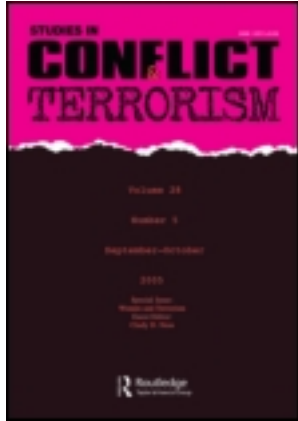


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Groups, Networks, or Movements: A Command-and-Control-Driven Approach to Classifying Terrorist Organizations and Its Application to Al Qaeda

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Appropriately describing the properties and defining the boundaries of terrorist groups is frequently challenging. Public and policy discussion of Al Qaeda as a group, network, or broad social movement is described as an example of this problem, with an emphasis on the consequences of placing a terrorist organization in each of these different categories. To resolve the confusion that such uncertainties can introduce into discussion, an approach is described focusing on the strength of command-and-control linkages within an organization for laying out the differences between groups, networks, and movements and defining the boundaries between them.

Initially—before and after the September 11 attacks—analysts wondered whether this mysterious organization was structured like a corporation, venture-capital firm, franchise operation, foundation, social or organizational network—or all of the above. Today, now that Al Qaeda has more affiliates, the network and franchise concepts remain in play, but the emphasis is on Al Qaeda's evolution into a decentralized, amorphous ideological movement for global jihad.¹

From Lackawanna, NY to Bali, officials use the words Al Qaeda to explain the potential threat or the grisly reality of almost anything resembling a terrorist attack, potential anti-government plot or suspected sleeper cell. . . . So what is the current Al Qaeda? An organization? A movement? An ideology?²

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In the policy and popular literatures, there is significant debate and discussion about how to classify Al Qaeda. As illustrated in the opening quotes, terms used to describe Al Qaeda range from terrorist group to ideological movement, from a “brand identity” for Jihadist terrorism to a “global tribe.”³ Counterterrorism officials and policymakers at all levels frequently use the term Al Qaeda differently—to refer to the source of detected or suspected terrorist activity that may be connected to Osama bin Laden, to individuals with direct contact to him, to affiliate groups supported through his access to funds or charities, or to individuals inspired by his public statements and ideologies.⁴ These definitional and linguistic problems are generated by the shift in terrorism from actions carried out by comparatively well-defined, contained, and stable organizations—such as “classic” left-wing groups in Europe where the small size and tight organization meant choosing a single label for the group and all its activities did not pose any difficulty—to acts taken by broadly spread out, amorphous organizations that, while held together by a common ideology, may lack any strong or direct linkages among members.

The absence of consensus about how to describe Al Qaeda emphasizes the need for a clear and systematic way of articulating the important differences between these different labels. Do they only arise because of differences in what individuals are using the term Al Qaeda to refer to? Are they because of differences in meaning of the labels themselves—group, network, movement, and so on? Or are they because of the real uncertainty about the nature of the organization? Without clear articulation of the source of the variation, the broad spread of labels injects an unconstructive diversity into policy discourse—proposals may be advanced using similar terms but in reality be aimed at different targets. This is particularly important because embedded within specific labels for Al Qaeda—group, network, movement—are very different answers to key questions for policy and counterterrorism design:

- *How does the nature of the organization affect the types of activities and operations it can stage—and what are the implications for the countermeasures deployed against it?* If the organization is viewed as a delocalized movement, then what does that mean with respect to its activities and operations compared to viewing it as a group with many external linkages?
- *What are the implications of the nature of organizational structures—or lack of structures—for design of counter-efforts?* If Al Qaeda is viewed as a movement, it follows that efforts to penetrate it and collect intelligence on its activities will be designed very differently than if it is viewed as a defined group.
- *What is the boundary of the organization?* Opportunities to attack organizations frequently arise at their boundaries—the linkages between those who are inside versus those who are not. Different classifications of Al Qaeda lead to different conclusions about where those boundaries are and what actions should be taken to identify and exploit any vulnerabilities found there.

At a basic level, this is a problem with the use of language—what exactly is being referred to when the term Al Qaeda is used—but the issue is larger than simply one of nomenclature. The choice shapes the way that counterterrorism and policy professionals think about their adversary and, therefore, approach their efforts to counter it.

As discussed elsewhere in the literature, one source of these issues is the dynamic nature of Al Qaeda itself and the changes it has made in the wake of the 11 September 2001 attacks and the U.S. response to them. As many have noted, the Al Qaeda faced today is not the same as the Al Qaeda that existed before the attacks on New York and

Washington—both because of the actions of the United States and its allies and because of Al Qaeda's efforts to change and adapt.⁵ This particular author's interest in this topic draws directly from this observation: the questions cited earlier arose repeatedly in recent RAND work on organizational learning in terrorist groups⁶ focused on the implications of groups' ability to change and adapt for counterterrorism efforts. It is clear that terrorist groups' efforts to evolve over time will invariably complicate classifying them and describing their structures and capabilities. However, it is the argument of this article that without a more systematic approach to articulating the differences between what is meant when using different labels (e.g., group vs. network vs. movement) there will be problems in characterizing even some static real-world terrorist organizations in ways that are useful for designing counterterrorism efforts.

In the study of terrorist groups, considerable analytical effort has been focused on classifying and describing terrorist organizations⁷ based on the structures they adopt. A significant body of work has been produced focusing on the advantages of networked, flexible organizations for terrorists compared to more traditional hierarchical organizations.⁸ This article comes at this problem from a somewhat different perspective, focusing not on group *structure* as the starting point for analysis and classification, but on *function*—specifically the command and control authority relationships⁹ that exist within groups.¹⁰ It appears that such a reductionist approach—building upward from internal functional characteristics—has key advantages. By making explicit the data and decisions underlying categorization of an organization, it can help address two of the potential sources of variation with respect to groups like Al Qaeda:

1. Clearly defining what is meant by the terms used to categorize terrorist groups (e.g., movement, network, or group) in a way that is relevant for counterterrorism, and
2. Providing an approach to label and define the boundaries of complex terrorist organizations and their components in less ambiguous terms and to ensure analysts using the same names are not, in fact, talking about different things.

Beyond potentially benefiting the consistency and accuracy of policy debate on groups such as Al Qaeda, this approach can also help to answer critical questions, such as those posed earlier, about terrorist organizations, their capabilities, and behaviors.

Defining the Terms Used to Categorize Terrorist Organizations

Organizations are held together by the connections that exist among their constituent units—at the lowest level, connections between individuals; at higher levels, connections among components of the organization. Such connections link individual actors and the resources they marshal into common purposes. Those connections provide the ability to communicate, to exchange information, and to convey authority to shape the behaviors of others in the organization. To build a terrorist cell that can function, a set of individuals is required with appropriate connections among them, sufficient ability to communicate, and the authority relationships necessary to shape a coherent agenda for the cell's activities.

As a way of introducing the nomenclature and framing the concepts used later in discussion of more complex organizations, it is useful to discuss a simple example cell (Figure 1). This exemplar cell is made up of four individuals: a central member (labeled "leader" in the figure for convenience) and three members connected to the central

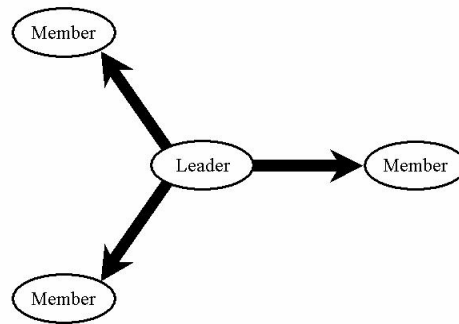


Figure 1. Command and control linkages in a simplified terrorist cell.

member. The connections and authority relationships among the members are shown by the lines and directionality of the arrows between them (in this simple case going from the leader to each of the members).

Types of Authority

To describe activities in more complex and relevant, real-world cases, the nature of the *authority* (which could derive from formal *control* relationships or informal *influence*) exerted among group members must be broken down into more specific components. For this purpose, the standard terminology of strategic, operational, and tactical levels can be used, viewed from the perspective of the terrorist organization:

1. *Strategic Control or Influence*—The ability to define the top-level goals and aims of the group. For example, through his statements and the *fatwas* he sought and released, bin Laden defined the strategic aims of the global jihad.¹¹
2. *Operational Control or Influence*—The ability to control or influence the activities and operations being carried out in pursuit of the organization's strategic goals. Examples of operational control within terrorist organizations include bin Laden's specific approval of the 11 September 2001 attacks and involvement in selection of the targets.¹²
3. *Tactical Control or Influence*—The ability to control or influence the specific activities an individual member or component of the organization carries out on a day-to-day basis. An example of tactical control is the authority of a cell leader commanding an operation or managing the logistical or other activities supporting cell members should to perform. In the 11 September 2001 plot, Mohammed Atta maintained primary tactical control of the operational cell, although bin Laden sought to influence the tactical details of the operation such as the timing of the attacks through the communications modes he had available.¹³

The strongest leaders—whether through formal or informal authority—have the ability to shape group activities at all three levels.¹⁴ However, the requirements to do so may differ. Because of its time-sensitive nature and the specificity of the interactions involved, significant tactical control or influence (e.g., beyond the transmission of a signal to initiate a fully preplanned operation) will likely require direct and ongoing contact.¹⁵

Operational control or influence could require much less—for example, periodic meetings where the overall plan of an operation is framed. In contrast, strategic control or influence may require no direct contacts at all—provided appropriate mass communication modes exist to transmit opinion leaders' statements to their followers.

Within an organization, the ability of a commander or opinion leader to exert different types of authority is defined by the nature of the relationships among the members (e.g., how influential is the leader, will he or she be “listened to” when orders or suggestions are given?) and the communications mechanisms available for the leader to communicate with members. Even in organizations with strong and charismatic leaders, limits on their ability to communicate with their members reduce their ability to exert authority at all three levels. Such limits could arise simply from practical constraints on the bandwidth and frequency of their communications modes, or from more complex operational security concerns. In such cases, isolated components of the group may diverge from the intent of the leadership because of the weakness of the connection between them, even in the absence of any intentional effort to change strategy or tactics. As components of an organization slip outside the control or influence of leadership first tactical, then operationally, and finally strategically, the linkages among the components weaken and the unity of action in the organization—the alignment of individual activities with the overall organizational aims—can break down.¹⁶ Examples of this situation can be found in terrorist organizations as diverse as the Provisional Irish Republican Army¹⁷ (discussed later) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas).¹⁸

Within a very small terrorist cell, the nature of authority will likely be driven predominantly by the personalities of the individuals involved and their specific interactions. As a result, explicitly dissecting individual types of command and control authority in cases as simple as the one shown in Figure 1 is almost certainly unnecessary. However, when analysis is expanded from simple cases to larger, more complex terrorist organizations, these classes of command and control authority can be usefully applied as three separate variables for modeling and categorizing them.

Tightly-Coupled Groups, Coupled Networks, and Loosely Coupled Movements: Connections and Control in Terrorist Organizations

Because the connections among units within and outside of an organization shape its ability to bring together capabilities and information to stage operations as well as its flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, a number of previous efforts have focused on categorizing terrorist groups based on the topology of their internal networks. For example, Arquilla and Ronfeldt present three canonical structures that frame their discussion of the impact of network modes of organizing on terrorism: the chain network, where units of the organization link sequentially in a single line; the hub and spoke network, where links to all units radiate outward from a single node; and the all-channel network where all units connect to all others within the organization (Figure 2).¹⁹ The potential advantages of such structures—particularly when they are designed to maintain flexibility and their ability to change as needed—are contrasted with static, traditional hierarchical structures of organizations.

It is argued here that it is equally productive to categorize organizations, based on functional rather than structural characteristics. Instead of the connections that exist between units providing the basis for discrimination, the nature of the authority relationships that exist within them is used—how much strategic, operational, and tactical control or influence specific components of the organization have over others.²⁰ Adopting

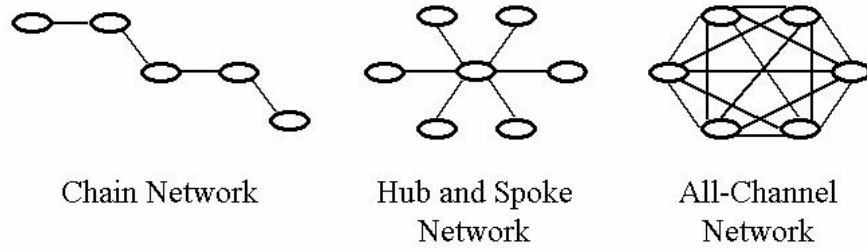


Figure 2. Network structures (adapted from Arquilla & Ronfeldt, 2001).

this principle as the basis of categorization makes it possible to bring together a range of analyses and terminologies from across the terrorism literature and build clear meanings for terms such as terrorist group, network, and movement. Focusing on the strength of the authority linkages provides a complement to the structural approach, both helping to highlight cases where structure may be the dominant influence on organizational characteristics and, conversely, cases where structures that might appear very different may be functionally more similar than might otherwise be assumed.

In describing the control and influence differences among organizations, three canonical classes will be discussed. As shown in Figure 3, the organizational structure is held constant and the nature of the connections between the organizational nodes is varied. As in Arquilla and Ronfeldt, “each node . . . may refer to an individual, a group, an organization, part of a group or organization, or even a state.” For the purposes of this discussion, all the linkages within a single organization’s nodes are identical, a simplification that facilitates the current discussion but that will be subsequently released.

- *Tightly Coupled*²² *Groups*²³—At one extreme of this typology are *tightly coupled groups*, organizations where commanders or opinion leaders within the group have the ability to exert strategic, operational, and tactical control. With effective

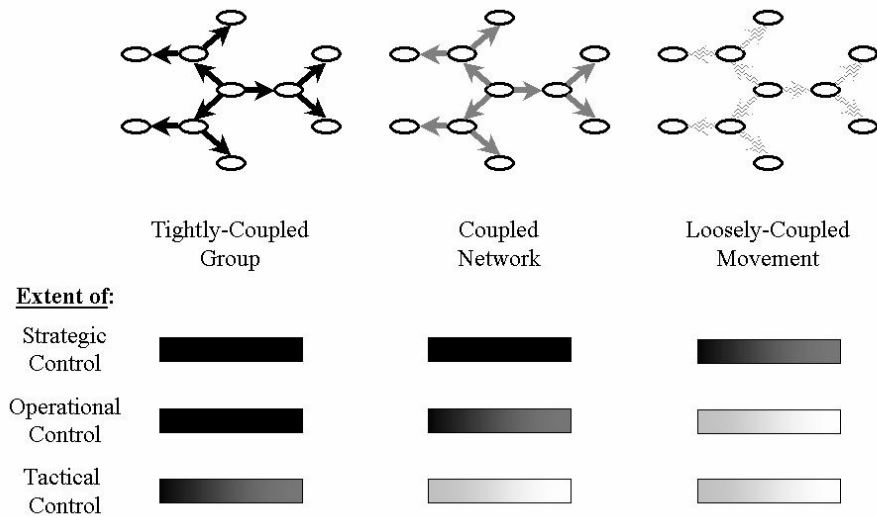


Figure 3. Canonical classes of organizational command and control.

communications mechanisms connecting them to all appropriate functional parts of the organization, these leaders theoretically can design and implement plans aimed at complex strategies, requiring the coordination and sequencing of many different activities in different components of the organization. The most frequently cited example of such tightly coupled groups is the classic hierarchy which, in addition to specific structural characteristics, have clear and stable authority relationships where leadership can exert all three forms of control over their subordinates. This control is exerted unidirectionally from “higher to lower” within the organization (as diagrams of such organizations are commonly drawn) (Figure 4, left). As shown in Figure 4, a hierarchical structure can be diagrammed as a network (right in the figure), where the characteristics of the relationships among units are shown not positionally in a management tree but in the directionality and shade of the arrows connecting the nodes in the organization. Although traditional hierarchies are tightly coupled groups, they are not the only types of organizations that fall into the category. Other structures could fall into this category if the control and influence relationships within the organization allowed coupling at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

- *Coupled Networks*—In categorizing organizations based on their command and control relationships, the transition between a tightly coupled group and a *coupled network* is marked by the loosening of the control and influence that commanders or opinion leaders within the organization can exert over other components (Figure 3, middle). Specifically, the looser relationships among units and less direct modes of communication lead to a reduction in the ability of the entire organization to maintain tactical unity and, in some cases even operational unity, in its components’ activities.²⁴ In the literatures on networked organizations, this shift is sometimes marked by no longer using words such as “leader” or “commander” and instead replacing them with the concept of the “network core.”²⁵

The reduction in tactical control and unity within such groups has advantages and disadvantages from an organizational perspective. As cited by many previous authors, the increased flexibility the autonomy provides can be a key advantage. Lack of centralized control and coordination can also provide advantages in stimulating tactical level innovation because more independent actors frequently can experiment with new approaches more readily.²⁶ However, the price of this increased flexibility may be limits on an organizations’ ability to achieve goals or carry out

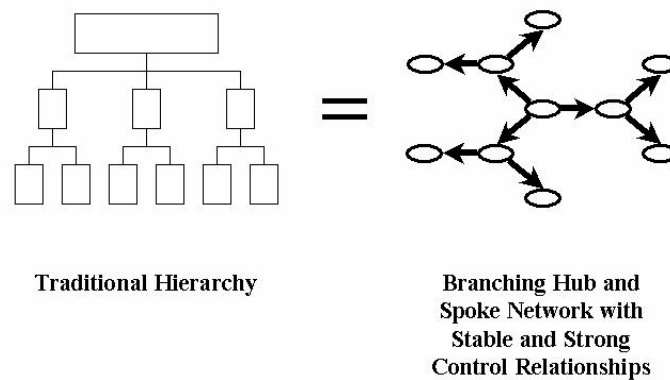


Figure 4. Traditional hierarchies as examples of tightly coupled groups.

activities that require more exact coordination among the various “moving parts” within the group.^{27–28} Examples include more complex political goals (e.g., putting specific types of pressure on an ongoing political process) or situations where the group must carefully modulate its activities to prevent a strenuous security response. In addition to being affected by the nature of what the group is trying to accomplish, the distribution of capabilities and resources within an organization will affect how serious a price is paid for reduced tactical unity and coordination. For example, groups whose resources are built in specialized units (a mechanism the author’s recent work on learning examined in a number of terrorist organizations)²⁹ need control mechanisms to coordinate those specialized units; in a group where all parts are equivalent³⁰ there would be no corresponding requirement.

- *Loosely Coupled Movements*—Further loosening of the control and influence linkages within an organization leads to its categorization as a *loosely coupled movement* (Figure 3, right). Social movements can be defined as “a group of people with a common ideology who try together to achieve certain general goals.”³¹ Pursuit of common “general goals” is equivalent to common strategic aims in the present terminology. In some cases, there may be individuals or elements within a movement that can exert considerable strategic control or influence over the movement as a whole, although disagreements among parts of the movement can certainly occur. The level of operational or tactical control that can exist in a movement is limited—“There is no one person or group able to make decisions that are binding upon all or even most of the participants in a movement.”³² Mechanisms for limited types of operational and tactical influence may exist—for example, the consensus on legitimate target sets or even circulated lists of priority targets such as those seen in the violent anti-abortion or animal/earth liberation movements. The specific form of movement-based terrorism labeled leaderless resistance is defined by the absence of control or influence at the tactical level, at most weak influence at the operational level, but strategic shaping by opinion leaders within the movement.

As with networks, movements have advantages and disadvantages from an organizational action perspective. Weak connections make movements attractive from a security perspective; they are very robust to penetration and compromise: even if there is a “leadership” of the movement, such weak connections cannot be “followed upward” to that leadership. However, even looser coordination makes it even more difficult to pursue goals that require unity of action—although many activities of movements, such as broad protests or maintaining levels of violence against general classes of targets, do not require such strict coordination. Such disunity can result in sufficient drift in the movement that fractures and splits occur as has been observed in violent and nonviolent movements alike. Similarly, the lack of a clear center and authority means that an end-game settlement of conflict (e.g., negotiation among the adversaries) is very difficult if not impossible.³³

Tying the labels used to describe terrorist organizations on the nature of their authority linkages has significant advantages. Linking the meanings of terms such as group, network, or movement to a fundamental property of the group that can be measured forces a degree of discipline and clarity into the use of terms to categorize an organization. For an organization of interest, the starting point is available data on where its command and control linkages fall on the gradients in Figure 3 (lower half) tying the selection of

a label to objective data on the organization. Because the nature of command and control within organizations is a key determiner of group capability and behavior, using it as the foundation for categorization also ties the meanings of the labels directly to organizational characteristics relevant for counterterrorism.

Categorizing and Defining the Boundaries of Real-World Terrorist Organizations

Although simplified cases such as those shown earlier are useful for describing an analytical framework, readers experienced with the practical demands of assessing actual terrorist organizations will be quick to point out that any real group will be far more complex than the basic and regular structures shown in Figure 3. This heterogeneity and complexity is readily demonstrated through two examples of terrorist organizations, chosen because they represent organizations commonly thought to occupy opposing sides of the structural and command-and-control spectrum:

- The *Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)* is frequently cited as the prototype of a hierarchical, traditional command-and-control terrorist organization (a *tightly coupled group* in the author's terms). During parts of its existence, the core of organization exerted significant tactical control over units via central control of weapons.³⁴ Tight coupling produced vulnerability, however, and under pressure parts of the group shifted to models where individual components of the organization had more autonomy (producing characteristics of a *coupled network*). Although improving security and stimulating tactical innovation, some actions of individual units—mistakes, poorly timed attacks, or sectarian violence—had to be justified after the fact by the core leadership and sometimes significantly damaged efforts to achieve overall goals.³⁵ Expanding outward beyond the generally accepted boundary of PIRA, the group was part of a larger milieu of sympathizers and activists whose actions influenced and were influenced by PIRA. This broader view places PIRA as a central node within a loosely coupled Republican *movement*. The other members of this movement, including many that engaged in some forms of violence, were only influenced at the strategic level by PIRA, sometimes causing problems that had to be addressed in its broader terrorist campaign.³⁶
- The radical environmental movement (in particular terrorist activities claimed under the names *Animal Liberation Front* and *Earth Liberation Front*), as the label implies, is often cited as a prime example of terrorism from within a movement. Built through leaderless resistance—*independent action by inspired individuals—the central element of influence*³⁷ in the organization is the strategic concepts, framework, and aims built by opinion leaders to inspire people to action, consistent with the framework described earlier. However, assuming that no operational or tactical influence occurs in the organization would be incorrect. At a basic level, cells within the movement consisting of more than a single individual will have their own authority structures with much tighter coupling. More importantly, as other authors have noted, the Internet and information technologies have provided these organizations with broad communications modes to anonymously share ideas, operational concepts, and other information. Internet message boards for discussing potential targets and the exchange of manuals containing tactical information provide ways for operational and tactical influence of the broader

organization by individual components, providing somewhat stronger coupling of organizational activities.³⁸

As these examples suggest, just as real organizations are frequently hybrids of different structural types,³⁹ they are hybrids from a functional perspective as well. As is observed in PIRA, the authority relationships among different units are not all identical—the coupling in one part of an organization may differ considerably from that in other. Linkages between components could also be bi-directional with the potential for strategic, operational, or tactical influence going both ways. Because of the nature of the relationships among members of groups or organizational units, some linkages will support full strategic, operational, and tactical control. Others may only allow broad strategic suggestion or influence. As in the ALF/ELF case, commanders or opinion leaders may have some communication modes that can reach all members of their organizations—such as public statements or Internet message boards. Such modes, although limited in the amount of information and authority they can convey, can give almost any organization some of the character of an all-channel organization structure and the ability to shape the behavior of the entire organization to a limited extent.⁴⁰

Attempts to appropriately categorize Al Qaeda face these problems and more. As a global organization, there is significant heterogeneity that makes selecting a single label difficult. As the earlier discussion of PIRA demonstrated, selecting an appropriate label for an organization depends on where the boundary of that organization is drawn—looking at PIRA on its own led to the conclusion that it was either a tightly coupled group or a coupled network; looking at it in the broader context of Republican violence meant it was a substantial node within a loosely coupled movement. There is even less clarity with respect to Al Qaeda. Unlike PIRA, where there was a generally accepted view of the organization's boundary, there is no similar understanding for Al Qaeda and no consistency in what analysts are referring to when the term Al Qaeda is used.

Both before and after 11 September 2001, the term Al Qaeda has been used to refer to a range of combinations of different organizational components:

First, there is the original network, the one that committed 9/11, which uses its own resources and people it has recruited and trained. Then there is the ad-hoc terrorist network, consisting of franchise organizations that Al Qaeda created. . . . The third network [is] a strategic union of like-minded companies. . . . Finally, there is the fourth network, 'imitators, emulators.'⁴¹

At varied times and by varied individuals, Al Qaeda as a label has been used to describe everything from only the “original network” described by Wright to the combination of all four of the organizations he lists. Given the broad variety of individuals, activities, behaviors, and groups that have been placed under the umbrella term “Al Qaeda,” it is not surprising that a consensus does not exist regarding how to classify and describe the organization.

The broadest and most inclusive definitions of the term Al Qaeda encompass three or all four of the components described by Wright. In this construction, Al Qaeda is an organization containing all actors involved in global jihadist terrorism. Based on the categories defined previously, this collective organization has significant characteristics consistent with a *loosely coupled movement*: Actions taken by “imitators” or “emulators” are only strategically (and perhaps operationally) inspired, not tactically controlled.⁴² This usage by many in the literature is summarized by Hoffman:

Al Qaeda today, as other analysts have noted, has become more an idea or a concept than an organization; an amorphous movement tenuously held together by a loosely networked transnational constituency rather than a monolithic, international terrorist organization with either a defined or identifiable command and control apparatus.^{43–44}

Bin Laden's public statements provide strategic level inputs across the loosely coupled organization and, beyond his (and others') pronouncements, a strategic literature is also evolving to develop and promote strategic unity in the movement.⁴⁵ However, even in this broadest construction, Al Qaeda is more than *just* an idea or concept—it is not *fully* leaderless resistance. Just as was observed for radical environmentalist terrorism, efforts are made by some within the organization to provide more to its disparate “members” than basic strategic guidance. Jihadist manuals and instructions are now being broadly disseminated on the Internet to allow some tactical and operational influence across the organization: Al Qaeda's “periodic release of fresh targeting guidance and operational instructions has helped to give renewed focus and sustain this strategy.”⁴⁶ Similarly, the broad body of Afghan veterans and Al Qaeda's past efforts to instruct and indoctrinate a large number of individuals through training camps also helps build some commonality beyond the strategic level across a delocalized movement.⁴⁷

A slightly more restricted view of what is described by the term Al Qaeda encompasses the first two to three of Wright's components—the core group, franchise organizations created by it, and perhaps some like-minded terrorist organizations. Looking at the definitions developed earlier, in this construction Al Qaeda is consistent with a *coupled network*. Although some still use the term Al Qaeda to refer to this broadly connected organization, others have adopted the more descriptive term “Al Qaeda network:”

It is important to understand that what is referred to as the “Al Qaeda network” is in reality a conglomerate of a number of terror groups and their cells, of varying autonomy but who share a common ideology and who cooperate with each other.⁴⁸

Strategic and operational control or influence may be exerted throughout the organization but variation is allowed at the tactical level. Just as in the PIRA case, discussions of Al Qaeda as coupled network cite counterterrorist pressure—in this case U.S. pressure on its Afghan safe haven—as a forcing function that pushed the group toward a less tightly-coupled organizational form.⁴⁹ This is the vision of bin Laden as venture capitalist—funding and supporting attractive operations by other groups (operational influence) that are consistent with his overall strategy, while leaving the tactics to them.⁵⁰ This usage of the term Al Qaeda is also consistent with the descriptions of the process of managing cells constituted for specific operations (e.g., the *Cole* attack or the 11 September 2001 operations) where influence of bin Laden and the core of the group primarily touched the strategic and operational levels rather than the tactical.⁵¹

The most restrictive usage of the term Al Qaeda corresponds to the first and, in some cases, the second component cited by Wright—the core group and some of the franchise organizations it created or supported. This is the approach taken by Gunaratna, who draws a clear boundary between Al Qaeda and associated groups—reserving the term for the core organization:

Al Qaeda itself has not been responsible for the bulk of terrorist attacks since September 11, 2001. Rather, they have been carried out by its associated

groups with origins in the Middle East, East Africa, Asia, and the Caucuses, such as the Al Zarkawi group, Al Ansar Al Islami, Al Ansar Mujahidin, Jemmah Islamiyah, Salafi Jehadiya, the Salafi Group for Call and Combat, and the Abu Sayyaf Group. Even as the international intelligence community continues to focus on Al Qaeda, the threat has shifted to Al Qaeda's associated groups.⁵²

Gunaratna's approach focuses on Al Qaeda as the *tightly coupled group* containing bin Laden and those with whom he is directly connected and, therefore, the set of linkages through which control or influence down to the tactical level can be exerted. Before 11 September 2001, this group was quite large, built in Afghanistan and utilized to manage the organization's military activities there: "On the eve of 9/11, Al Qaeda was a unitary organization, assuming the dimension of a lumbering bureaucracy."⁵³ At points in time, however, even the core of Al Qaeda sought to exert direct tactical influence well beyond the borders of Afghanistan. The reports of the *National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* describe bin Laden seeking to influence the timing of the attacks on New York and Washington⁵⁴—a distinctly tactical detail—and operations involving affiliates like Jemaah Islamiyah sometimes had direct participation of core Al Qaeda members⁵⁵ to exert control at all levels.⁵⁶ Some operations, even after 11 September 2001, have had direct involvement of leadership close to bin Laden. For example, the suicide bomber who attacked a synagogue in Tunisia in April 2002 reportedly talked directly to Khalid Shaik Mohammed hours before the attack⁵⁷ and, in an interview that September,⁵⁸ Mohammed identified himself as the head of Al Qaeda's military committee—a component of the hierarchical authority structure used by the core of the group to manage the organization—suggesting that some linkages used by the core group to manage activities were at least nominally still in place.⁵⁹

Defining the Internal and External Boundaries of Terrorist Organizations

The hybrid nature of the three terrorist organizations discussed earlier suggests that—even given rigorous definitions of what terms like group, network, and movement mean in functional terms—assigning a single, simple label to describe a complex organization appropriately is far from straightforward. Instead, a more useful approach is to define meaningful boundaries around the components of more complex groups and assign useful labels to them.⁶⁰ The case of Al Qaeda in particular emphasizes that disagreement in what you are actually trying to define makes the task nearly impossible—given enough different conceptions of Al Qaeda, the term could appropriately apply to a group, network, or movement. As a result, although systematic definitions of terminology is a reasonable first step, it is insufficient. You cannot clearly categorize Al Qaeda without clearly identifying "which Al Qaeda" you are talking about—it is as much a question of looking at the entirety of jihadist terrorism and selecting what component will be called "Al Qaeda." The right terminology will depend on what is considered inside and what is considered outside the boundary of Al Qaeda.

Just as authority linkages provided a systematic way of defining what terms like group and movement mean in functional terms, they can also provide a systematic way to define the boundaries of terrorist organizations and their components. However, doing so requires that the process described in the previous sections be inverted—instead of taking an organization and looking at the control and influence linkages inside it to assign a proper label, the linkages among individuals or subunits within a large

constellation of parts are examined and breakpoints in linkage types are used to define what is inside and outside a given organization.

Loosely Coupled Movement as Boundary

Given the complexity of many significant terrorist organizations, such groups will likely look much more like Figure 5 than the simple models discussed in the earlier parts of the article. The broadest definition of a terrorist group—analogue to including the entire jihadist terrorist enterprise within the term Al Qaeda—would encompass everything included in Figure 5 and, as suggested by the outward arrows, more. The criterion for inclusion within the boundary of the group is any element acting with common strategic influence or control.

There are advantages and disadvantages to defining such a broad boundary for the organization. The highly inclusive approach, echoed in the opening quotation from the *New York Times*—“officials use the words Al Qaeda to explain the potential threat or the grisly reality of almost anything resembling a terrorist attack, potential anti-government plot or suspected sleeper cell”⁶¹—makes it easy to collectively refer to the terrorist threats facing the nation. Because mobilizing public opinion is part of an overall effort against terrorism, grouping even the weakest-coupled individual or unit into a single, defined label provides a focus for public attention and simplifies communication. It could be useful from a political and psychological warfare perspective as well: if all jihadist terrorism is identified as coming from Al Qaeda, then any arrest or disrupted plot is a blow against the source of national danger, helping to convey a sense of progress and rally public support. The broad focus on Al Qaeda as a movement also points counterterrorist attention to specific types of information sources—particularly open sources. Unlike closed groups frequently focused on keeping all data secret, movements must broadly disseminate their strategic platform and whatever operational or tactical guidance

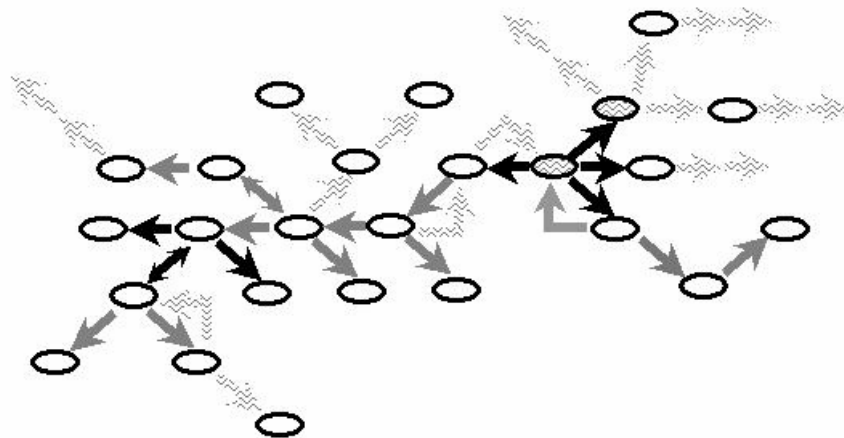


Figure 5. A simplified example of a complex terrorist organization. (Notes: Arrows indicate the directionality and colors designate the types of control or influence: black—strategic, operational, and tactical; gray—strategic and operational; dotted—strategic. Nodes identified by dotted fill are “opinion leaders” that can exert some types of influence over the entire organization through public or other statements. Strategic influence arrows leading away from nodes designate linkages to a larger number of loosely-coupled units that are not shown.)

they expect their members to take into consideration.⁶² Paying such sources close attention can provide at least a partial window into some relevant terrorist activities.

However, too broad a perspective can also shape thinking in less useful ways. Drawing the boundary of Al Qaeda too broadly can constrain available responses to the threat—if an entire movement, from weak partisans to the most hardened terrorist operative, is placed under the same umbrella effective options may be foreclosed. For example, there may be strategies to separate weaker supporters from the movement through nonviolent or conciliatory means, but if the individuals involved have been defined as “part of Al Qaeda” this may be seen as making concessions to terrorists and therefore be politically unacceptable. How the problem is defined may limit the ability to pursue strategies that might otherwise be effective. These types of strategies can be viewed as targeting boundaries within the larger terrorist organization—between supporters and militants, between funders and terror cells, and so on—or different parts of the overall terrorist system, as described by a number of other authors,⁶³ boundaries that are obscured by a broad definition of the organization.

Too broad a focus may also skew judgments about the capabilities and likely actions of an organization. For example, there are real limits on the complexity of the operations that loosely coupled movements can carry out. Particular goals may be able to be advanced through uncoordinated activity and without unity of action, but such an approach is wholly inappropriate for others. Examples of activities tolerant of such loosely coordinated action include such netwar concepts as dispersed actors acting to limit states’ ability to control information,⁶⁴ exerting pressure on commercial actors,⁶⁵ or organizing protests. The violence in Iraq is another—where the main goal is to maintain a level of operations against defined targets rather than execute an intricate strategy.⁶⁶ In other cases, reductions in a leader’s ability to exert tactical control risks the individual activities undertaken by members not “matching” the needs of the group—a breakdown in unity of action in the organization’s activities. A relevant contrast can be made with Al Qaeda’s structures and management structures in Afghanistan, which were needed for an effort that required unity of action at deeper levels—fighting a more conventional war against the Northern Alliance.^{67–68} Focusing too closely on an adversary as a movement may overlook components of the group where tighter control and higher levels of unified action enable more complex and hazardous activities.

Coupled Network as Boundary

A somewhat more restrictive approach would be to define an organizational boundary around units where there are strategic and operational authority relationships and label that entity that Al Qaeda—around the coupled network (Figure 6) in the author’s terminology. As with the earlier discussion where the entire movement was used as a boundary, focusing on the coupled network as the primary boundary of the terrorist organization has both advantages and disadvantages. Doing so sacrifices the benefits of treating the entire movement as a unit—for example, now actions might be taken by and against individuals not contained within the network, complicating both public and political discussion about the threat and achievements made in countering it.

Yet, the transition has significant benefits as well. Linkages that convey both strategic and operational control begin to be exploitable. For example, in discussing Al Qaeda as a movement, Pillar stated: “The danger now lies in the fact that the looser the operational connections become and the less Islamist terrorism is instigated by a single figure, the harder it will be to uncover exploitable links and the more likely that the instigators

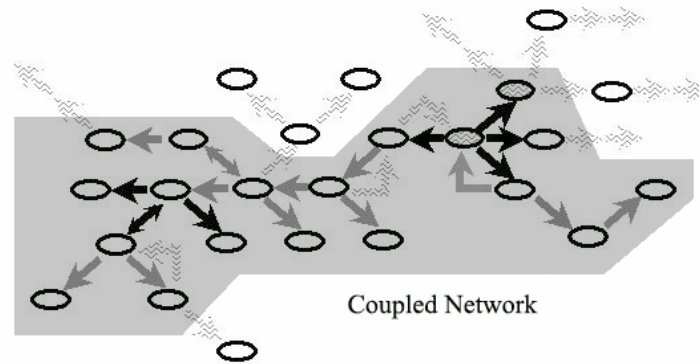


Figure 6. The boundary of a coupled network within a complex terrorist organization. (Notes: As Figure 5, shaded area indicates boundary of coupled network—units connected by linkages allowing at least operational command or influence.)

of future terrorist attacks will escape the notice of U.S. intelligence.”⁶⁹ Focusing in at the network level “steps away” from this problem by attempting to focus attention on the components that might have exploitable links and the potentially exploitable boundaries between them. This pushes attention to points where the payoffs may be greater: With increased influence, the information captured from monitoring or penetrating linkages increases in value—it is no longer just noise in a loosely coupled movement where individuals are fantasizing about violence, but actual discussions of operations among pieces of an organization actually planning to carry them out. In contrast to movements, units of a network can hold such data closer because there are linkages to transfer it to the people that need to act on the data.

Tightly Coupled Group as Boundary

The most restrictive approach would be to draw organizational boundaries only around groupings that are tightly coupled (Figure 7) and choose only one of them to call Al

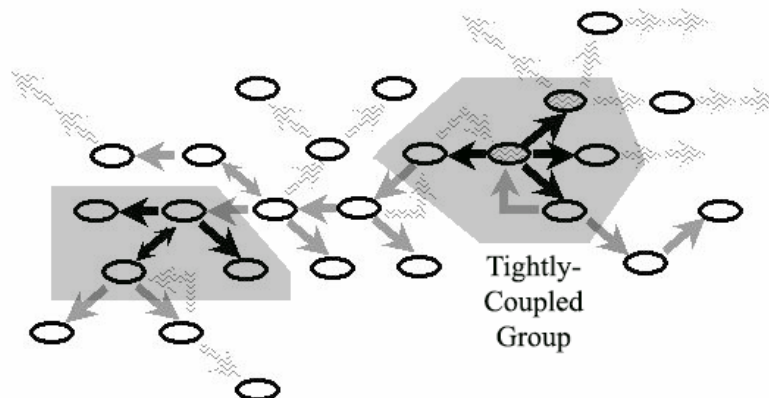


Figure 7. Two tightly coupled groups within a larger organization. (Notes: As Figure 5, shaded areas indicates boundary of tightly-coupled groups—units connected by linkages allowing command or influence at all levels.)

Qaeda. For the example organization, doing so reveals two tightly coupled groups: one, on the right, containing the two most influential opinion leaders within the organization (the two nodes crosshatched with lines) and a separate one on the left influenced by the other through the two nodes connecting them.

Although limiting the scope of what is referred to as Al Qaeda, this approach has its own set of advantages from the perspective of designing efforts to combat the group. Paying closest attention to the most tightly coupled elements focuses on the pieces where penetration of the group is most applicable and valuable⁷⁰—analogous to placing a spy within a foreign government agency or military, intercepting communications between nodes connected by tight command linkages produces valuable and actionable information. However, given the nature of Al Qaeda, such penetration is also the most difficult given the role of cultural, kinship, and other connections frequently providing the foundation for these very control and influence linkages. Because tactical-level authority increases the potential for the sharing of operational and tactical procedures, focusing on tightly linked groups can also help the analyst in anticipating the next moves of those component groups. The strength of coupling among organizational units will affect the convergence or divergence of the tactical and operational approaches of those units. Tight coupling provides the chance for more commonality among units, loose coupling the opportunity for more diversity. Such tightly coupled units are also clearly key sites for direct intervention—and focusing in on them can help design those efforts and more realistically anticipate their potential payoff. A good example is the direct targeting of terrorist leadership. Loss or capture of an individual from within a tightly coupled group will have the greatest effect because there will be a significant disruption to strong linkages. Removing individuals from within loosely coupled structures will have less of an effect. This approach can therefore help identify group leaders that may be most valuable to target; at the same time, focusing on authority linkages can also help to predict how far the effect of removing a particular individual might “travel” throughout the organization overall.

Conclusions

Although focusing on the terms used to label and categorize terrorist organizations may seem a largely academic exercise, the language used to characterize threats in ongoing terrorist conflicts is important. Consistent definitions of the terms used to do so are needed to ensure policies are not mistargeted because the many individuals involved in designing them use the same words, but mean different things. In the specific case of Al Qaeda, there are signs of movement toward more consistent nomenclature and approaches to describe the different potential views on the organization. For example, Burke has introduced the term “jihadi international” for the broadest construction of Al Qaeda.⁷¹ Further efforts in that direction may address the problems created by many different individuals using “Al Qaeda” to refer to many different things.

However, the increasing prominence of terrorist threats growing from and existing within broader movements—complex, interconnected organizations with varying command and influence linkages—suggests that such problems could arise again in relation to other groups, focused on other threats. There is no “correct” or optimal answer for the appropriate boundary to put around all or part of a complex terrorist group. There are real advantages associated with the different options. Whatever choice is made, however, it should be done clearly, thereby making the implications of doing so explicit. This will make it less likely that the potential advantages of defining the problem in a different way

will be given up unknowingly or that separate individuals and actors, having reached different conclusions about the appropriate answer, will sacrifice all of the potential benefits and generate confusion among those attempting to address the problem.

Notes

1. David Ronfeldt, "Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates: A Global Tribe Waging Segmental Warfare?" *First Monday* 10(3) (2005) (<http://firstmonday.org>).

2. Doug Frantz, "Defining Al Qaeda: They're coming after us, but who are they now?" *The New York Times*, 20 October 2002.

3. Bruce Hoffman, "What can we learn from the terrorists?" *Global Agenda* (2004), pp. 32–34; Ronfeldt, "Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates."

4. See, for example, discussions in both the policy and popular literatures in Jason Burke, "Think again: al Qaeda," *Foreign Policy* (May/June 2004), 18–26; Douglas F. Frantz et al., "The new face of al Qaeda," *The Los Angeles Times* (26 September 2004), 1; Rohan Gunaratna, "Al-Qaeda adapts to disruption," *Jane's Intelligence Review* (1 February 2004); Bruce Hoffman, "The changing face of al Qaeda and the global war on terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27 (2004), pp. 549–560; Xavier Raufer, "al Qaeda: A different diagnosis," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003), pp. 391–398.

5. See, for example, Rohan Gunaratna, "The new Al Qaeda: Developments in the post 9-11 evolution of al Qaeda" (paper presented at the International Conference on Post-Modern Terrorism: Trends, Scenarios, and Future Threats, Herzliyya International Policy Institute for Counterterrorism, 7–10 September 2003); Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism"; Ronfeldt, "al Qaeda and Its Affiliates."

6. Brian A. Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 1: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism*, MG-331-NIJ (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005); Brian A. Jackson, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," in *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 2: Case Studies of Learning in Five Terrorist Organizations*, edited by Brian A. Jackson, et al. (Santa Monica, California: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 93–140.

7. Because a central topic of this article is the specific use of language, an introductory point on the use of the word "organization" is merited. In this article, the word organization is used in its most general sense—organizations are systems to structure the activities of their components (which could be individuals or other organizations) in pursuit of specific goals. Because the existence of an organization implies the inclusion of some components and the exclusion of others (members and non-members), organizations also undertake activities to maintain their boundaries. Organizations may be temporary or permanent, but focus on the organization of activity aimed at specific goals. (See, for example, Howard Aldrich, *Organizations Evolving* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1999) for additional discussion of the characteristics of generic organizations.) The term is used generically to encompass all the types of organizations considered—illustrated by the three in the title: groups, networks, and movements.

8. For example, the monograph (John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, MR-1382-OSD [Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001]) and related publications.

9. Use of the term *command and control authority* (or *authority* more generically) should not be interpreted to mean only formal command authority similar to that exerted in a traditional military organization. This article intends for the term to be much broader to capture formal and informal influence mechanisms within these organizations. The authority that allows one part of an organization to coordinate the actions of other parts to help ensure unity of action may come from formal mechanisms (for which the author uses the term *control*), but more frequently comes from mechanisms such as the level of respect he or she maintains from peers, perceived legitimacy within the group, and so on (for which the author uses the term *influence*). The "strength" of authority relationships may differ depending on the source of the authority. Whereas a traditional "commander" might be able to exert direct control and issue enforceable orders, an "opinion

leader” in a group with more consensual decision making might only be able to influence priorities and activities through persuasion, argument, and other non-formal authority mechanisms. Ronfeldt’s description of a tribal chief is a useful illustration: “The title of chief, if there was one, meant little; he was a man of influence, an adviser, a facilitator, a broker—but he could not give orders that had to be obeyed” (Ronfeldt, “Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates”). The source of the authority (e.g., formal vs. informal influence) is not necessarily inherently linked to the strength of that authority. It is, for example, possible for an individual whose authority comes from the respect of group members to exert as strong, or even stronger, influence than one who only derives authority from his or her position. Mechanisms through which such information authority can be built include familial relationships, shared time in prisons, interaction in training activities, or common experiences in previous conflicts, for example, discussion in Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars*, pp. 31–32, 72; Ronfeldt, “Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates”).

10. These two approaches are complementary—addressing different components that determine organizational effectiveness: access to appropriate information, capabilities, and resources and the command, control, and communications capability needed to effectively coordinate and apply those resources to organizational goals. The sources of these components are partially driven by structure (e.g., the structures that connect internal capabilities or link the organization to external capabilities) and partially driven by the functional control and coordination capabilities. See, Jonathan David Farley, “Breaking Al Qaeda cells: A mathematical analysis of counterterrorism operations (A guide for risk assessment and decision making),” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003), pp. 399–411 for an example of an analysis that includes both these structural and control issues in examination of terrorist cells.

11. Modes of exerting strategic control or influence range from direct control relationships to communication of a strategic vision to a group overall through public statements or documents. As suggested in (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars*, pp. 328–333), strategic coherence in certain types of organizations (potentially obviating the need for ongoing strategic control efforts) can be maintained through common and accepted “stories” or “narratives” that knit the members together and shape their actions.

12. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *Staff Statement No. 16: Outline of the 9/11 Plot* (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 2004 [cited 16 March 2005]); available at (http://www.9-11commission.gov/staff_statements/index.htm).

13. Ibid.

14. Previous analyses, such as *Networks and Netwars* which focuses discussion on organizational structures and the information technologies that can connect organizational components, do not address constraints on command and control relationships within organizations—focusing on situations where all three types of control (or, more specifically, a level of group consensus obviating the need for formal control mechanisms) can be achieved: “The capacity of this design for effective performance over time may depend on the existence shared principles, interests, and goals—perhaps an overarching doctrine or ideology—which spans all nodes and to which the members subscribe in a deep way. Such a set of principles, shaped through mutual consultation and consensus-building, can enable members to be “all of one mind” even though they are dispersed and devoted to different tasks. It can provide a central ideational and operational coherence that allows for tactical decentralization” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars*, p. 9.) This discussion is focused on unpacking the consequences for counterterrorism when terrorist groups do not attain such full coherence and/or control at all levels—a situation likely to be relatively common.

15. For example, to exert tactical control over Jemaah Islamiyah activities (pressing the group toward planning attacks in Singapore on American and other targets), members of the Al Qaeda core had to interact face-to-face with members of that group and directly participate in the operation (John C. Baker, “Jemaah Islamiyah,” in *Aptitude for Destruction: Case Studies of Learning in Five Terrorist Organizations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 57–92, 65; Rohan Gunaratna, “Al-Qaeda’s Operational Ties with Allied Groups,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 1 February 2003; David Martin Jones, Michael L. R. Smith, and Mark Weeding, “Looking for

the pattern: Al Qaeda in Southeast Asia—The genealogy of a terror network,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26 (2003), pp. 443–457).

16. For the purposes of this discussion, let it be assumed that the loosening of command and control coupling within organizations occurs sequentially—loss of tactical control or influence, then operational, and finally strategic. Although arguments can be made supporting such sequential loss (e.g., tactical control requires the tightest and most frequent connection and will therefore be lost first, etc.) there may be cases that would evolve differently. Though such differences would complicate the simple classification of groups discussed in the next section, the need to both look for them and systematically address them is discussed later when attention is turned back to the complexities of real-world groups.

17. Brian A. Jackson, “The Provisional Irish Republican Army,” in *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 2: Case Studies of Learning in Five Terrorist Organizations*, edited by Brian A. Jackson et al. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 93–140.

18. Shaul Mishal, “The pragmatic dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A network perspective,” *Armed Forces & Society* 29(4) (2003), pp. 569–589.

19. John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, “The advent of netwar (Revisited),” in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), pp. 1–25, p. 8.

20. Although the part of an organization that can exert this control—for which authors generally use the term “leadership”—is treated as stable for the purposes of this discussion of different organization types, there is no reason it should be assumed—and, in fact, many reasons do not do so—that loci of authority within organizations are either single or will remain stable over time. Consistent with Luther Gerlach’s analysis of social movements, centers of influence within organizations may be multiple and unstable (Luther P. Gerlach, “The structure of social movements: Environmental activism and its opponents,” in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), pp. 289–310). From the perspective of the analytical approach described here, any such shift would be reflected in the directions of the “arrows” of control or influence within the model of the organization or multiple nodes with the ability to exert levels of control or influence over other parts of the organization.

21. Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, p. 8.

22. Russ Marion and Mary Uhl-Bien, “Complexity theory and Al-Qaeda: Examining complex leadership,” *Emergence* 5(1) (2003), pp. 54–76 discusses the nature of coupling in organizations as a critical variable in understanding them in the context of complexity theory—however, the loose coupling discussed here in the context of movements appears to be much weaker than the analogous term used in that article. Karl E. Weick, “Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems,” *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1) (1976), pp. 1–19 discusses strength of coupling in educational organizations and the advantages of loose coupling from an organization’s perspective.

23. Uncoupled Individuals could be viewed as a fourth class—violence perpetrated by fully uncoupled individuals would lack any of the three types of control because they would not meet the requirements to be an “organization.”

24. Marion and Uhl-Bien, “Complexity Theory and Al-Qaeda,” pp. 72–73; Shaul Mishal, “The Pragmatic Dimension of the Palestinian Hamas: A Network Perspective,” *Armed Forces & Society* 29(4) (2003), pp. 569–589 also discuss comparable ideas specifically with respect to Hamas.

25. For example, in reference to criminal networks: “Networks of any substantial size will generally have both a core and a periphery, reflecting asymmetries of power, influence, and status within the network . . . the core members initiate specific criminal activities, arbitrate disputes, and provide direction” (Phil Williams, “Transnational criminal networks,” in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), p. 72). Such authorities roughly correspond to strategic (“provide direction”) and operational (“initiate specific criminal activities”) control.

26. See, for example, discussion in Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 1: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism*; Jackson, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army."

27. It should be noted that levels of operational (and even some tactical) control and coordination may be required for characteristic netwar-type activities such as swarming (John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "What Next for Networks and Netwar?," in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), pp. 311–361, p. 333). Depending on the target of a swarm type attack, unity at different levels is required to make sure the elements of the swarm show up at the appropriate time and act in ways that are at least complementary, if not completely unified.

28. Marion and Uhl-Bien argue that organizations with moderate coupling are the best compromise between the innovation enabled by loose coupling and the coordination/control enabled by tight-coupling (Marion and Uhl-Bien, "Complexity Theory and Al-Qaeda: Examining Complex Leadership."). This is likely the case as long as the path the organization needs to follow to achieve its goals is at least somewhat "fault tolerant"—able to survive failures or mistakes caused by the absence of tight control down to the tactical level. Such faults for the terrorist could include failures in operational security, staging attacks when a larger political strategy "needed" silence, or killing too many or the wrong type of victim. Depending on what the organization is seeking to do, some faults will be survivable, others will not.

29. Jackson, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army."

30. See, for example, Ronfeldt's discussion of tribal organizations in Ronfeldt, "Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates."

31. WordNet 2.0, *Wordnet 2.0— "Social Movement"* (Princeton University Cognitive Science Laboratory, [cited 18 March 2005]); available at (<http://wordnet.princeton.edu/>).

32. Gerlach, "The Structure of Social Movements," p. 295.

33. Ibid.

34. Kevin Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1982), p. 284.

35. Jackson, "The Provisional Irish Republican Army," pp. 134–135; Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA*, pp. 246–247.

36. Kelley, *The Longest War: Northern Ireland and the IRA*, pp. 138–139.

37. The word *control* is intentionally omitted due to the lack of direct connections among units in such organizations.

38. See discussion in Horacio R. Trujillo, "The Radical Environmentalist Movement," in *Aptitude for Destruction, Volume 2: Case Studies of Learning in Five Terrorist Organizations*, edited by Brian A. Jackson et al. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), pp. 93–140.

39. Arquilla and Ronfeldt, "The Advent of Netwar (Revisited)," p. 8.

40. The availability of communications technologies can make almost any organization an all-channel network in some respects with mechanisms for some individual components to communicate with the organization as a whole. Even corporations or government agency (frequently cited as examples of the prototype hierarchical organizations with strong and unidirectional authority relationships), leadership will have some all-channel communications modes with all members. Whether through blast e-mails from the CEO or public speeches by the President, certain types of (usually strategic) control and influence can be exercised directly from the highest to the lowest levels of a hierarchy.

41. Lawrence Wright, "The terror web," *The New Yorker*, 2 August 2004.

42. For example, Hoffman's assessment of Al Qaeda activities in Iraq: "The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) may be right that hundreds, perhaps even a few thousand, of foreign fighters have converged on Iraq. But few who have been captured have any demonstrable direct ties to Al Qaeda. Nor is there evidence of any direct command-and-control relationship between the Al Qaeda central leadership and the insurgents." (Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," p. 555).

43. Ibid, pp. 551–552.

44. Like PIRA, Al Qaeda has paid a price for lack of coordination. The clearest example of the downsides to the group itself of this strategy resulted from its operations in Saudi Arabia claimed by “Al Qaeda Organization of the Arabian Peninsula” (Anthony H. Cordesman and Nawaf Obaid, “Working Draft: Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia” (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2005)). “Some operations, such as the 2003 attack on Western compounds in Riyadh, which killed mainly Muslims, were such fiascos that it appeared Al Qaeda was no longer able to exercise control” (Wright, “The terror web.”). Just as the PIRA Army Council was forced to do, Al Qaeda leadership was forced to address the outcomes of these operations (Middle East Media Research Institute, *Al-Qa’ida Magazine Debates Attacks in Saudi Arabia—Proposes More Attacks in the U.S. Will Boost Support* (Middle East Media Research Institute, Special Dispatch Series—No. 632, 23 December 2003 [cited 15 March 2005 2005]); available at (<http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP63203>), even though the core of the organization did not have control over the actions themselves.

45. Brynjar Lia and Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi Strategic Studies: The Alleged Al Qaida Policy Study Preceding the Madrid Bombings,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27 (2004): 355-75.

46. Hoffman, “The changing face of Al Qaeda and the global war on terrorism,” p. 553.

47. Gunaratna, “Al-Qaeda’s operational ties with allied groups.”

48. Gohel, quoted in Raufer, “Al Qaeda: A different diagnosis.”

49. Gunaratna, “Al-Qaeda’s operational ties with allied groups.”

50. Hoffman, “What can we learn from the terrorists?”

51. Marion and Uhl-Bien, “Complexity theory and Al-Qaeda: Examining complex leadership,” p. 66; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *Staff Statement No. 16: Outline of the 9/11 Plot*.

52. Rohan Gunaratna, “The post-madrid face of Al Qaeda,” *Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), pp. 91–100, p. 93.

53. Hoffman, “The changing face of Al Qaeda and the global war on terrorism,” p. 551.

54. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, *Staff Statement No. 16: Outline of the 9/11 Plot*.

55. There was direct Al Qaeda participation in planning of the (later foiled) attacks on U.S. and Western targets in Singapore in late 2001 (Baker, “Jemaah Islamiyah,” pp. 65–66, 69–70).

56. Ibid.

57. Frantz, “Defining Al Qaeda.”

58. Reported in a story about his subsequent capture in March 2003. Maria Ressa et al., *Top Al Qaeda Operative Caught in Pakistan* (CNN.com, 2003 [cited 19 March 2005]); available at (<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/south/03/01/pakistan.arrests>.)

59. A diagram of Al Qaeda’s “management tree”—a structure very similar to those constructed for more formally hierarchical groups like PIRA—is included in Cordesman and Obaid, “Working draft: Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia.”

60. Such an approach is consistent with Hoffman’s point that fully understanding the threat of jihadist terrorism requires accepting bin Laden/Al Qaeda involvement in all these types of influence and control modes (Hoffman, “What Can We Learn from the Terrorists?”; Ronfeldt, “Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates”).

61. Frantz, “Defining Al Qaeda.”

62. The author would like to acknowledge Dennis Pluchinsky for this specific observation.

63. See, for example, Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence & Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al Qaeda*, MR-1619-DARPA (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002); Williams, “Transnational Criminal Networks,” p. 94.

64. Tiffany Danitz and Warren P. Strobel, “Networking Dissent: Cyber Activists Use the Internet to Promote Democracy in Burma,” in *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime and Militancy*, edited by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001), pp. 1–25, p. 132.

65. Ibid., pp. 129–169.

66. Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, OP-127-IPC/CMEPP (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, 2004).

67. Hoffman, "The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism," p. 551.

68. Due to problems with unity of action, even PIRA had to find ways of bringing uncoordinated activity more under control before the group could navigate the sensitive and fragile paths of entering various types of negotiations—so the leadership could ensure that violence was quiet "when quiet was needed" (J. Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army: The IRA*, Revised 3rd ed. (Dublin, Ireland: Poolbeg, 1998), pp. 468–469.). Similar suggestions have been made by some about Al Qaeda, which may eventually reach a point where bin Laden's ability to move toward his goals, "to manipulate the political future," will "depend, in part, on convincing the West that Al Qaeda and bin Laden *remain in control* of the worldwide Islamic jihad" (Wright, "The terror web," emphasis added).

69. Paul R. Pillar, "Counterterrorism after Al Qaeda," *The Washington Quarterly* (Summer 2004), pp. 101–113.

70. *Ibid.*

71. Burke, "Think Again: Al Qaeda."