligence services, where they often receive advance information about pending arrests from sympathetic police members.[29]

For an organization that inflicts violence to enforce its goals, al-Qa'ida is remarkably tolerant. It is an odd characteristic for a terrorist group. Many extremist organizations—some of which are now affiliated with al-Qa'ida—view competing radical organizations as more dangerous than the regimes they oppose. The Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Gamaat Islamiyya, both of which advocated Islamic rule in Egypt and the violent overthrow of the Mubarak government, reserved much of their invective to fighting each other.[30] Many religious groups that are derived from one ethnic group regard others with suspicion.[31] Al-Qa'ida draws from a larger and diverse base and forges ties to revolutionaries whether they share all or only part of its goals. In a movement prone to divisions, al-Qa'ida is a unifier. Even if this bridging effort fails, cooperation continues. Al-Qa'ida is reported to have worked tactically with the Lebanese Hizballah, despite other salafi groups that regard Shi'a Hizballah members as apostates. As long as the group targets apostate Muslim regimes rather than the United States, al-Qa'ida feels free to work with them.

Al-Qa'ida's use of terror is different from that of other jihadist organizations. Their leaders view it strategically, as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself. Bin Ladin sees the Muslim world as artificially weak, bogged down by the United States and its puppet

regimes. Al-Qa'ida attempts to provoke the United States into retaliating against the group and, in so doing, reveal America's true colors as an oppressor of Muslims. At the same time, al-Qa'ida works with local groups to pressure and topple the regimes they regard as corrupt. Bin Ladin sought to instigate a heavy U.S. military retaliation against Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attacks, believing, thus far incorrectly, that this would precipitate a broader clash between the West and the Islamic world that the United States would lose.[32] By hitting America hard and then trapping it in a quagmire, the United States would therefore be forced to withdraw from the Muslim world. On the other hand, the U.S. entry into Iraq appears to reinforce bin Ladin's master plan.

Al-Qa'ida believes it is winning.

Saif al-Adel, a senior al-Qa'ida leader, articulated a multiphase strategy that would culminate in victory in about 2020. Al-Adel contends that when al-Qa'ida or like-minded groups control a government, they can use this power as a stepping-stone to establish the global caliphate. Once the Muslim world is stronger and more united, the West can be attacked in a more conventional matter. Afghanistan was to be the first foot in the door, but after 9/11 and the U.S. occupation of Iraq, the stepping-stone became Iraq.

Al-Qa'ida Is Dead, Long Live al-Qa'ida

Despite its many strengths, the al-Qa'ida core was hit hard after 9/11. Most obviously, the United States and its Afghan allies ended al-Qa'ida's sanctuary in Afghanistan. Bin Ladin attempted to draw the United States into a debilitating and bloody conflict in Afghanistan. With only a few losses, the United States and its Afghan allies quickly routed the Taliban and killed or dispersed much of al-Qa'ida's cadre.

The loss of the Afghan haven was devastating. Afghanistan had been a hub for recruitment as well as planning. Al-Qa'ida and its supporters sent thousands of radicals to Afghanistan, allowing the group to choose the most skilled and dedicated to conduct operations. A sanctuary in Afghanistan made it far more difficult for counterterrorism officials to operate. Before their base was destroyed, a senior al-Qa'ida planner could quickly flee to Afghanistan

whenever the heat grew unbearable. The congressional September 11 inquiry quoted one counterterrorism official as stating that al-Qa'ida's haven in Afghanistan gave the group a head start. It prevented the U.S. intelligence community from doing more than reacting to its constant plots. In the official's eyes, the world was "trying to chop down a tree by picking the fruit." Now al-Qa'ida members must often be on the run, unable to relax or to vet new recruits with the same thoroughness.

The immunity from attack in Afghanistan also gave the terrorists an important psychological advantage. In Afghanistan, a terrorist could make phone calls to his mother, relax with comrades after a day of training, and stay close to his wife and children. In the camp he could find family, sex with a spouse, companionship, and other human needs. Without a haven, all these normal human activities are lost, and a solitary life is difficult to endure.

A second, less noticeable advance is the worldwide police and intelligence campaign against al-Qa'ida. Before the attacks, counterterrorism was low on the list of world priorities. Even when senior U.S. officials did raise the issue of counterterrorism, foreign governments did not appreciate the degree of danger. Al-Qa'ida reaped the rewards of this shortsighted vision. Many governments around the world allowed al-Qa'ida a permissive environment in which to operate. Then deputy secretary of defense Paul Wolfowitz testified in 2002 that "even worse than the training camps [in Afghanistan] was the training that took place here in the United States and the planning that took place in Germany." Although these governments in no way supported Islamic radicalism, their own indifference and legal restrictions allowed al-Qa'ida operatives to recruit, train, and plan with impunity.

No more. Allied governments have made al-Qa'ida a priority. Though intelligence services possess different degrees of skill and government officials face varying degrees of political pressures, all are intent on preventing al-Qa'ida from obtaining a foothold in their country. In Europe and in Asia, security services are now far more willing to monitor and act against suspected radicals. Several countries have scrutinized their legal codes to ensure that terrorists do not exploit various loopholes. Then director of Central Intelligence

George Tenet testified on February 11, 2003, that more than a hundred countries have been involved in the capture and arrest of al-Qa'ida members. Proof of the effectiveness of this approach can be found in the statements of al-Qa'ida leaders. An al-Qa'ida "political bureau" statement declared that "The entire world became a CIA office, following America around everywhere on earth."[33]

The United States has either killed or arrested several thousand members of al-Qa'ida. These advances often receive little notice, and when they do appear in newspapers or on television, they are described as yet another unknown person sent to an undisclosed facility where it is unclear what would be revealed.[34] But these measures are the building blocks of counterterrorism success. Each individual arrested brings with him the potential to disclose information regarding the broader terrorist network, helping U.S. and allied intelligence to prevent the next attack.

Even when they are not killed or arrested, constant global pressure makes it far more difficult for terrorists to operate. Al-Qa'ida leaders must spend much of their time hiding. Communicating, recruiting, and fundraising, which are necessary to conduct operations, are far more difficult when the world's intelligence agencies are constantly on the alert.

Not surprisingly, the group's finances have fallen with these reverses. The 9/11 Commission staff found that al-Qa'ida's budget may be down to a few million dollars a year, in contrast to approximately $30 million per year before 9/11.[35]

A major shift in the terrorists' means of operation is their growing dependence on local groups. It is harder now for al-Qa'ida to conduct sophisticated attacks that involve global preparation—attacks such as 9/11 and the 1998 embassy bombings. Al-Qa'ida has downsized its targets. Local attacks with local perpetrators—scaled-down versions of 9/11—are more likely. Attacks are directed toward symbols of U.S.-Zionist hegemony, but they are more likely to be synagogues and Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets instead of warships or embassies. Many of the post-9/11 attacks were conducted by individuals with few contacts to bin Ladin himself. This shift is small comfort, but it suggests that bin Ladin finds it difficult to control the movement. For example, al-Qa'ida announced a "truce" with Spain

after a new government won elections there and promised to withdraw troops from Iraq. But local jihadists still tried to conduct an attack there.[36] Given these problems, it is no surprise that the number and scale of attacks directly linked to al-Qa'ida also have fallen. Unlike the bloody pre-9/11 attacks, several of the most violent attacks since 9/11—Bali, Madrid, and Beslan—were not planned and orchestrated by the al-Qa'ida core.

So is al-Qa'ida dead? John Negroponte, the director of National Intelligence, testified in February 2006 that while the al-Qa'ida leadership is diminished, it still plots and prepares attacks, often operating from ungoverned areas along the Pakistani-Afghan border.[37] This alone is of concern, but its current capacity for attack is only one issue. More important, bin Ladin and his organization retain their prestige, their Rolodex and a steady stream of willing recruits. Many jihadists admire al-Qa'ida and would join the organization more formally if they could figure out how to approach the leadership. Unless sustained and unrelenting pressure is placed on its leaders, they will again be able to recruit and plan more attacks.

Even though the al-Qa'ida core has become weaker since 9/11, bin Ladin's stature has increased. Bin Ladin himself is a giant today. Few question his personal piety and courage. In Saudi Arabia, younger Saudis lionize him. They view him as a giant compared with the "pygmies" of the al-Saud.[38] Even if bin Ladin dies, al-Qa'ida, and its brand of jihadist Islam, would live on. Al-Qa'ida has many talented lieutenants who would step up to fill bin Ladin's role as leader. Bin Ladin himself has prepared for his own demise, stating that "my martyrdom would lead to the birth of thousands of Osamas."[39] And in this he appears correct. Bin Ladin's image is far more powerful than the man himself.

Even more chilling is the impact of bin Ladin's worldview. His belief that the United States is the root of the Muslim world's problems has gained remarkable currency, just as his use of violence against regional governments has helped many Muslims legitimize terrorism.

Finally, the weaker core remains active and could easily regenerate should pressure lift. Since 9/11, al-Qa'ida conducted attacks in Pakistan and plotted several operations in Europe (and, as noted

above, may have links to the July 2005 bombings in London). In addition, al-Qa'ida has been devoted to helping anti-U.S. forces in Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan—major undertakings that have seriously set back U.S. interests in these countries and in the region.

Perhaps most ominously, the core seems to be reconstituting itself in tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistani border. For five years after 9/11, the government of Pakistan made several serious efforts to gain control of this area and reduce al-Qa'ida activity. These efforts failed. Moreover, they were bloody, with Pakistan's military and police taking hundreds of casualties. In late 2006, fearing more losses and worried that continued pressure was angering anti-U.S. factions within the rest of the country, the Musharraf government agreed to curtail its attacks. Al-Qa'ida may now have a new haven. From this new haven, bin Ladin is planning spectaculars and working to knit together the various strands of jihad that have emerged in recent years. The plot revealed in August 2006 to bomb ten airplanes over the Atlantic Ocean as they flew from the United Kingdom to the United States looked professional and carefully planned. Particularly worrisome was the planned use of sophisticated liquid explosives. Several of the plotters, including Rashid Rauf, the alleged leader, had links to Pakistan-backed Kashmiri terrorist groups. A former Egyptian paramilitary commander turned jihadist reportedly orchestrated the attacks for al-Qa'ida from Pakistan.[40]

The Second Circle: The al-Qa'ida Periphery

Ammari Saifi was a rebel out of legend, as daring and charismatic as he was brutal. He was a leader of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (in French, Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat, or GSPC), a salafi jihadist group that shares many of al-Qa'ida's goals and in January 2007 changed its name to al-Qa'ida of the Islamic Maghreb. GSPC is best known outside Algeria for having taken thirty-two European "adventure travelers" hostage for almost half a year. Surrounded by poor and strife-torn lands, Saifi's refuge was the Sahara, one of the most desolate regions on Earth. For several years he played hide-and-seek with U.S. and African

troops, leading them on wild chases throughout the Sahara. He slipped from Algeria to Mali to Niger just ahead of the local forces. In 2004, Chadian rebels finally captured him, leading, eventually, to his imprisonment in Algeria in 2005.

Saifi did not begin as an international terrorist. For most of his career he focused on local issues, like other Algerian jihadists. He was born in Algeria in the late 1960s. His mother was French and his father Algerian. He joined the Algerian military and became a paratrooper, giving him his future nickname "al Para." Saifi joined the ranks of the Islamists when they went underground following the military seizure of power in 1991.

By any standard, the civil war that followed this seizure was horrific. Roughly 150,000 Algerians died, many in gruesome ways. The Armed Islamic Group (in French, the Groupe Islamique Armée, or GIA), the leading Algerian resistance group for several years in the mid-1990s, was extreme even by jihadist standards. GIA leaders included many Algerians who had fought in Afghanistan against the Soviets. They embraced violence in 1992, castigating not only the Algerian military for its coup but also Islamists who supported electoral politics. They argued that the Islamists were naive and that democracy itself was anti-Islamic. As the years wore on, the GIA became more radical. In the areas it controlled in Algeria, it imposed a brutal form of Islamic law. The group attacked not only soldiers but also foreigners, teachers, artists, and government employees. In 1994 and 1995 the GIA was implicated in a series of terrorist attacks in France, including the hijacking of Air France flight 8969 and bombings in the Paris Métro. Over time, its rejection of democracy became a bloody passion. The GIA's slogan for those who voted was "one vote, one bullet."

By 1996 the GIA had declared total war on all Algerians who did not support it, and it slaughtered Muslims who refused to join the group. Within the group, it purged more moderate members and even murdered their families. The GIA declared Algerian society to be *kuffar*—apostates, who had turned away from the word of God—and, as such, legitimate targets to be killed. The GIA wiped out whole villages. To terrify all of Algeria, the GIA made a point of killing people in appalling ways (disemboweling pregnant women,

among many other horrors). For many among the GIA, imposing a salafist credo on areas it controlled was more important than fighting the government.

It took a lot to legitimate the corrupt, brutal, and despotic junta that overturned the 1991 elections. But the extent of the GIA's brutality alienated most Algerians. They did not want to see their country turned into a charnel house. The violence appalled not only the Algerians but also the international community, which shunned antigovernment fighters. Despite the international community's condemnation of the junta's military coup and repression, over time they supported the Algerian regime as the lesser of two evils. The GIA's violence backfired even within the Islamist community. Donations to the popular Algerian cause dried up as the once-heroic rebels were revealed as brutal thugs.

Torn by factionalism, the GIA began to spiral down. Personal rivalries, differences over obscure points of doctrine, and deliberate government efforts to encourage infighting led to internal purges and the creation of breakaway factions. Appalled by the GIA's ferocity and brutality, dissident Islamists led by Hassan Hattab, a former GIA regional commander, formed the GSPC in the late 1990s, a move that bin Ladin himself supported. Even bin Ladin, no stranger to horrific violence, turned away from the GIA's extreme brutality. Al-Qa'ida did not share the GIA's vision that all of society was apostate. With support crumbling and its members defecting, the GIA fell apart.

The GSPC then became the dominant group, and like the GIA, the GSPC went through several commanders. But the damage had been done. The GSPC steadily lost ground in its battle with Algerian forces. With its local hopes dashed, group leaders moved away from Algeria toward bin Ladin's more global agenda. One commander, Nabil Sahraoui, who was later killed, announced in 2003 that the group leaders "strongly and fully support Osama bin Ladin's jihad against the heretic America."[41] Several senior GSPC leaders also worked closely with al-Qa'ida, and other reports indicate that the GSPC has ties to networks linked to Iraqi jihadists. In January 2007, GSPC embraced al-Qa'ida formally with a name change, becoming al-Qa'ida of the Islamic Maghreb. As the new name suggests, the

group's agenda includes radical change in Morocco and Tunisia as well as Algeria.

As various leaders died or defected, Saifi became more and more important to the GSPC. He was the group's chief commander for northeastern Algeria. The Algerian government, however, steadily gained the upper hand against the militants, and Saifi was forced to flee.

As his efforts to overthrow the Algerian government faltered, Saifi embraced banditry and international terrorism. His capture of thirty-two European tourists who were traveling through the Sahara in Algeria brought him worldwide attention. Journalist Raffi Khatchadourian speculates that Saifi may have had two reasons for taking the tourists hostage: one reason was to dramatically demonstrate that the GSPC was still strong; a second reason was to follow the al-Qa'ida leadership's 2002 call to strike at "the enemy's tourist industry." Eventually the German government ransomed the tourists for 5 million Euros, a staggering sum in a region that includes several of the poorest countries in the world. Saifi used the money to buy weapons and vehicles and soon had a small militia that was a match for local military forces.

Because of Saifi's brutality and anti-Western agenda, the American military joined local governments in pursuing him. That proved his undoing. With nowhere to hide, Saifi was captured by Chadian rebels, who passed him to the Algerian government.

Saifi's odyssey illustrates two sides of local groups—their parochial goals as well as their global aspirations. Saifi had loose connections to al-Qa'ida, but his men were locals.[42] Al-Qa'ida has long devoted much of its energies to supporting local jihadists fighting what they see as oppressive regimes. An obvious front was Algeria, where an avowedly secular military government was crushing rebels acting in the name of Islam. To this day, GSPC terrorists conduct attacks in Algeria. In exchange, many of the Algerian operatives entered al-Qa'ida's network, particularly in Europe. Sometimes the Algerians acted as minor functionaries, helping al-Qa'ida with acquiring documents, hiding operatives, or otherwise preparing for attacks. But they have also been connected to major terrorist acts. Ahmed Ressam, the so-called Millennium Bomber,

who planned to bomb Los Angeles International Airport on New Year's Eve 1999, was one Algerian who gravitated to al-Qa'ida. Fighters from Algeria have been linked to numerous plots in Europe, including the March 11, 2004, commuter train bombings in Madrid, and to plots against the United States.

Peter Bergen compares al-Qa'ida to a holding company that exercises varying degrees of control over other groups.[43] When these groups are factored in, al-Qa'ida's manpower increases dramatically. Thus we are required to dramatically expand our estimate of the size and appeal of the adversary. These large numbers, however, are not necessarily indicative of al-Qa'ida's strength. Even when the leaders of these groups profess loyalty to bin Ladin, their agendas may be local or regional. Particular ideological visions may differ from those of bin Ladin. Some are not focused on the United States; others vary in their interpretations of jihad. These distinctions have implications for the struggle against terrorism. If these disparate groups join the al-Qa'ida core or embrace its agenda, bin Ladin's legions will have multiplied and his reach will have expanded greatly. On the other hand, if they focus entirely on local concerns, or if their actions discredit the jihadist cause in general, then the fight against al-Qa'ida becomes largely a manhunt for the relatively small number of members in the al-Qa'ida core.

The mountains of the Caucasus and the desert of Africa are geographical extremes, but affiliates of al-Qa'ida are found in both. In the cold reaches of Chechnya, far from the desert heat of Algeria, Vladimir Khodov fought the Russians. He, too, made headlines in the West, even though he never went after Americans or Europeans. On September 1, 2004, the first day of school, Vladimir Khodov and thirty-one other terrorists stormed Middle School 1 in Beslan, a town in the North Ossetia region of Russia. The attackers were a mix of individuals drawn from different parts of the Caucasus, particularly from Chechnya and Ingushetia, though ethnic Russians and others, including one or two Arabs, also took part.[44] The terrorists' demands were extensive. They called for Russia to immediately end its war in Chechnya and withdraw its troops from the province. They also insisted that Soviet president Vladimir Putin resign.

Even by the standards of a region accustomed to remarkable brutality, the Beslan attack was horrific. The gunmen took 1,200 hostages, most of whom were children. When Russian security forces stormed the building, at least 331 hostages died, including 186 children. Only one terrorist survived.[45]

Survivors of the Beslan attack say Khodov was "one of the most ruthless of the gang." He died, either at the siege itself, or a day later, in police custody—an uncertainty that is typical of the Beslan incident, which is clouded by propaganda on all sides.[46] But before his death he succeeded in sending a chill down the spine of parents around the world.

Vladimir Khodov called himself Abdullah. His embrace of jihad is more reminiscent of the Columbine school shootings in Colorado in 1999 than the daring deeds of Saifi. Khodov's father was a Soviet Army officer from Elkhodovo, a village near Beslan. As a boy, Khodov was a poor and sickly student who was regularly beaten by other boys. When his brother Boris went to jail for murder, he converted to Islam. Vladimir followed suit. Later he went to Dagestan, a neighboring province that has suffered violence linked to Chechnya, and became involved in violence there.

Khodov's transformation from ninety-eight-pound weakling to international terrorist occurred against the backdrop of a war that rivaled the Algerian conflict in its horror. The Chechen rebellion against Russia mixes a dash of al-Qa'ida-style religious fanaticism with old-fashioned nationalism and tribalism. The roots of the conflict date back decades if not centuries. It is tied to Russia's brutal subjugation of the Chechens. Russia first took over Chechnya in the late eighteenth century, and it fought resistance there for decades. When the Chechens rose up against the Soviets in the 1940s, Stalin deported the entire Chechen population to Siberia, where a quarter of their number died. The Chechens were only allowed to return after 1956.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chechens hoped to gain independence, following the example of other ethnic groups long dominated by Russia. In 1991, when the Russians refused to grant them independence, the Chechens rebelled and declared themselves independent, free from the shackles of the Russian oppressors.

Russia "invaded" its erstwhile province in 1994 but withdrew in 1996. For reasons that remain murky, the Chechens subsequently led an incursion into neighboring Dagestan and conducted additional violence in Russia. Russia invaded Chechnya again in 1999. The violence inflicted on both sides was horrendous. Chechens claim that more than 200,000 people died—that out of a total population only slightly higher than 1 million—and more than 20,000 Soviet troops were killed. Hundreds of thousands of refugees fled because of the conflict. Meanwhile, the violence spread to nearby regions such as Dagestan, Ingushetia, and North Ossetia.

On the surface, this struggle would seem to have little to do with al-Qa'ida. The Chechen revolt has more in common with rebellions against colonial rule after World War II than terrorism in the twenty-first century. There are differences. Unlike al-Qa'ida, there is a strong criminal element in the Chechen insurgency that takes advantage of indigenous violence to run drugs and kidnap wealthy locals. Local Chechen leaders constantly joust for power. In the environment of Russian brutality, these differences, combined with strong popular opposition to Russian dominance, would be enough to foment rebellion regardless of what the jihadists do.

And yet al-Qa'ida has inserted itself. Most Chechens are Sunni Muslims. Thus many Islamists saw the Russian-Chechen conflict as yet another attempt of the Christian world to conquer Islamic lands. For the Islamists, Chechnya was a logical next step after liberating Afghanistan from Soviet rule. Starting in the mid-1990s, Chechnya became a cause célèbre among jihadists. Some commanders, such as Khattab, had close personal ties to the al-Qa'ida leadership and began to draw upon them for funding. Responding to the call to liberate oppressed Muslims, jihadists flocked to Chechnya from Central Asia, the Arab world, and even Europe. Al-Qa'ida quickly saw the struggle in Chechnya as part of its overall agenda.

Chechnya, in turn, proved a fertile recruiting ground for al-Qa'ida. Russian atrocities in Chechnya, both real and imagined, became the grist for al-Qa'ida's propaganda mill, and the conflict became one of the most prominent struggles in jihadists' eyes until the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Al-Qa'ida videos and propaganda endlessly highlighted the horrors Russia inflicted on the Chechens. According

to al-Qa'ida's leaders and the words repeated by Imams and propagandists throughout the Western and Muslim worlds, Russia invaded Muslim lands, raped the women, and wantonly killed the men. Sadly, many of the accusations of brutality are well founded. In response to the call, the Chechen cause attracted volunteers and foreign financial contributions. Al-Qa'ida facilitated this flow of money and people. At times they diverted potential recruits and money for their own purposes. The infamous 9/11 leader, Mohammad Atta, originally intended to go to Chechnya but was persuaded by an al-Qa'ida facilitator to go to Afghanistan instead.

Al-Qa'ida neither controlled nor directed the Beslan attack nor the kidnapping of Western hostages in the Sahara. Chechen and Algerian commanders, even though openly sympathetic to al-Qa'ida's global agenda, appear to have acted independently of bin Ladin. It is likely that he didn't know about these outrages before they happened. Other affiliates are even further removed from al-Qa'ida's objectives and priorities. For example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is focused largely on Uzbekistan, and to a lesser degree Central Asia—not the struggle against America.

Given al-Qa'ida's ties to a range of insurgencies and local groups, a key challenge for counterterrorism operatives is determining where the organization's influence stops. How many additional radical groups and ideologues share al-Qa'ida's objectives and worldview? And what impact has al-Qa'ida had on each local group's ideology? Initially jihadist ideologies played little or no role in the conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya, Iraq, and Kashmir. With time and al-Qa'ida's encouragement, radical ideologies became a major component of these conflicts.

Al-Qa'ida successfully convinced many local insurgents the world over that all Islamic insurgents are fighting individual battles that are part of a larger worldwide war.

Today al-Qa'ida has wide appeal and influence throughout the struggles it sponsors. This mutual cooperation benefits both sides. Local groups have much to gain by association with al-Qa'ida. Al-Qa'ida assists groups with logistics and skilled personnel to encourage cooperation and unity of purpose.[47] By organizing and

training jihadists, al-Qa'ida makes local conflicts more deadly. And as a result of their association with al-Qa'ida, the local groups become more prestigious.

Al-Qa'ida in turn benefits from additional venues for proselytizing. The local conflicts produce alumni who greatly expand the reach of the broader jihadist cause. Literally tens of thousands of Muslims have fought in conflicts on the antigovernment side in Algeria, Chechnya, Kashmir, Indonesia, and so on. Not all, or even most, of these local insurgents are al-Qa'ida. But al-Qa'ida can reach out to these people when it wants to conduct a local operation. A major strength of al-Qa'ida is its ability to link diverse jihadist elements into a broad network capable of working together for common goals, even though these groups are barely unified.

To understand al-Qa'ida, it is important not only to see it as a terrorist group such as the Weathermen or the Abu Nidal Organization but also as a "worldwide, religiously inspired, and professionally guided Islamist insurgency promoted by bin Ladin."[48] Although the spectacular terrorist attacks are what garner the most U.S. attention, these grinding low-intensity conflicts are what cause the most suffering and have the greatest potential for dramatic change. Because many of these conflicts are seen as legitimate liberation struggles, even by Muslims who reject terrorism, the jihadists' appeal is greatly expanded.

Unfortunately, the number of local groups embracing al-Qa'ida's global agenda may be increasing. Then director of National Intelligence John Negroponte testified in 2006 that several Sunni jihadist groups are expanding outside of their traditional area of operations. Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiah; the Islamic Jihad Union, which operates out of Central Asia; the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group; and various Pakistani groups all have used Iraq as a rallying point for fighting the United States. It appears that the call has been answered. Fighters from several such groups have shown up in Iraq as well, which suggests that even if al-Qa'ida itself is not growing, its appeal has widened.

The jihadist network may be bin Ladin's most enduring legacy. As former CIA official Paul Pillar argues, "This network is something like the Internet: it is a significant transnational phenomenon

that has grown in recent years and that some determined people have used to their advantage, but nobody owns or controls it."[49] Bin Ladin's capture or death would not dismantle the thousands of personal relationships he helped forge in the past decade. The groups may be separate but the individuals are now connected.

The Third Circle: Unaffiliated Activists

Even more worrisome than the expanding web of bin Ladin's radicals is the explosive growth of unaffiliated activists. Throughout the world, increasing numbers of independent, insurgent, and terrorist groups are embracing al-Qa'ida's vision. The State Department's 2004 annual report on terrorism describes this trend:

> The global jihadist movement—including its most prominent component, al Qaeda—remains the preeminent terrorist threat to the United States, U.S. interests, and U.S. allies. While the core of al Qaeda has suffered damage to its leadership, organization, and capabilities, the group remains intent on striking U.S. interests in the homeland and overseas. . . . At the same time, however, al Qaeda has spread its anti-U.S., anti-Western ideology to other groups and geographical areas. It is therefore no longer only al Qaeda itself but increasingly groups affiliated with al Qaeda or independent ones adhering to al Qaeda's ideology, that present the greatest threat of terrorist attacks against U.S. and allied interests globally.[50]

These individuals would join al-Qa'ida formally if they could. But in much of the Western and Muslim world, the local affiliates of al-Qa'ida are weak: they receive limited support from local Muslim communities, or their governments have crushed them decisively. So these local individuals often act on their own.

The commuter training bombings on March 11, 2004, in Madrid—or "3/11"—is instructive. The attacks killed 191 people and wounded more than 2,000. As Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon note, the attacks had "all the qualities of an al Qaeda operation": the perpetrators endorsed bin Ladin's ideas, the attacks

were simultaneous (ten bombs were set off), and the goal was mass casualties.[51] Yet al-Qa'ida did not orchestrate the attack. Instead, Benjamin and Simon declare 3/11 to be a "homage" to bin Ladin. The attackers were a motley collection of petty criminals and jihadists of different persuasions. Only one member had any past jihadist experience to speak of.

Since 9/11, many of the attacks and plots in Western Europe and parts of the Middle East fall into this category of unaffiliated activists. At best, the insurgents maintain loose contact with the al-Qa'ida core. Terrorism expert Marc Sageman articulates this view when he notes, "The old Al Qaeda is hiding away in caves someplace."[52] Sageman's claim overstates al-Qa'ida's decline, but his basic point that the core is less capable is true. Nevertheless, the ranks of sympathizers swell even more.

Although al-Qa'ida's model is proliferating, these sympathizers are less skilled than the al-Qa'ida core. The Madrid cell had planned even more attacks after the subway bombings but was incapable of implementing them. Its members were quickly arrested or killed. The attackers in Morocco who killed thirty-three people in a series of attacks on Jewish, European, and Kuwaiti targets in 2003 fell far short of their goals: despite the carnage, they only managed to kill five Westerners and no Jews. Benjamin and Simon report that Europe has had fifteen major conspiracies for every successful attack, an impressive show of force by European security officials.[53] In other words, the intention is there but the capability is not.

This loose network of al-Qa'ida sympathizers presents a major problem for counterterrorism officials: there is no way to draw a profile of an archetypal terrorist. These members arrive on the scene from different countries, different economic and educational backgrounds, and with varying degrees of assimilation into their host country. The perpetrators of the July 7, 2005, attacks in London were primarily second-generation Pakistani immigrants, but those who attempted a follow-up attack two weeks later were first-generation immigrants from East Africa. The uncle of Abdelhalim Badjoudj, a French Muslim of North African extraction who blew himself up in Iraq, claimed that "If he had work, this wouldn't have happened."[54] But a British report on extremists in the United

Kingdom found that radicals came from both the deprived and the dispossessed and within universities. Among the individuals there is often no asocial behavior. Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the July 7 London bombers, used to take time to help his neighbor's child with his homework.[55] Nor do the individuals necessarily display a high degree of religiosity before they turn to violence. Badjoudj, for example, drank beer and smoked hashish regularly. Despite their embrace of violence, they do not appear to be sociopaths.

In Europe, the emergence of unaffiliated jihadists is bolstered by their deep-seated belief that Muslims are not accepted as citizens in their new countries and that they are disenfranchised economically. A British Home Office report found that many European Muslim radicals were alienated because they were not participating in mainstream public and political life as well as "Islamophobia" in British society, among other issues.[56] Even those Muslims who abhor violence share the radicals' complaints. And there is truth to these feelings of unfairness. In most European countries, Muslim communities experience far higher levels of poverty and unemployment than do non-Muslims. Majorities of the public in Spain, Germany, and France believe that there is a conflict between being a devout Muslim and living in a modern society—a view that many Muslims living elsewhere in Europe also endorse. Spaniards, Germans, Russians, and Frenchmen often see Muslims as fanatical and violent.[57] The Home Office report found that Muslims experience three times as much unemployment as do non-Muslims in Britain.[58] European Muslims feel dislocated and uncomfortable in Europe as well as in their native country. Dominique Many, a French lawyer involved in the trials of several militants, noted, "In Tunisia they are considered foreigners. In France they are considered foreigners."[59] One study of British Muslims found that 80 percent see themselves as Muslims before they are British, and another found that 26 percent do not feel loyal to Britain.[60] In Spain and Britain, 16 and 14 percent, respectively, of Muslims polled have confidence in bin Ladin—a large number that is only slightly less than the 26 percent of Egyptians who do.[61]

Fanning the flames of fanaticism are the vitriolic sermons delivered in neighborhood mosques. Because of a shortage of religious

leaders, European Muslim communities looked to the Middle East for their local religious leaders. Rather than sending imams who would calm the troubled waters, the native country often sent firebrands to European mosques. French intelligence estimates that 150 of the country's 6,000 mosques are under the control of extremists—a small overall percentage, but a tremendous number given the damage that only a few radicalized individuals can wreak. Similarly, the British government estimates that between 10,000 and 15,000 British Muslims support radical groups—a fraction of the overall Muslim community of almost 2 million, but a significant number nonetheless. Of these, the British security services believe that potentially hundreds might commit terrorist attacks.[62]

The Iraq debacle has encouraged these unaffiliated radicals on their path to violence. A British government analysis found that Iraq was the "recruiting sergeant" for extremist groups.[63] The war and subsequent occupation have "proven" that the United States and its allies seek to subjugate the Muslim world. Those who go to Iraq may find it to be as fertile an al-Qa'ida training ground as Afghanistan once was under the Taliban. Roland Jacquard, a French terrorism expert, declared, "Those who don't die and come back will be the future chiefs of Al Qaeda or Zarqawi [groups] in Europe."[64]

For now, European Muslims appear caught between the harsh Middle Eastern views of the West and more positive experiences that many Westerners assume come with living in a Western society. As a report by the Pew Global Attitudes Project notes, "While Europe's Muslim minorities are about as likely as Muslims elsewhere to see relations between Westerners and Muslims as generally bad, they more often associate positive attributes to Westerners—including tolerance, generosity, and respect for women."[65]

Criminal activity is another common characteristic among those active in jihadist violence in Europe. Before Richard Reid tried to set off a bomb in his shoe on a transatlantic flight in December 2001, he had been in jail for muggings and other petty crimes. It was there that he converted to Islam. Many radical groups have members who are common criminals like Reid and use their illegal activities to pay for violent acts. A group of French radicals linked to the financing of Iraqi insurgents conducted armed robberies and forged passports to

finance its activities. Not surprisingly, the group also proselytized in prisons.[66]

A look at the major terrorist attacks since 9/11 suggests the complexity of discerning these three circles in practice. Some cases are clear: al-Qa'ida leaders appear to have directly organized the attack on a synagogue in Djerba, Tunisia, on April 12, 2002. But many of the most prominent attacks were done by locals who had cloudy links to al-Qa'ida. Other attacks, particularly those in the Middle East, often involved local affiliates of al-Qa'ida based in the country in question ("al-Qa'ida of the Arabian Peninsula" or "al-Qa'ida in the Land of the Two Rivers") rather than involving the sort of top-down planning that characterized 9/11 and several major plots before that, such as the attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000 and the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa.

The Fourth Circle: Sympathizers around the World

Speaking to Congress and the nation in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, President Bush declared: "The terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism that has been rejected by Muslim scholars and the vast majority of Muslim clerics—a fringe movement that perverts the peaceful teachings of Islam."[67] This view is reassuring but simplistic. If the views of al-Qa'ida and its fellow travelers exist only on the fringe, the organization's ability to sustain itself in the face of a worldwide manhunt would be greatly diminished.

Bin Ladin, unfortunately, is not a voice in the wilderness. That Muslim governments collaborating with the West are illegitimate, formerly a radical view, appears to be gaining ground, particularly as these governments rely on repression while failing to deliver economic progress.[68]

Many Muslims, particularly Arabs, share al-Qa'ida's resentment of the United States, especially its Middle East policies. They also disdain the tolerance of free artistic expression and homosexuality. Poll results released after the end of major combat operations in Iraq indicated that "people in most predominantly Muslim countries remain overwhelmingly opposed to the U.S., and in

several cases these negative feelings have increased dramatically."[69] A 2006 Pew poll found that fewer than half of the citizens in Indonesia, Morocco, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Pakistan had a favorable view of the United States. Surprisingly, Jordan, a long-time U.S. ally, had the least favorable opinion, with only 21 percent viewing America positively.[70]

Al-Qa'ida's appeal goes beyond the Arab world. After 9/11, many new babies in Muslim parts of Nigeria are named Osama.[71] Jihadist appeal is very strong in Europe as well. Benjamin and Simon cite a *Times* of London poll that found that an astonishing 40 percent of British Muslims supported bin Ladin's attacks on the United States.[72]

Increasingly, this hatred is directed beyond current disputes. Sayyid Qutb, a leading Islamist thinker who inspired many al-Qa'ida officials, warns of the "Crusader spirit which runs in the blood of all westerners."[73] Radical Islamists combine this vision of eternal conflict with the West and virulent anti-Semitism (historically rare in the Muslim world). They view all current events through the lens of a broad conspiracy against Islam. Armed with these "facts," they conclude that the United States is truly evil rather than merely misguided.

The picture is ominous. It suggests that al-Qa'ida's ideology runs deep. Bin Ladin believes that by making America react forcibly to violence, America's true colors will be revealed. Then Muslims will take part in the cosmic battle between the East and the West, between Muslims and Christians, and between secularism and Shari'a. Unfortunately, bin Ladin's vision is gaining acceptance. As Scheuer notes, "with or without bin Laden, and whether or not the West accepts it, many Muslims appear to think a war against Islam is underway."[74]

Even nonjihadists believe that there will be an ultimate schism between East and West in which the Muslims will emerge as the victors. Gunaratna points out that mainstream Islamist groups did not condemn al-Qa'ida after September 11 because the attacks were wrong, but rather criticized the organization for attacking before the time was right and for risking American retaliation.[75] In particular, several Islamist leaders have argued that jihad will inevitably fail

until the Muslim world is united. Such criticism of bin Ladin is small comfort to Westerners seeking amity.[76]

Divisions among the Ranks

Our enemy multiplies. To the few hundred members of al-Qa'ida's core we have added the tens of thousands of insurgent fighters who share jihadist goals. And to the mix are perhaps thousands more unaffiliated activists. Most menacing, the polling data of Muslims around the world suggest that millions more have sided against us.

Yet despite the growing number of jihadists, we must remember that as the number of the enemy grows larger, so does its potential for division. Though myriad groups—the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, for example—may sympathize with al-Qa'ida, they have different goals, motivations, skill levels, and degrees of dedication. Indeed, the jihadist community is rife with dissension. Many of these internal struggles have become violent. Beyond jihadist circles, among the Islamist community or Muslims in general, the differences far outweigh the similarities. Indeed, U.S. strategies for victory depend heavily on understanding and exploiting these divisions successfully.

One of the most basic divisions among the jihadists concerns the nature of the perceived enemy. Most jihadists would agree that the governments of the United States, Israel, Russia, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and numerous other countries are immoral and hostile to Islam. But where to begin? What country deserves the groups' priority? Traditionally, most groups focused first on their home country. And despite bin Ladin's efforts to make the "far enemy," the United States, the priority over the "near enemy," Egypt and Saudi Arabia, most groups still see their local struggle as a top priority.[77] In Saudi Arabia militants split between those heeding al-Qa'ida's call to fight Americans in Iraq and those focusing first on overthrowing the al-Saud regime. In fact, al-Qa'ida has not yet resolved this basic question within its own ranks. Journalist Lawrence Wright reports that an al-Qa'ida training school in Afghanistan listed its heretical enemies: Mubarak and his ilk first;

followed by the Shi'a; then America; and finally Israel. Wright adds that the order would vary depending on who was teaching.[78]

The question of methods also divides potential sympathizers. Many Islamist political movements share their violent coreligionists' ultimate objective of establishing a government of God but disagree strongly on the means of achieving that goal.[79] Modern Islamists advocate three different approaches to advancing the faith: the political process, social change, and finally violence.

Those who view Islamists as a fringe group may be surprised to discover that the Islamists view politics as a promising path to power. In the Arab world, Islamist political parties have done quite well in elections. A common maxim for watchers of Arab politics is that the freer the election, the better the Islamists are likely to do. In Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories, the dominant political victors turned out to be the Islamist parties, including two terrorist groups: Hizballah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine. In Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, Yemen, and other countries there has been more limited political participation, but Islamists have done quite well, given the constraints and government vote manipulation they faced during campaigning. For these Islamist parties, the vote is the key to power and change. Millions of Muslims have endorsed this position simply by casting their ballot.

The jihadists, however, viscerally reject democracy. In their eyes, democracy places the law of man above the law of God. A legislature, for example, could legalize drinking. Or it could grant women the right to vote. Both measures would be anathema to jihadists. For the extremists, the Koran is the foundation of all law. Any other source of law is blasphemous. Yet democracy is exceptionally popular among Arab publics, perhaps because they understand firsthand the costs of tyranny. Thus the jihadists' position puts them at odds not only with the vast majority of people in the Muslim world, but also with the numerous Islamist parties and movements that stand to do quite well through the ballot box. Not surprisingly, when elections have happened, they have caused rifts in the movement.

Many *salafis* also are highly skeptical of political organization. Their dreams are personal and spiritual. To realize God's will, they

must make themselves and their acquaintances better Muslims. Then society will improve, slowly and steadily. Their emphasis on religion places them at variance with groups or social movements that seek political change. They disapprove of prominent jihadist theologians such as Sayyid Qutb, who emphasizes political rather than religious advancement. The salafis' wariness of political organization places them at odds with mainstream political movements and terrorist groups. The salafis disdain the political savvy and tremendous organizational skills that are required to mobilize people and force governments to capitulate. Their dismissal of politics in turn drives a wedge between them and al-Qa'ida, which is intensely political.

Many salafis also define jihad as a struggle to strengthen one's own religious convictions rather than just violence. Salafis do accept that violent jihad is at times appropriate, but they are skeptical of how groups like al-Qa'ida use it. Jihad, in the eyes of most salafis, is appropriate only under rare circumstances and should not involve taking innocent blood. In the absence of a consensus regarding a commander of the faithful, they believe jihad should only be defensive. Iraq today is seen by many salafis as a legitimate place for jihad, but they would disagree with other calls to take jihad to fight for Muslims throughout the world. Salafis are not alone in criticizing the jihadists. Other Muslims see their violent coreligionists as unschooled and too political. In their eyes, social change and personal purification should be priorities.

The jihadist violence often backfires. After the bombings of hotels in Jordan in 2005, the Jordanian public's support for suicide attacks as a justifiable tactic plunged from 57 percent to 29 percent and public confidence in bin Ladin fell from 60 percent to 24 percent.[80]

Another key area of disagreement is the question of *takfir*, the act of declaring an individual (or government) to be an unbeliever, or *kafir* (plural, *kuffar*). The charge is serious and punishable by death. Sinful behavior such as murder or rape is not enough to make an individual a kafir. The individual charged must also make a deliberate decision to deny the faith, thus becoming an apostate. Because the charge is so serious, overwhelming evidence is required

to prove that an individual is a kafir. That person is guilty only after this evidence is presented. Many Muslims refer to jihadists and their supporters as "takfiris" because they have the audacity to declare other Muslims to be apostates.

A number of jihadists have expanded the definition of takfir from individuals to governments throughout the Muslim world. As such, devout Muslims do not owe them loyalty, but in addition are obligated to rebel against them. In contrast, traditional Islamic teachings emphasize the value of a civil peace, even at the price of tyranny.[81] The International Crisis Group points out that salafis in general are highly skeptical of the legitimacy of rebellion against a Muslim government, even if it does not follow salafi teachings. "Most salafists, if forced to choose between the Saudi government and Osama bin Laden, would choose the former."[82] In Saudi Arabia, many salafis reject politics altogether; they may reject the Saudi state and its authority, but they also reject the rival claims of various religious organizations.[83]

Some groups have taken their view of takfir to such extremes that even jihadists find them intolerable. The GIA in Algeria, for example, declared all of society apostate: in short, those who were not jihadists were kuffar, and the group had the right—indeed, the obligation—to kill them.

Bin Ladin has fought against this narrow approach. In particular, he has tried to discourage attacks on other Muslims, whether they are Sufis, Shi'a, or other groups that many salafis view with suspicion. He has tried to unify different Sunni jihadist groups, urging them to go beyond their differences. Much of the global jihad, however, rejects this big-tent approach. Believing they have a duty to kill apostates, jihadists in Iraq regularly target the Shi'a.

As a result of these differences, many jihadists reject al-Qa'ida's call to focus on U.S. policy. Mohammad Bouyeri's 2004 attack on Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh or the violent demonstrations over the cartoons ridiculing the prophet Mohammad in a Danish newspaper are, for many European Muslims, more salient issues than U.S. support for corrupt regimes in the Arab world. (The al-Qa'ida core is trying to reach out to these would-be affiliates. Although bin Ladin has historically focused on policy more than

values, Ayman al-Zawahiri released a videotape in March 2006 that railed against Danish cartoons mocking the Prophet Mohammad.) The Taliban in Afghanistan and Jemaat Islamiyyah in Indonesia are concerned about the penetration of Western popular culture, as suggested by its attack on the Bali discotheque. Protests ensued immediately after *Playboy* went on sale, even though the Indonesia version lacked unclothed women (raising the unrelated question of why anyone would purchase the magazine). In Southeast Asia and Egypt, insurgents burn churches and attack Christian businesses. Sectarian issues often stir more passions than bin Ladin's global, U.S.-focused agenda.

Nationalism still divides many Islamist movements, with Hamas focused primarily on Palestine, the Islamic Group focused primarily on Egypt, and so on. Nationalism is an issue even within al-Qa'ida, where the prominence of Egyptians in its senior ranks has bred resentment. In London the presence of representatives from a wide range of Islamist groups has "led to a tempest of reciprocal excommunications and anathemas."[84] National sentiment is an exceptionally strong form of identity, and it has defeated international communism, Arab unity, Christendom, and other past pretenders to universalism.

Because ideology is so malleable, it is tempting to dismiss these differences as irrelevant to the world of terrorism operatives. That would be a mistake. Ideology helps the movement raise money and recruit members. Those who contribute or join usually do so because they genuinely believe in the cause. But the differences do not necessarily end once the recruits join the group. Assuming that most terrorists conclude that violence is justified, many will then disagree about the level of intensity. The al-Qa'ida–supported struggles in Algeria and the Caucasus involved levels of bloodshed that far exceeded anything al-Qa'ida itself has committed. The French scholar of Islam Gilles Kepel contends that the "savage violence" of terrorist organizations has worked against them. Rather than inspire other Muslims to take up arms against the West or apostate regimes, they have instead disgusted their coreligionists, leading them to reject extremism. The GIA justified the mass murders of Algerian villagers because they believed that the villagers

were kuffar. Instead of helping the GIA's cause, the murders led to worldwide repugnance. Egyptian Islamic Jihad's bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Pakistan in 1995 led to considerable criticism among supporters, who claimed that the innocent died along with the guilty.[85]

While resentment and disdain toward the United States from the Muslim world have not declined in recent years, there are signs that support for bin Ladin and terrorism has fallen. A 2005 Pew opinion survey of the Muslim world found that in many countries support for terrorism and Osama bin Ladin was on the decline. Indonesia and Morocco exhibited the biggest change since 2003, with the percentage of respondents displaying "a lot" or "some" confidence in bin Ladin falling by almost half, from 58 percent and 49 percent to 35 percent and 26 percent, respectively.[86] Moreover, support for suicide bombs against civilian targets in Pakistan dropped from 41 percent in 2004 to 25 percent in 2005. In Indonesia, the figure fell from 27 percent to 15 percent.[87]

According to Middle East expert Augustus Richard Norton, these results are not surprising: "Muslims, like non-Muslims, are plugged into the world. . . . It is one thing to be caught up in the supposed glamour of attacking the superpower or global bully, but it is quite another to have to pay the consequences economically, politically, not to mention personally. This is what has happened in places like Indonesia, Morocco, Pakistan and Turkey, where many people now see extremist Islam as a threat to their lives, not a fantasy game of kick Uncle Sam."[88] While many Muslims in 2003 "saw a worldwide threat to Islam and [bin Ladin] represented opposition to the West and the United States" says Andrew Kohut, president of the Pew Research Council, "tempers have since cooled."[89]

Personal rivalries among leaders compound these differences. For many years Egyptian militants were divided into two camps: those who followed the blind sheikh Omar Adbel-Rahman, the man who inspired the 1993 World Trade Center attack, and those who rejected his leadership. This dispute between like-minded groups produced polemic after polemic. Some salafis in Indonesia have branded bin Ladin a *khawarij*, essentially labeling him a deviant who can be killed with impunity.[90]

Once a person leaves the salafi community and enters the broader world of political Islam, the differences loom even larger. The Islamist community shares the jihadist belief that Islam should play an important role in politics, but like any large religious community, they are divided on a wide variety of issues. Some leading Islamists seek harmony with the Shi'a and other sects. Others preach that only one school of thought is legitimate. Islamists disagree on the value of democracy, the role of women, the level of tolerance toward different sects within Islam, the proper role of government in the economy, and other core issues. The vast majority oppose violent rebellion against their own governments.

When the Islamists are successful in gaining power, their record so far has been unimpressive, which suggests that the model they champion may have inherent limits. Two self-declared "Islamic states"—Sudan and Afghanistan—have become remarkably less "Islamic" in recent years. In December 1999, Khartoum jailed the prominent Islamist Hassan al-Turabi, though they later released him. Two years later, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan fell to U.S.-backed forces. The much-feared "Talibanization" of Pakistan has been checked, though it remains disturbingly plausible. Attempts to overturn the government of Egypt, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia, among others, have failed. Iran's "government of God" is in crisis, with widespread disillusionment throughout Iranian society and much of the religious establishment.[91]

Implications for Counterterrorism

There is no single strategy that can successfully defeat the jihadists. All heads of the hydra of terrorism must be attacked. It is precisely the divisions among the groups that suggest the means in which the battle against terrorism can be successful. (Some of these points will be discussed later, but they are worth mentioning now.)

Al-Qa'ida's size, discipline, and skill make it a formidable intelligence challenge. Early terrorist groups such as Germany's Red Army Faction or November 17 in Greece were small and limited in scope. Unlike al-Qa'ida, they did not pose a global threat, nor were their techniques especially innovative. They lacked the ability to

regroup when their leaders were killed or arrested. Even the activities of larger and more competent groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Lebanese Hizballah are far smaller and more geographically focused than al-Qa'ida. The most important difference between these groups is that al-Qa'ida is willing to inflict mass casualties on U.S. soil. Few other organizations are willing to embark upon such a horrific quest.

So the first challenge to U.S. intelligence is collecting in-depth information about the areas in which al-Qa'ida and its affiliates function. But counterintelligence operatives cannot stop there. The United States must also be able to connect disparate pieces of information from a wide swath of countries across the world. Information from a cell in Algeria may be relevant to terrorists in Europe, who in turn may be in touch with radicals in Iraq. The United States must go beyond the al-Qa'ida core. In the countries they investigate, operatives must obtain knowledge about each local group and each relevant individual. Though many of the locals have done little to threaten the United States, they may possess a small nugget of information that can lead to the terrorist networks within their midst.

Militarily, the United States will have to ensure that there are no more Talibans: no regime should be allowed to support, or even knowingly tolerate, a jihadist presence. In addition, the military will be called on for narrower, nontraditional roles that differ from its traditional emphasis on conventional war. Conducting or assisting targeted killings may be one role. Given the importance of insurgent groups to the global jihad, the most important function of the military should be counterinsurgency.

Diplomatically, the United States must redouble efforts to gain strategic allies in the fight against terrorism. Allies in the Muslim world are of paramount importance. But so, too, are traditional allies. Europe was a staging ground for the September 11 attacks, and its large Arab and Muslim population represents a pool of potential recruits for al-Qa'ida. Similarly, allied police and intelligence services offer additional (and sometimes superior) intelligence to complement U.S. efforts.[92]

So far, al-Qa'ida is winning the battle of ideas: its concept of defensive jihad is gaining authority, as is its credo that the United

States is at the root of the Muslim world's problems. If we do nothing to counter al-Qa'ida's ideology, the movement will gain a steady stream of recruits. And terrorists will be able to find refuge among a sympathetic populace. Public diplomacy should try to provide a competing narrative, one that calls attention to the acceptable positions of U.S. foreign policy and, most importantly, delegitimizes the jihadists' activities.

The United States must use extreme caution when it attempts to foster political reform. The grievances jihadists harbor against their own countries are often justified, and promoting reform may be necessary. But reform can backfire. Change can dislocate established elites. Reforms can create instability, particularly in the short term. If the dislocations resulting from reform are not addressed, they offer further openings for jihadists to exploit.

One issue stands out above all else: Iraq. All else pales beside the overwhelming quandary that Iraq has created for the United States. Al-Qa'ida has sought to make Iraq a new Afghanistan, and it appears to be succeeding. Iraq has inflamed the passions of millions of Muslims, and at the same time it has become a base for jihadists operating in the region. The fate of Iraq will be instrumental in determining the future path of the jihadist movement.

If the United States treats all insurgents as one group, it runs the risk of fulfilling bin Ladin's desire to elicit a heavy-handed U.S. response to terrorism, which will then generate more sympathy and support for his cause. In particular, policy must seek to avoid turning groups with primarily local aspirations into groups that share al-Qa'ida's global agenda. Indeed, equating al-Qa'ida and terrorism, and making any organization with sympathy for al-Qa'ida part of a monolithic terrorist *internationale*, may become a self-fulfilling prophecy by forcing us to take the government's side in every internal dispute. In the end, such a policy will bolster al-Qa'ida in places where its current presence is limited—the Xinjiang region of China, for example.

Al-Qa'ida's penchant for infighting and its limited mass support are internal weaknesses that are ripe for U.S. influence. Islamists, salafis, and salafi jihadists are divided on issues that range from ideology to

tactics. The United States can take advantage of these differences to reduce contacts among groups, even turning one against another.

When possible, U.S. policy should try to distinguish between those groups supporting violence against the United States and those that simply dislike or denounce America. Fortunately, only some of the radical groups around the world are focused on the United States—though the number is growing. Some local groups, such as Algeria's GSPC, Egypt's Islamic Jihad, and Indonesia's Jemaah Islamiyya, have joined al-Qa'ida or otherwise embraced its global agenda. So, too, have many local cells such as the Madrid bombers, many of which do not formally belong to any long-standing group but nevertheless pose a deadly threat. But other terrorist organizations should not be as high on the list. Chechen fighters, for example, often share a similar outlook with al-Qa'ida, but their goals are primarily local. Attention should be focused on the more urgent threat—those groups that intend to harm the United States through violence.

A final necessity is education of the U.S. public and improved homeland defense. Given al-Qa'ida's lethality and appeal, we must expect further attacks. The president and other senior leaders must try to minimize the popular fear and the economic and political damage resulting from even a limited attack. Also vital is ensuring the continued goodwill of the U.S. Muslim community. Violence is almost certain to continue for at least the coming decade. If Americans can remain steadfast, the government can better avoid mistakes and overreactions that play directly into al-Qa'ida's hands.