

CS 5450

Content Distribution Networks

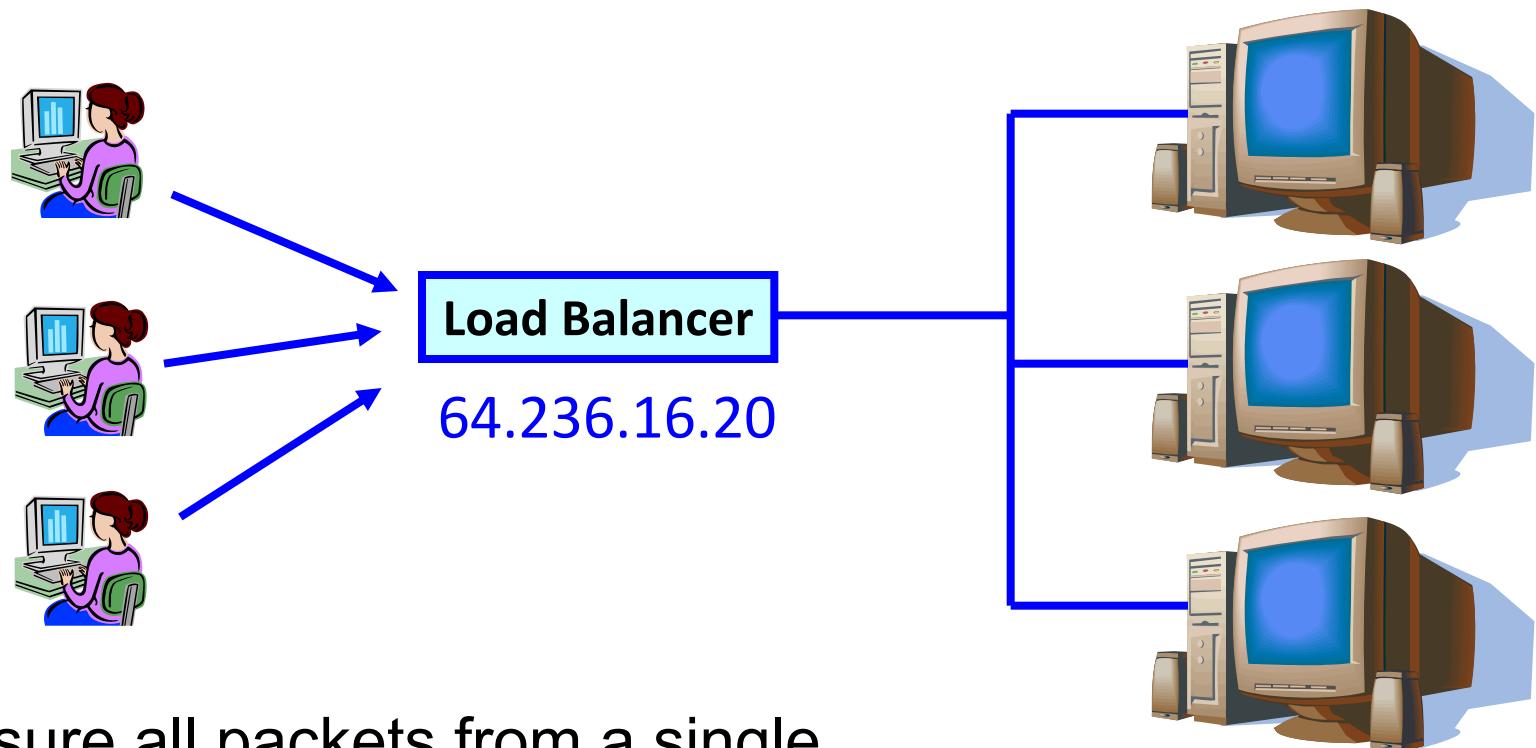
Vitaly Shmatikov

Problem: Overloaded Website

- ◆ Solution: replicate site across multiple machines
- ◆ Need to direct client to a particular replica
 - Goal: balance load across server replicas
- ◆ Solution #1: manual selection by client
 - Each replica has its own site name
 - Some webpage lists replicas (by name or location), asks clients to click link to pick

Load-Balancer Approach

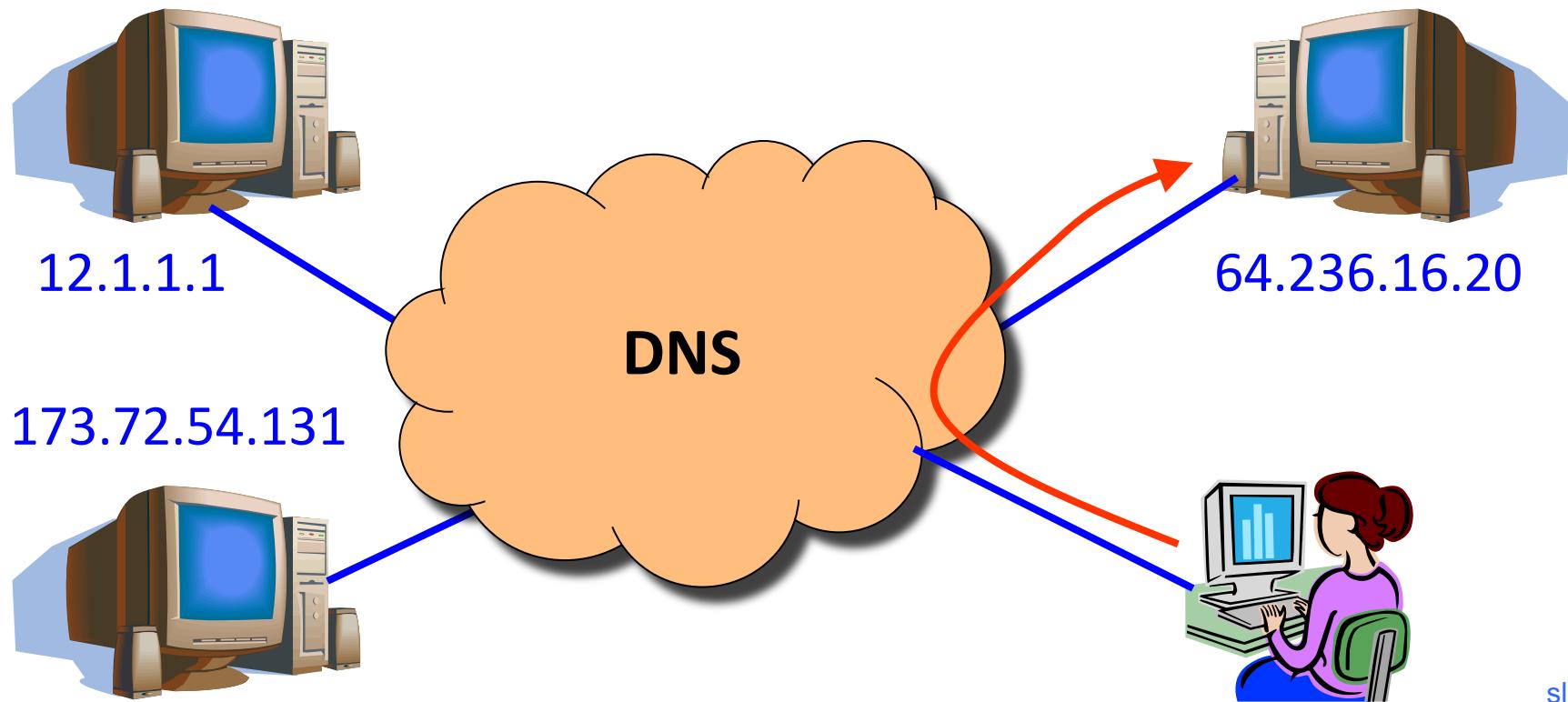
- ◆ Solution #2: single IP address, multiple machines



Ensure all packets from a single
TCP connection go to the same replica

DNS Redirection Approach

- ◆ Solution #3: multiple IP addrs, multiple machines
 - Same DNS name, different IP for each replica
 - DNS server returns IP addresses “round robin”



Distributing Client Requests

◆ Load-balancer approach

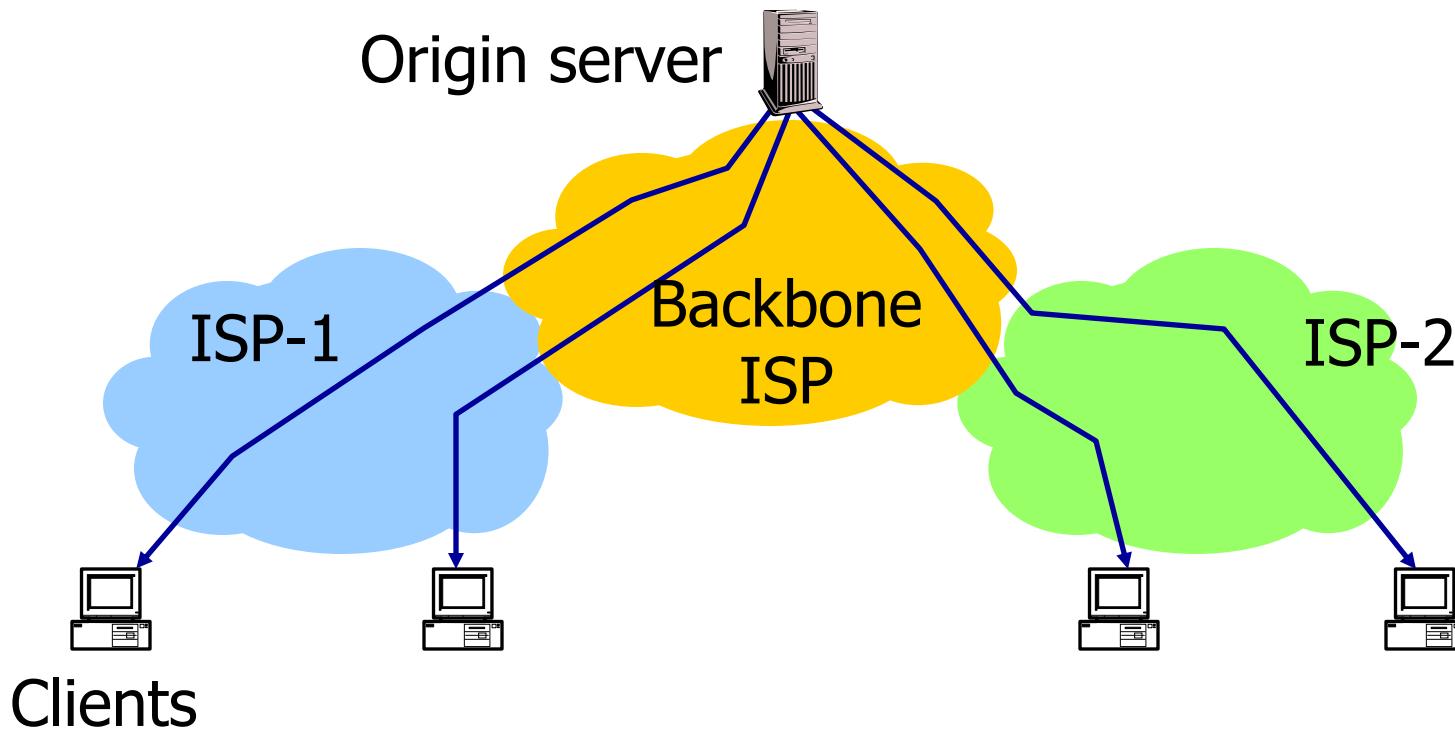
- No geographical diversity ✗
- TCP connection issue ✗
- Does not reduce network traffic ✗

◆ DNS redirection approach

- No TCP connection issues ✓
- Simple round-robin server selection
 - May be less responsive ✗
- Does not reduce network traffic ✗

Motivation for Web Caching

- ◆ Many clients request the same information
 - Generates redundant server and network load
 - Clients may experience high latency



Web Caching

◆ Why place content closer to client

- User gets better response time
- Content providers get happier users
- Network gets reduced load

◆ Why does caching work?

- Exploits locality of reference

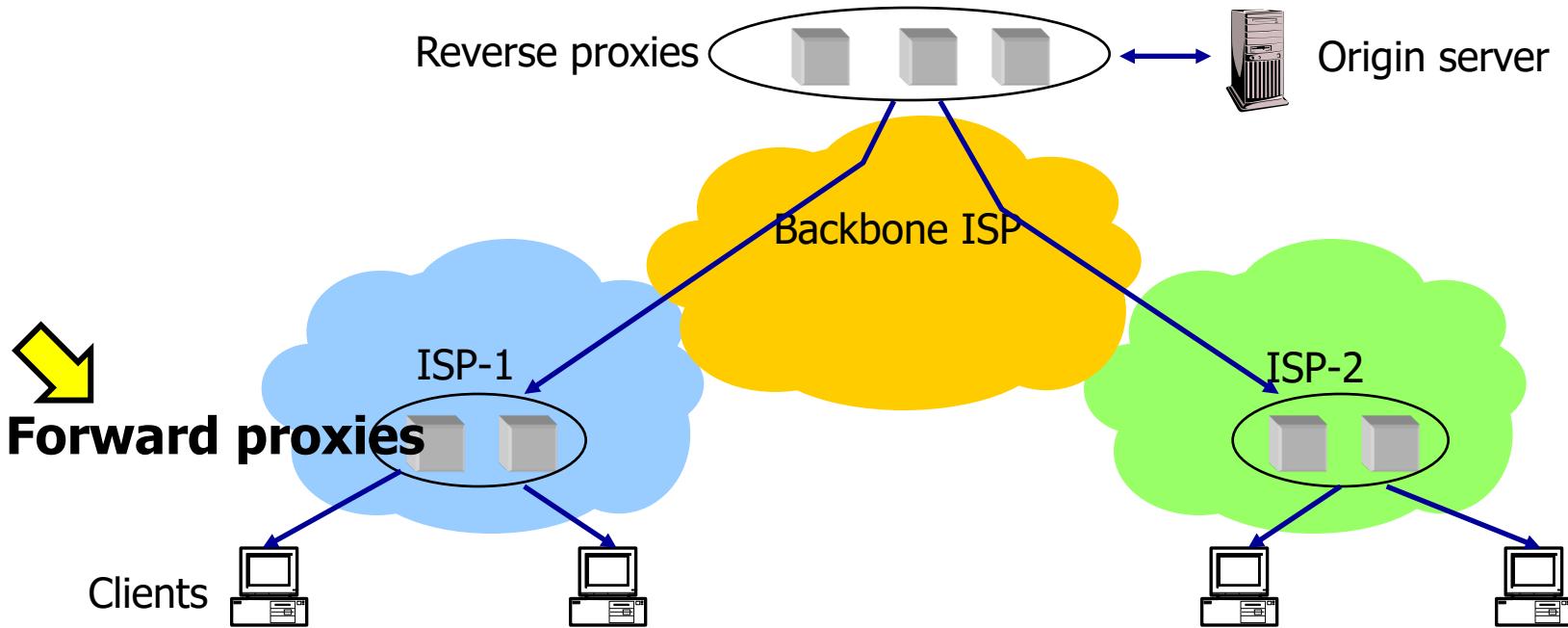
◆ How well does caching work?

- Very well, up to a limit
- Large overlap in content, but many unique requests

Caching with Forward Proxies

- ◆ Cache close to clients → less network traffic, less latency
 - Typically done by ISPs or corporate LANs
 - Client configured to send HTTP requests to forward proxy
- ◆ Reduces traffic on client ISP's access link, origin server, and backbone ISP

Proxies



Challenges

◆ Problem ca. 2002: How to reliably deliver large amounts of content to users worldwide?

- Popular event: “flash crowds” overwhelm (replicated) web server, access link, or back-end database infrastructure
- More rich content: audio, video, photos

Typical Webpage Workload

- ◆ Multiple (typically small) objects per page
- ◆ File sizes are heavy-tailed
- ◆ Embedded references
- ◆ This plays havoc with performance. Why?

- Lots of small objects & TCP
- 3-way handshake
- Lots of slow starts
- Extra connection state

Content Distribution Network

◆ Proactive content replication

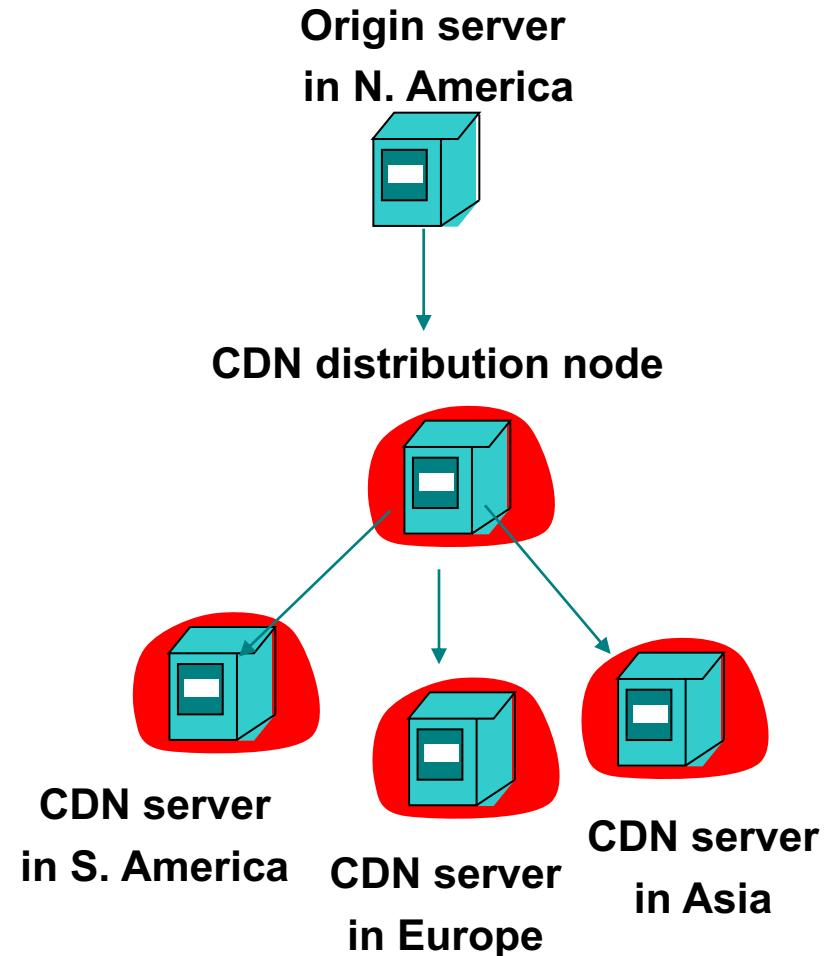
- Content provider (e.g. CNN) pushes content out from its own origin server

◆ CDN replicates the content

- On many servers spread throughout the Internet

◆ Updating the replicas

- Updates pushed to replicas when the content changes



CDN Challenges

- ◆ How to replicate content
- ◆ Where to replicate content
- ◆ How to find replicated content
- ◆ How to choose among known replicas
- ◆ How to direct clients towards replica

Replica Selection

Requires continuous monitoring of liveness, load, and performance

◆ Which server?

- Lowest load → to balance load on servers
- Best performance → to improve client performance
 - Based on geography? RTT? Throughput? Load?
- Any alive node → to provide fault tolerance

◆ How to direct clients to the chosen server?

- As part of routing → anycast, cluster load balancing
- As part of application → HTTP redirect
- As part of naming → DNS

Application-Based Selection

- ◆ HTTP supports a simple way to indicate that Web page has moved
 - 30X responses
- ◆ Server receives GET request from client, decides which server is best suited for particular client and object, returns HTTP redirect to that server
- ◆ Additional overhead
 - Multiple connection setup, name lookups, etc.
- ◆ HTTP redirect has some design flaws – especially with current browsers

Naming-Based Selection

- ◆ Client does name lookup for service
- ◆ Name server chooses appropriate server address
 - “A” record returned is the “best” one for the client
- ◆ How does the name server choose?
 - Server load and location (info must be collected!)
 - Information in the name lookup request
 - ... typically from the local name server for client

How Akamai Works

- ◆ Akamai creates new domain names for each customer
 - ◆ Ex: a73.g.akamaitech.net
 - ◆ Akamai's DNS servers are authoritative for these names
 - ◆ Clients fetch HTML document from origin server
 - ◆ URLs for replicated content are replaced in HTML
 - Ex: becomes
- ... or domain names are aliased to Akamai names
- ◆ Client's browser issues GET to Akamai caches instead of origin server

Content Replication in Akamai

- ◆ Akamai only replicates static content
 - Akamai also lets sites write code that can run on Akamai's server, but that's different
- ◆ Modified name contains original file name
- ◆ Akamai server is asked for content
 - First checks local cache
 - If not in cache, requests file from primary server and caches file

DNS-Based Redirection

Two levels of DNS indirection

- ◆ Akamai top-level name servers (TLNSs)

- 4 in the U.S., 4 in Europe, 1 in Asia
- TLNSs return eight LLNSs in three different regions
 - Chosen to be close to the requesting client
 - Handles complete failure of any two regions

- ◆ Akamai low-level name servers (LLNSs)

- Point to Akamai edge servers, which serve content
- Do most of the load-balancing

Using DNS in Akamai

- ◆ Root server gives NS record for akamai.net
- ◆ akamai.net name server returns NS record for g.akamaitech.net
 - Name server chosen in the region of client's name server
 - TTL is large
- ◆ g.akamaitech.net name server chooses cache (edge server) in the client's region
 - Should try to choose server that has file in cache (how?)
 - Uses aXYZ name and hash
 - TTL is small (why?)

How Akamai Uses DNS

cnn.com (content provider)



TLD server



GET
index.
html
1
HTTP
2

cache.cnn.com/foo.jpg



End user

Akamai global
name server



Akamai
cluster



Akamai regional
name server



Nearby
Akamai
cluster

How Akamai Uses DNS

cnn.com (content provider)



TLD server



DNS lookup
cache.cnn.com

1

2

3

4 ALIAS:
g.akamai.net
NS: Akamai
global name
server



End user

Akamai global
name server



Akamai
cluster



Akamai regional
name server



How Akamai Uses DNS

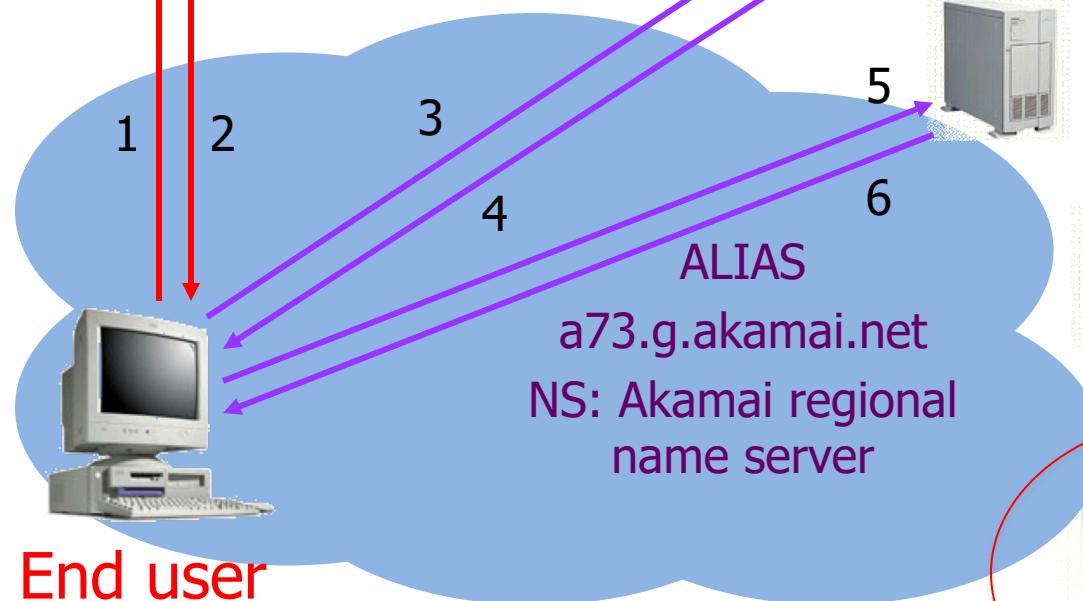
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TLD server

DNS lookup
g.akamai.net

Akamai global
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Akamai
cluster



End user



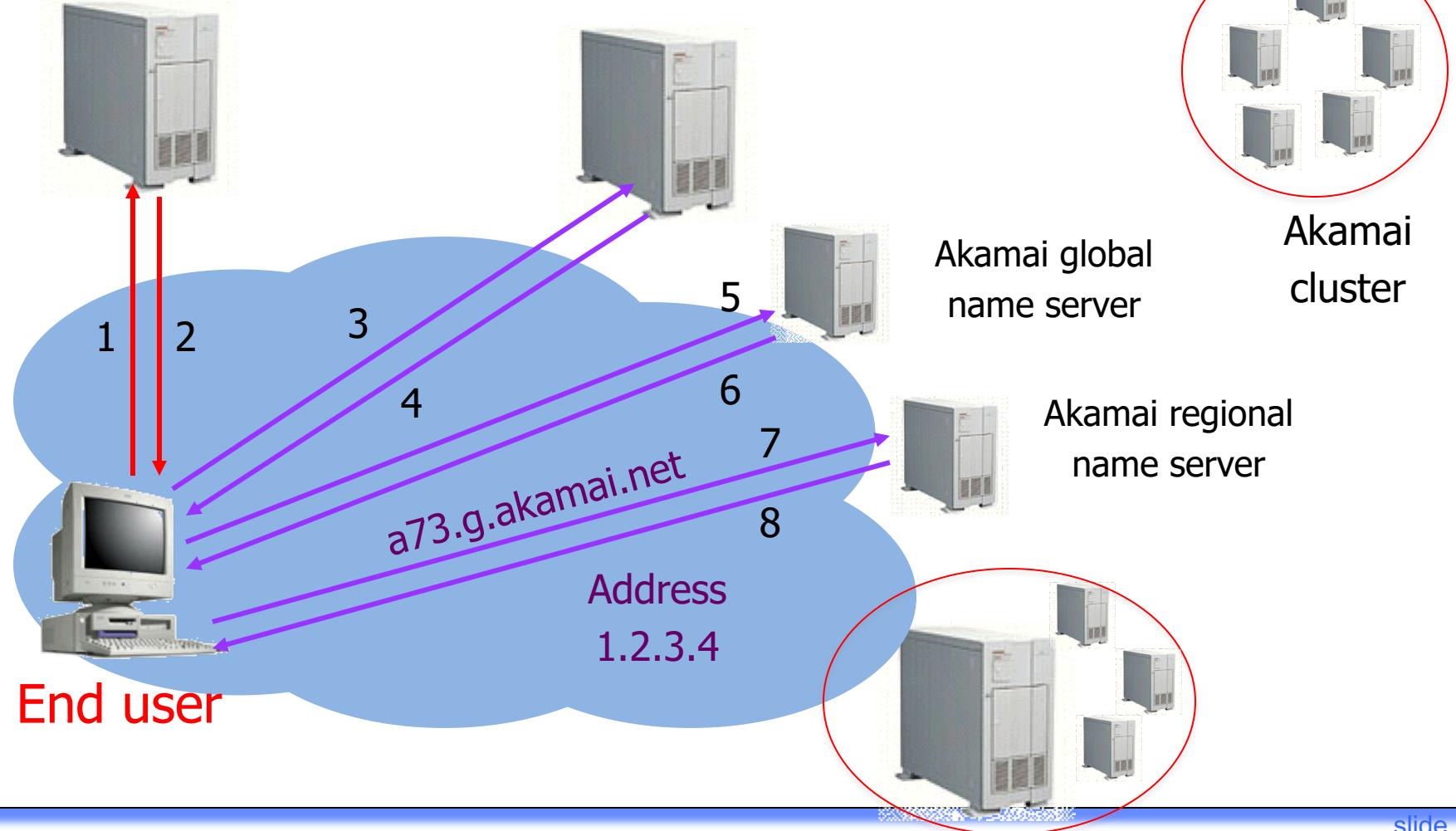
Akamai regional
name server



How Akamai Uses DNS

cnn.com (content provider)

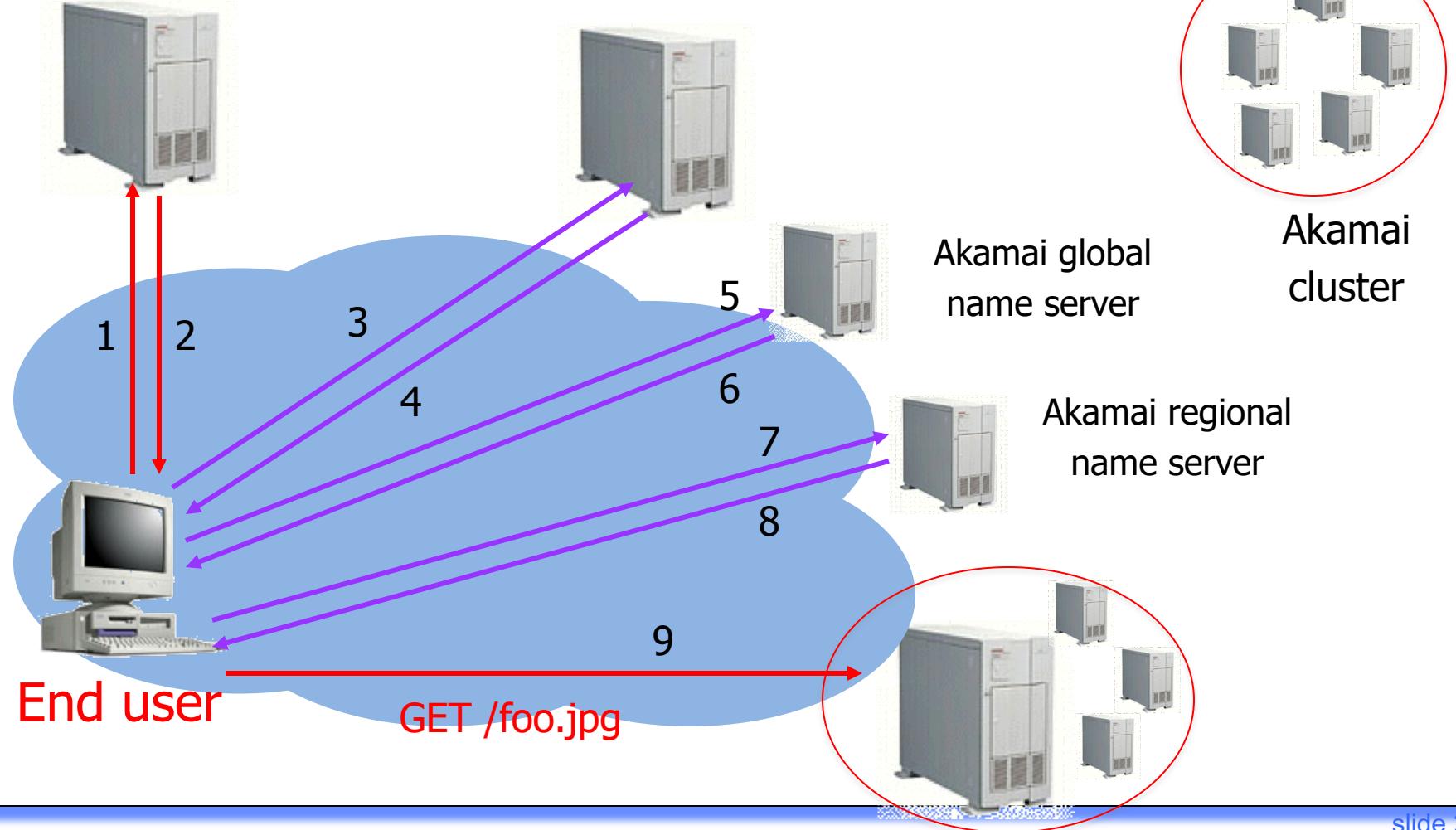
TLD server



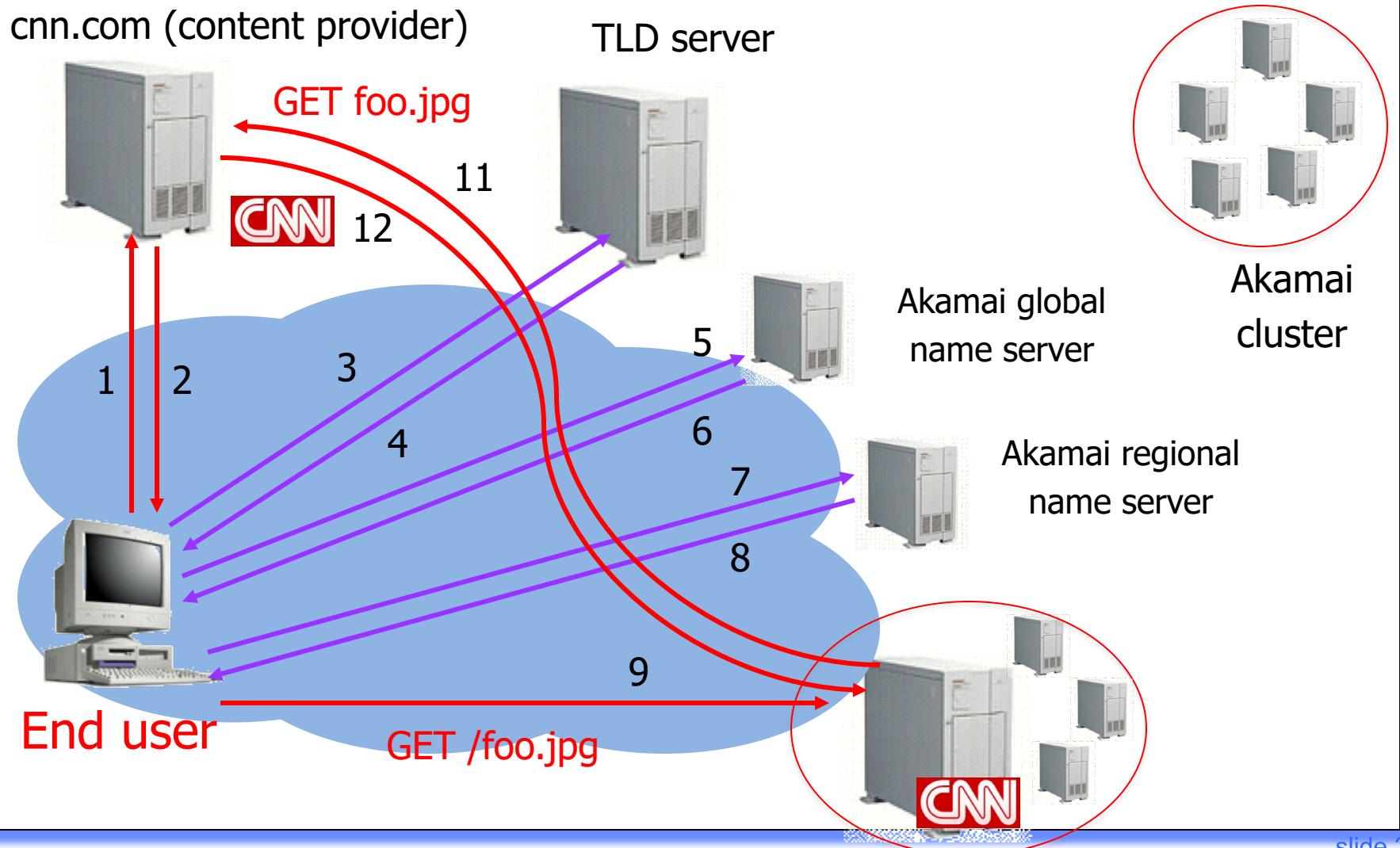
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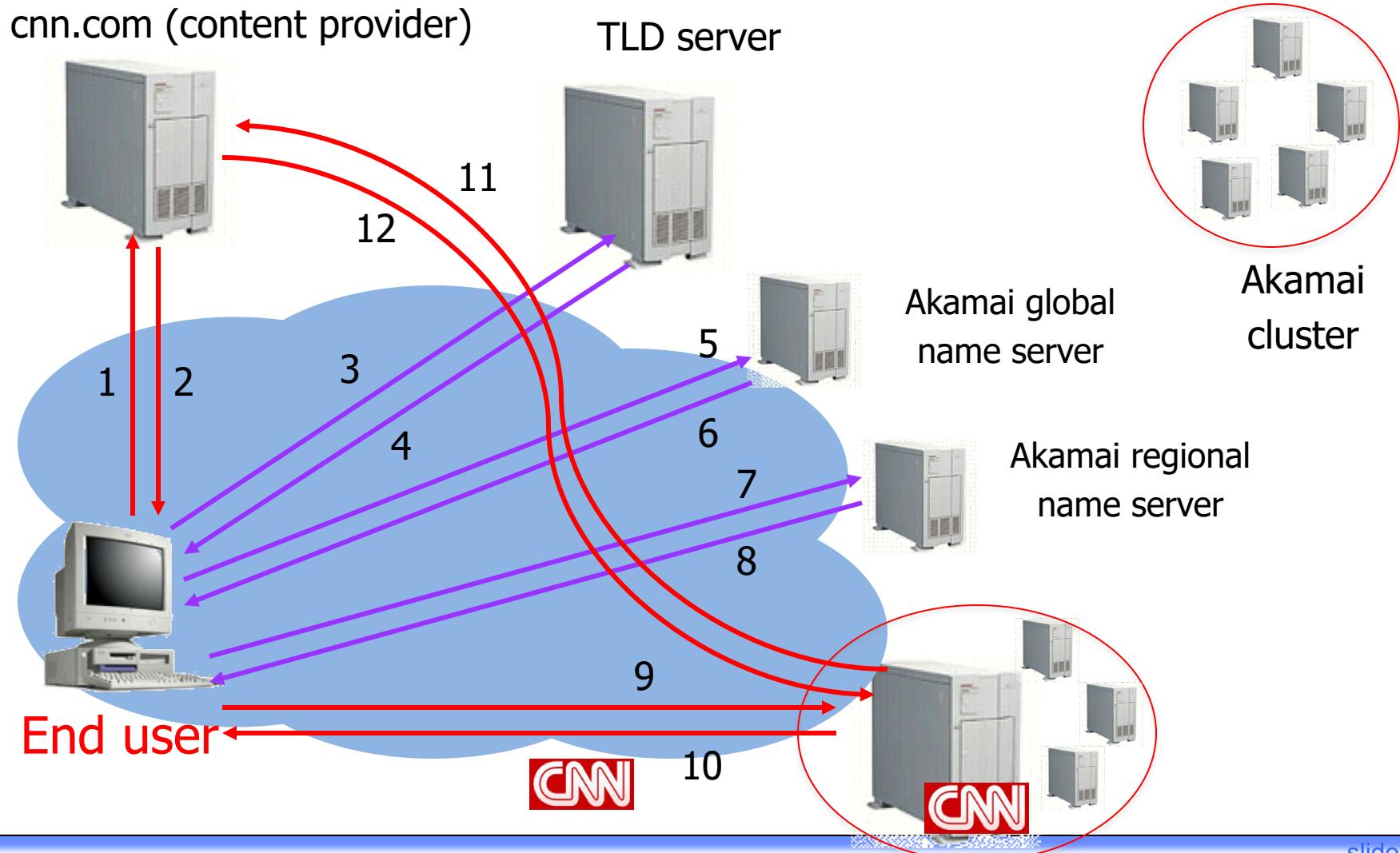
TLD server



How Akamai Uses DNS



How Akamai Uses DNS



How Akamai Uses DNS

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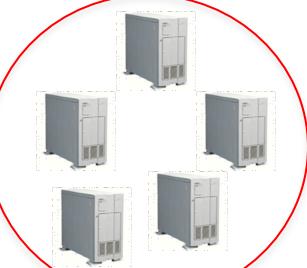
TLD server



Akamai global
name server



Akamai
cluster



Akamai regional
name server



End user

1

2

3

4

5

6



Akamai Statistics (Old)

◆ Distributed servers

- Servers: ~100,000
- Networks: ~1,000
- Countries: ~70

◆ Customers

- Apple, BBC, FOX, GM IBM, MTV, NASA, NBC, NFL, NPR, Puma, Red Bull, Rutgers, SAP, ...

◆ Client requests

- 20+M per second
- Half in the top 45 networks
- 20% of all Web traffic worldwide

Mapping System

- ◆ Equivalence classes of IP addresses
 - IP addresses experiencing similar performance
 - Quantify how well they connect to each other
- ◆ Collect and combine measurements
 - Ping, traceroute, BGP routes, server logs
 - Over 100 TB of logs per days
 - Network latency, loss, throughput, and connectivity

Routing Client Requests

◆ Create map of the Internet

- BGP peering sessions with ISPs' border routers → coarse-grained AS map of the Internet
 - + live traceroute, loss and latency measurements
 - Over 100 TB of logs per day

◆ Map each IP class to a preferred server cluster

- Based on performance, cluster health, network status
- Updated roughly every minute
 - Short, 60-sec DNS TTLs in Akamai regional DNS accomplish this

◆ Map client request to a specific server in cluster

- Load balancer selects (eg, to maximize cache hit rate)

Adapting to Failures

- ◆ Failing hard drive on a server
 - Suspends after finishing “in progress” requests
- ◆ Failed server
 - Another server takes over for the IP address
 - Low-level map updated quickly (load balancer)
- ◆ Failed cluster, or network path
 - High-level map updated quickly (ping/traceroute)

Take-Away Points on CDN

- ◆ Content distribution is hard
 - Many diverse, changing objects
 - Clients distributed all over the world
- ◆ Moving content to the client is key
 - Reduces latency, improves throughput, reliability
- ◆ Content distribution solutions evolved from load balancing and reactive caching to proactive content distribution networks