Targets and Tactics: Testing for a Duality Within Al Qaeda's Network*

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and

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Abstract

One prevailing view treats Al Qaeda as a monolithic entity with a global network of affiliates. Yet, certain affiliates appear more committed to local political and territorial goals – *parochial*, not global, terrorists. We construct a classification scheme to differentiate affiliates conceptually and empirically, and then track their types over time. We sort Al Qaeda's network of affiliates using a principal components analysis of terrorist attacks from 1988 to 2012. We show that this aids in identifying latent affiliate types, and interpreting shifts in behavior. We find that despite Al Qaeda's anti-western rhetoric, there exists a global-parochial divide in which most affiliates are parochial – with anti-Western groups pursuing local political goals even when Western targets remain. By providing an empirical strategy to identify which affiliates are more or less aligned with global terrorism, this research holds implications for the literatures on terrorism and civil war, terrorism and democracy, and the effects of counterterrorism.

Since September 11th, 2001, over two dozen groups have joined Al Qaeda, professing allegiance to its global anti-Western agenda. Yet, certain affiliates appear committed to local political and territorial goals – *parochial*, not global, terrorists (Byman 2014; Findley and Young 2012; Piazza 2008, 2009; Riedel 2010; Sánchez-Cuenca and De la Calle 2009). Groups such as Al Shabaab and Boko Haram prey on domestic civilians in campaigns against the Somali and Nigerian governments.[2] In contrast, Jemaah Islamiyaah targets Western tourists and businesspersons.[3] These differences fuel debates over whether Al Qaeda ought to be defined by only its senior leadership, or a combination of formal and informal affiliates, and lead to vague characterizations of Al Qaeda as nebulous and monolithic (Gunaratna 2002; Hoffman 2004; Mendelsohn 2016; Riedel 2010). Further, these differences feed into questions about the relationship between global terrorism and civil war (Findley and Young 2012; Kydd and Walter 2006; Sambanis 2004, 2008; Tilly 2004; Young and Findley 2011), terrorism and democracy (Chenoweth 2010, 2013; Merolla and Zechmeister 2009; Piazza 2007; Savun and Phillips 2009), and the effectiveness of counterterrorism (Cronin 2006; Price 2012; Walsh and Piazza 2010; Wilkinson 2011).

Is there a divide within Al Qaeda, and can it be systematically identified?

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[2]Al Shabaab, a Somali militant group affiliated with Al Qaeda, executed more than 150 civilians after holding them hostage at a Kenyan university in 2014. Although Al Shabaab is subject to internal divisions, most of its fighters are predominantly interested in the nationalistic battle, and do not support a global jihad. Boko Haram – a group that for years claimed to be an Al Qaeda affiliate, but was not formally acknowledged by Al Qaeda, and more recently allied with ISIS – has targeted civilians in an insurgency in Nigeria since 2009 with the goal of creating an Islamic state.

[3]In 2002, Jemaah Islamiyaah ordered a strategy of hitting soft targets like Bali nightclubs and bars, due to the belief these were visited by Americans (Byman 2015).

Answering this question raises significant challenges, since an affiliate's true motivations are unknown and may change over time. To examine whether there is a systematic divide, we construct a basic classification scheme that links observable targets and tactics to latent affiliate types. We then sort the network of Al Qaeda affiliates using a principal components analysis (PCA) of annual terrorist attack data from Al Qaeda's inception in 1988 to 2012.

Our results show that observable targets and tactics can aid in identifying an affiliate's type and interpreting their behavior over time. We find evidence of a global-parochial divide within Al Qaeda; and that despite Al Qaeda's anti-western rhetoric, many if not *most* of its affiliates are focused on parochial goals. We show that the results hold validity in view of expert analyses, which suggests that affiliate types can be identified without a priori knowledge of their goals. We discuss the implications for specific affiliates and in relation to Al Qaeda as a whole. This research is the first to quantitatively and systematically examine whether there exists a duality within Al Qaeda.

By leveraging observable attacks to identify an affiliate's type, our classification holds implications for four literatures. First, for research on terrorism and civil war, this identification strategy provides a first step in answering questions about the causes and consequences of affiliation (Choi and Piazza 2016; Fearon, Kasara, and Laitin 2007; Fearon and Laitin 2011). Why do some groups affiliate, while others do not? Does affiliation make a group more lethal, or more resistant to counterterrorism? Could improved classification help clarify the relationships between terrorism and ethnic conflict, migration, political exclusion, or state capacity?

Second, since we find that affiliates shift their targets and tactics in response to counterterrorism, future work can better examine the effects of specific strategies – such as leadership decapitation, indiscriminate and discriminate counterterrorism – on parochial terrorists at home, global terrorists abroad, and changes in the larger network (Buesa and Baumert 2016; Gill, Piazza, and Horgan 2016). What

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forms of counterterrorism work best against global or parochial terrorists?

Third, our classification speaks to the debate over whether democracy reduces or promotes terrorism (Dalacoura 2012; Li 2005; Piazza 2008; Wade and Reiter 2007). One possibility is that this debate fails to account for disaggregated types of violence. It is sensible that democracy might reduce parochial terrorism by granting dissenting groups access to the political process, while enabling global terrorism through the freedoms of organization, movement, and expression. Our research enables a future test of this plausible hypothesis.

Finally, this research contributes to the burgeoning literature on disaggregated violence by leveraging affiliated commitments to a single umbrella organization to identify subtle differences in underlying motivations (Bueno de Mesquita, Fair, Jordan, Rais, and Shapiro 2015; Cederman and Gleditsch 2009; Gill, Piazza, and Horgan 2016). Our research builds most directly on recent studies that disaggregate terrorists by their individual profiles within an Islamic organization (Perliger, Koehler-Derrick, and Pedahzur 2016), by their use of suicide bombing in Iraq (Seifert and McCauley 2014), and by their safe havens (Arsenault and Bacon 2015) to improve understanding of terrorists.

Al Qaeda's Duality

Scholars consistently find that Al Qaeda's agenda is anti-Western with a campaign that focuses on attacking Americans, Israelis, and their allies (Abrahms 2006; Byman 2003; Gerges 2009; Moghadam 2008; Stern 2003a). Even Al Qaeda's definition of a Muslim traitor or apostate regime defines treachery by an alignment with the West. Despite this consistency, Al Qaeda's affiliates show significant variation in their commitment to and even knowledge of Al Qaeda's agenda. 'Al-Qaida foot soldiers and their leaders are often ignorant about the basic tenets of Islam, if not bin Laden's political vision' (Abrahms 2008:99). Adding to this complexity, sometimes a terrorist group professes allegiance to Al Qaeda, but

Al Qaeda rejects it: Al Qaeda rejected The Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat's (GSPC) oath of allegiance in 2003 due to concerns about its commitment to Al Qaeda's agenda, but then accepted this same affiliation a few years later (Gray and Stockham 2008). Al Qaeda has even professed allegiance to a group, years after that same group had already professed its own allegiance to Al Qaeda: Al Qaeda made overtures to assure the Taliban of the importance Al Qaeda placed on the struggle in Afghanistan from 2005 to 2006, even though the Taliban had long before swore allegiance to bin Laden (Moghadam 2008:157). All of this raises questions about how best to understand Al Qaeda and its relationship to global terrorism and civil conflict, more broadly.

How can we better understand the relationships between affiliates and global terrorism? Research suggests that certain affiliates who are aligned with Al Qaeda's anti-western agenda, *global* affiliates, might form these alliances primarily to add legitimacy to their own anti-Western jihadi cause. For these affiliates, Al Qaeda emerged as the vanguard of a defensive jihad against the Western aggressors during the late 1990s (Brown 2010). The act of joining Al Qaeda would help to support a larger historical struggle that began against the Soviets in Afghanistan, and continued in places like Bosnia, Spain, and the US (Stern 2003a). At the same time, equally ample research shows that terrorist groups ally to increase their capacity for deadly attacks (Horowitz and Potter 2014). This suggests that other, *parochial*, affiliates might ally primarily to improve their wars against a home state. Al Qaeda is known for furnishing terrorists with numerous strategic advantages, including intelligence, training, technical expertise, advanced weaponry, financing, and logistical support (Byman and Kreps 2010; Siqueira and Sandler 2010). Beyond suggesting that a duality might exist, these findings also suggest a key difference: while global affiliates ally to add legitimacy to their anti-Western jihadi cause, parochial affiliates ally to boost their local political and territorial campaigns.

To the extent that this difference exists systematically, then relative to each

other, global affiliates might target the West more consistently than parochial affiliates, and parochial affiliates might target their state governments and security apparatuses more consistently. This tendency to target one's primary target is likely for three reasons. First, affiliates face resource constraints that encourage them to devote resources toward their own agendas. Second, research on outbidding suggests that parochial affiliates are likely to compete for ownership over local issues, which means that they face audience pressures to target the state (Bloom 2004; Kydd and Walter 2006). Third, case studies from within Al Qaeda show that when groups diverge from their stated anti-Western goals, disillusioned members have incentive to defect (Stern 2003b:214-216). Targeting tendencies should be useful to differentiate affiliates.

Certain tactics might also be useful for differentiation. Suicide attacks are deadly, large-scale, costly signals known for being unmatched in efficiency: these inexpensive attacks feature prominently in the media allowing global affiliates to reach international audiences more easily (Bloom 2005; Horowitz 2010; Moghadam 2006; Pape 2003; Pedahzur 2006). However, suicide attacks are also heavy-casualty with low precision, which can raise risks that include potentially alienating the domestic population, reducing a group's ability to credibly bid for government, increasing support for counterterrorism, and reducing government incentives to negotiate (Jacobson and Kaplan 2007; Stanton 2013). Further, since the perpetrator dies, the terrorist cannot renounce the act: the permanence of this signal may make it difficult for terrorists to regain local support, or deescalate. This suggests a trade-off that may make suicide attacks risky for parochial affiliates, especially for those concerned with local political campaigns, but beneficial to global affiliates who can use suicide attacks as propaganda of the deed. Thus, one possibility is that global affiliates use suicide attacks more often than parochial affiliates. However, there might also be a difference within parochial affiliates: affiliates that are less concerned with local populations ought to be more likely to use suicide attacks, than those seeking to either maintain local support, negotiate

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with the government, or bid for government.

In addition, what terrorists do to their kidnapped hostages might be useful for differentiation, because hostages serve two purposes – propaganda or financial compensation – each of which is likely to be useful to either a global or parochial affiliate. Terrorists use the kidnapping and *executions* of hostages as a tool for global propaganda: for example, in the 1972 Munich Olympics, surviving gunman Abu Daoud stated, the 'murder of eleven Israeli athletes before the horrified eyes of millions of viewers force[d] our case into the homes of 500 million people' (Cronin 2009:4). At the same time, terrorists use kidnapping and *releasing* hostages as a means to finance terror: Al Qaeda's 2014 'Guide to Kidnapping' asserts that one of the five reasons to kidnap is "to obtain ransom money 'like what our brothers did in Philippines, Chechnya, and Algeria'."[4] This suggests that, like suicide attacks, the observable outcomes of kidnappings – which we define as any seizure of persons, including kidnapping individuals, hijackings, skyjackings, and barricade incidents – can be used to differentiate affiliates: while global affiliates are likely to *execute* their hostages, parochial affiliates are likely to *release* their hostages for a monetary payout.

It is important to note that not all tactics are as useful for differentiation. We find little theoretical reason to believe that a global or parochial affiliate would be more likely to commit assault, to assassinate, to use bombs or explosive devices, or to attack infrastructure.[5] Attacks that qualify as 'assaults' are likely to be as useful against the West, as the 2017 London vehicle and stabbing attacks show, as against a home state government. Assassinations and infrastructure attacks are

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[4]Al Qaeda lists five reasons to kidnap: to coerce concessions; to shame a government that cannot protect its citizens; to gain valuable information; as propaganda for a specific cause; and to obtain ransom money 'like what our brothers did in Philippines, Chechnya, and Algeria.' Abdelaziz al-Muqrin, 'Al Qaeda Guide to Kidnapping,' *New York Times,* July 29, 2014.

[5]We include analyses using all tactics in the Appendix.

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likely to be useful to both global and parochial goals. The prevalence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan indicate that bombs and explosives can be used just as easily by both global and parochial affiliates. Further, the anonymity and affordability of an IED attack makes it difficult to attribute an explosion to any specific group, let alone any specific goal.

Thus, given our expectations that observable differences in targets, and in suicide and kidnapping tactics may aid in identifying an affiliate's type, we next describe our data and methodology. While there are other tactics – such as bombs, explosives, assassinations, and infrastructure attacks – we found little reason to suspect that any of these would be useful in differentiation. Nevertheless, we include all tactics in robustness checks in the Appendix.

Data and Methodology

To see whether our classification scheme uncovers patterns within Al Qaeda, we collected annual attack data from Al Qaeda's inception in 1988 to 2012 for 25 affiliates.[6] This combines qualitative reports and quantitative data from the Stanford Mapping Militants Project (SMMP), the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), and the Terrorism Knowledge Database (TKB).[7]

There were three main challenges in creating the data. First, groups sometimes adopted new names when affiliating. Second, many groups have multiple aliases that cause over-representation even within a single database. Third, groups some-

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[6]We inclusively examine all groups where a relationship has been documented in tracing all of Al Qaeda's partnerships, formal and informal affiliations since Al Qaeda's inception.

[7]Mapping Militant Organizations Project 2016; MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (TKB): Profiles archived through START's Big, Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) 2016; National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) 2016.

times publicly declare an alliance that Al Qaeda rejects. To ensure that affiliate identities are consistent and accurate, we started with the list of Al Qaeda affiliates in SMMP, which traces Al Qaeda's partnerships. Then we used TKB expert analyses to confirm when and if a group changed its name and whether affiliation was reciprocated and acknowledged. Finally, we cross-referenced this with GTD, combining data, and renaming groups where necessary. Of the 28 listed affiliates in SMMP, three had insufficient evidence of affiliation, and another seven were missing from GTD, even when accounting for potential aliases. Several confirmed affiliates were listed in GTD under aliases or pre-affiliation names that we carefully re-coded to provide for consistent identities. After omissions and additions, our final data include 5,859 attacks for 180 affiliate-year observations from 1988 to 2012 for the 25 affiliates listed in Table 1.[8] The temporal and spatial domains capture the oldest affiliates and cover Al Qaeda's entire operational territory including the Middle East, Africa, Central and South Asia. This provides the most inclusive examination of all groups where a relationship has been documented in tracing all of Al Qaeda's partnerships, formal affiliations, and informal affiliations since Al Qaeda's inception.

From this, we created five binary variables to indicate if an attack occurred against the West, against the state, was a suicide attack, kidnap-kill attack, or a kidnap-release attack.

To code *West*, we code the target as Western if the target's nationality is one of the 28 NATO member states or Israel, and non-Western otherwise.[9] We code an attack as targeting the *State* if the affiliate targeted it own state's government, police, military, or diplomatic entities.[10] Since the target's nationality is unknown

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[8]We exclude the following affiliates due to the lack of data: Al Qaeda Kurdish Battalions, Lashkar-e-Zil, Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group, Mujahideen Army, Second Soran Unit.

[9]Data for this come from GTD's *natlty1*, which codes the target's nationality.

[10]We used two conditions: first, the GTD's *targtype1* must indicate that the

TABLE 1 Al Qaeda Affiliates

Affiliate	Emerged	Affiliated	Operational in (base*)
Abu Sayyaf	1991	1998	Malaysia, Philippines*
Al-Nusrah	2011	2013	Iraq, Lebanon, Syria*, Turkey
Al Qaeda in Iraq	2001	2004	Iraq*, Jordan, Syria, United Kingdom
Islamic State of Iraq	2007	2007	Iraq*
Tawhid and Jihad	2000	2001	Iraq*, Jordan
Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	2003	2009	Saudi Arabia, UAE, UK, US, Yemen*
Al Qaeda in Yemen	2000	2009	Yemen*
Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia	2003	2009	Saudi Arabia*
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	2006	2006	Algeria*, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Tunisia
Salafi Grp. for Preaching & Combat	1998	2006	Algeria*
Al-Shabaab	2003	2010	DRC, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia*, Uganda
Ansar al-Islam	2001	2003	Iraq*, Syria
Al Jihad	1978	2001	Egypt*, Pakistan
Haqqani Network	1968	1968	Afghanistan*, Pakistan
Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami	1984	1998	Bangladesh, India, Pakistan*
Harakat ul-Mujahidin	1985	1998	India, Nepal, Pakistan*
Harkat ul Ansar	1993	1998	India, Pakistan*
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	1998	1999	Afghanistan*, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan
Jaish-e-Mohammad	2000	1998	India, Pakistan*
Jemaah Islamiyah	1993	1999	Indonesia*, Philippines, Thailand
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	1995	2001	Afghanistan, India, Pakistan*
Lashkar-e-Taiba	1990	2001	Afghanistan, India, Pakistan*
Al-Mansoorian	1993	2001	India, Pakistan*
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	2007	2007	Afghanistan, Pakistan*
Taliban	1994	1996	Afghanistan*, India, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, US, Yemen

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for only 57 out of 5,859 attacks, this measure captures nationality in over 99% of our data. Note that an attack can target neither the West nor the home State if the target is of another non-Western state.

We code *Suicide* attacks using GTD, where an attack is a suicide if 'there is evidence that the perpetrator did not intend to escape the attack alive.' We code whether a kidnapped hostage was *Released* or *Killed* using GTD's hostage-kidnapping outcome variable, *hostkidoutcome*. Note that this variable also indicates if a kidnapping resulted in an escape, rescue, or unknown outcome. These are coded as neither kidnap-release nor kidnap-kill to focus on intentional executions or releases. In our data, 12% of affiliate attacks are suicide attacks, and 13% of kidnappings resulted in release or killed.

A quick look at the summary statistics for each affiliate indicates that sorting Al Qaeda case-by-case is unreasonable. Table 2 shows that there are notable differences, but whether certain affiliates are more similar than others is undecipherable. While there are a handful of affiliates that do not target the West (such as Al Jihad, Al-Mansoorian, Al Nusrah), nearly all other affiliates target both the West and their home state to differing degrees. For example, Abu Sayyaf targets the West in 4% of its attacks, and the state in 23%. Is this affiliate more *or less* in line with Al Qaeda than Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which targets both the West and state more often at 20% and 53%? Now add in tactical and annual variation, and we immediately outgrow the number of dimensions one can consider simultaneously. Further, while we might like to create indices to be used in a regression to predict an affiliate's type, that method is useful only if we know the affiliate's type in advance. Since affiliate types are unknown, and in fact, we do not know whether there are any meaningful types to be found, indices and regressions will not work.

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entity targeted was the government, police, military, or government-diplomatic categories. Second, the attack had to take place in the state in which the affiliate is operationally based, as coded in TKB and listed in Table 1.

Instead, we would like a classification method that indicates whether meaningful types are substantiated, and if so, which variables are the most useful in distinguishing those types.

Model Specification

We use the data matrix describing targets and tactics for each affiliate-year – *West*; *State*; *Suicide*; *Kidnap-Kill*; and *Kidnap-Released* – as features in a principal components analysis. This method seeks to explain the maximum amount of variation in the data using the fewest number of components that are formed from the included features, and in doing so it extracts the strongest patterns in the data.[11] These resulting independent components make interpretation and analysis easier by indicating which features are the most useful to differentiate affiliates, and how these variables relate to each other (as in which are correlated and which are not). Then using the results, each affiliate can be scored according to its principal components to better visualize Al Qaeda's network according to its dominant sources of differentiation.

Note that we carefully coded the variables so that the PCA would find ambiguous attacks uninformative, and thus our findings are not baked into our measures. For example, if an attack targets both the state government and Westerners, then our coding rules count that as attack against the state and against the West. When this overlap occurs, the PCA will not find targeting to be a useful distinction. We coded tactics with this same goal.

Since the PCA requires continuous variables, we recode each of the five variables as proportions out of the total number of an affiliate's attacks in a given year. Summary statistics for these variables are given in Table 3. Note that since the PCA emphasizes variance, if the included variables have very different variances,

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[11]We do not use factor analysis because that requires specification of the number of factors in advance. Since we do not know the correct number of factors, we let the PCA extract the optimal number of dimensions.

TABLE 2 Attacks by Each Affiliate (Percentages of Total Attacks)

Affiliate	West	State	Suicide	Kidnap-Kill	Kidnap-Released
Abu Sayyaf	4	23	13	16	1
Al Jihad	0	43	0	0	14
Al-Mansoorian	0	100	0	0	22
Al-Nusrah	0	68	0	0	73
Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia	0	50	0	0	92
Al Qaeda in Iraq	3	34	25	8	30
Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula	20	53	12	9	34
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb	9	68	15	15	11
Al Qaeda in Yemen	34	38	0	0	53
Al-Shabaab	2	52	7	9	3
Ansar al-Islam	3	76	0	0	10
Haqqani Network	13	60	0	21	72
Harakat ul-Mujahidin	0	75	0	50	0
Harkat ul Ansar	17	21	0	33	0
Harkatul Jihad-e-Islami	17	39	0	0	6
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	17	33	0	17	67
Islamic State of Iraq	1	48	27	0	32
Jaish-e-Mohammad	4	60	33	0	25
Jemaah Islamiya	6	11	0	0	32
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	0	27	7	0	22
Lashkar-e-Taiba	0	39	10	2	4
Salafist Group for Preaching & Combat	1	57	18	7	0
Taliban	10	48	19	16	10
Tawhid and Jihad	62	36	18	9	29
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan	10	55	22	6	17

TABLE 3 Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
West	0.07	0.18	0	1
State	0.45	0.34	0	1
Suicide	0.19	0.31	0	1
Killed	0.11	0.24	0	1
Released	0.08	0.18	0	1

then the PCA will tend to find those with higher variance to be more important. To prevent this, the PCA is often run using standardized variables, which shifts each variable's mean to zero and standard deviation to one. In our case, standardization resulted in the exact same results, which indicates that the original differences in variances was not enough to overwhelm the PCA.[12] We present the model using standardization, and robustness checks using all targets and all tactics in the Appendix. This more complex model did not alter the relationships here, and added no explanatory power for affiliates or Al Qaeda.[13]

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[12]In addition, if the differences in variances were a problem, then the PCA might find State-Suicide to form Component 1, and Killed-West to form Component 2. This does not occur.

[13]The more complex model shows that affiliates that target the West are more likely to use suicide attacks, and attacks using bombs and explosives. Affiliates that target the State are more likely to use kidnappings, assault, assassinations, and infrastructure attacks. Beyond this, certain affiliates that target the West also use kidnappings, and a few affiliates that target the State use suicide attacks. Overall, these fit with our findings here: global affiliates target the West and use suicide attacks; parochial affiliates target the State and use kidnappings; all affiliates are using kidnappings more recently.

TABLE 4 Principal Components of Al Qaeda's Terror

Components	1	2	3	4	5
West	0.61	0.07	0.09	0.70	-0.35
State	-0.55	0.01	-0.48	0.65	0.20
Suicide	0.21	-0.70	0.22	0.16	0.62
Killed	-0.24	0.50	0.73	0.23	0.33
Released	0.46	0.50	-0.43	-0.11	0.59
Variance Explained					
Eigenvalue	1.17	1.14	0.96	0.91	0.82
Proportion	0.23	0.23	0.19	0.18	0.16
Cumulative	0.24	0.46	0.66	0.837	1.00

Results

Differentiating Affiliates

How do affiliates differentiate? Table 4 shows the resulting components, and the corresponding eigenvalues which indicate how much variance is explained by each component. The most common method to determine which components are useful is the Kaiser method, which retains any component with an eigenvalue greater than one (Velicer, Eaton, and Fava 2000:8). When an eigenvalue is greater than one, then that component does a better job of explaining variance than one of the original variables. If the eigenvalue is less than one, then we are better off using one of the original variables with its own variance than using that component.

The Kaiser method indicates that Components 1 and 2 should be retained, which together explain 46% of the variance in the data. While one could retain additional components (3 and 4) to explain greater variation in the data (84%), the purpose here is to find the strongest sources of variation within Al Qaeda, and not simply to explain all the variation. The PCA indicates that the strongest variation is given by components 1 and 2. Therefore, to see whether these sources are meaningful, next we interpret these components.

The first component corresponds well to **Targets**. This dimension explains 23% of the variance in attacks. It is positively correlated with *West* with a component loading score of .61, and negatively correlated with *State* with a score of

-.55. These two variables have the strongest effect on this component, suggesting that targeting is the most useful in sorting affiliate attacks.

This component also indicates that affiliates that target the West are more likely to use suicide terror, as *Suicide* positively correlates alongside *West* with a score of .21. There is also a substantial difference between affiliates who kill their hostages (-.24), and those who release them (.46). Unexpectedly, this indicates that affiliates who target the West and use suicide attacks tend to release their hostages, while those who target the State tend to execute their hostages.

The second dimension corresponds well to **Tactics**, explaining an additional 23% of the data. This component negatively correlates with *Suicide* with a score of -.7 and positively correlates with kidnapping: both *Killed* and *Released* score .5 and .498, respectively. This component indicates that affiliates further separate according to whether they tend to use suicide or kidnapping tactics.

This provides an important initial check on our classification scheme: targets is the main axis of differentiation, which supports the proposed distinction between parochial and global affiliates. Tactics provides further differentiation, but in unexpected ways. Global affiliates are more likely to use suicide attacks, and parochial affiliates are more likely to kidnap. However, when global affiliates kidnap, they are more likely to release their hostages, while parochial affiliates execute their hostages.

Affiliate Behavior

To what extent does this aid in understanding affiliates? To determine this, we derived each affiliate's two-dimensional position using components 1 (Targeting) and 2 (Tactics) for each affiliate-year. Using these affiliate-year positions, we calculated each affiliate's mean position, and then using the sample standard error of the mean, the 95% limits to indicate our uncertainty about the estimated means.[14]

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[14]PCA is not an inferential statistical method; thus, it does not return standard errors for its estimated components. The limits indicate the ranges within which

This gives an estimate for where an affiliate is positioned on average, in terms of targets and tactics, as well as an indication of the variance of that estimate. Figure 1 shows the 15 affiliates whose positions are fairly well-defined: for these affiliates, 95% of their targets and tactics places them within only one quadrant. This means that from affiliation to 2012, these affiliates tended to target either the West or the State, and to rely on either suicide or kidnapping tactics. Figure 2 shows that only three affiliates tended to vary their tactics, three varied their targets, and four, including Al Qaeda in Iraq varied both their targets and tactics.

In addition, we plotted each affiliate's behavior over time using annual positions in Figure 3, where targets is represented by the bold solid line and tactics by the dashed line. Global affiliate behavior occurs when both of these lines lie above the horizontal axis, and parochial behavior occurs when both targets and tactics are below the horizontal axis. In general, targets and tactics track together fairly well, suggesting that this correlation between targets and tactics is useful in evaluating affiliate behavior over time.

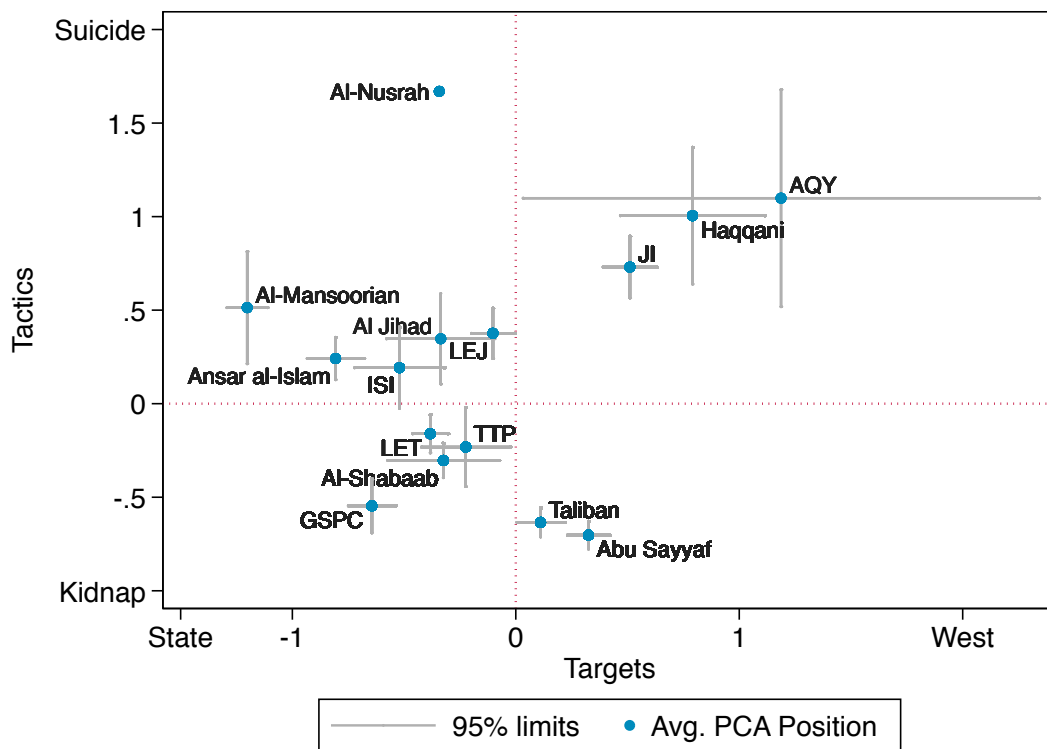the affiliate means are located 95% of the time.
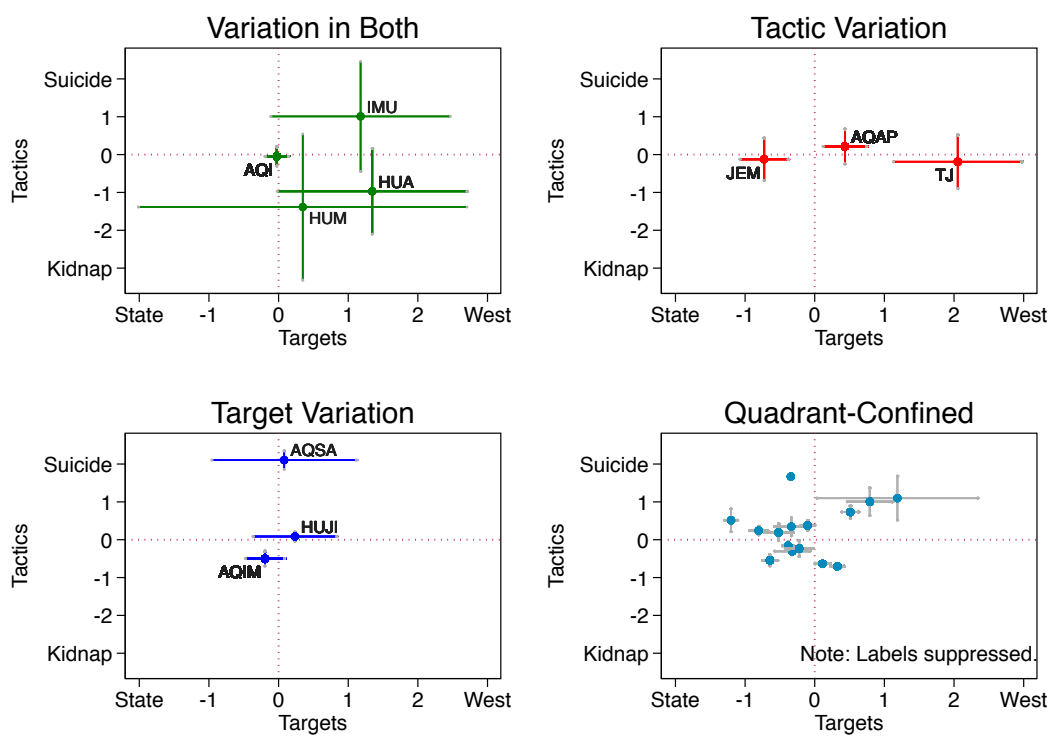
FIGURE 1 Quadrant-Confined Affiliates

FIGURE 2 Affiliates With Variation in Targets and Tactics

In looking at Figure 1, the results fit well with expert classifications, which suggests that the PCA has picked up on meaningful variation. Both Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Indonesia, and Al Qaeda in Yemen are known to target the West, and both are found in the global affiliate (upper-right) quadrant. This is seen in Figure 3 as well, where both the targets and tactics of these groups (Row 1) are nearly consistent in falling above the horizontal axis.

Both Lashkar-e-Taiba (LET) and the Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) can be found in the parochial affiliate (lower-left) quadrant of Figure 1. Both of these affiliates are known to be pursuing regional territorial and political goals concerning Kashmir, and the northwest Pakistan regions, respectively. Al-Shabaab is also found to be a parochial affiliate in line with expert analysis: this group controlled southern Somalia in 2006, and is primarily at war with the Somali government (Rollins 2010). Figure 3 shows that both Al-Shabaab and LET are fairly consistent in their parochial behavior, with targets and tactics roughly at or below the horizontal axis over time. In contrast, the TTP switched from global to parochial behavior, which is reflective of its early participation in attacks against the US-led coalition during the war in Afghanistan.

This fit with expert analyses gives evidence that the PCA meaningfully differentiates groups.

Movement Over Time

This raises one advantage of our empirical classification method: as Figure 3 shows, our method can assist in interpreting an affiliate's behavior over time. For example, JI's annual positions (Row 1) shows that it focused attacks against the West, and relied on suicide attacks in almost every year; switching to target the state only in two years, 2007 and 2011. This switch aligns with the government's decimation of JI's leadership that began in the mid-2000s, which led remaining leaders to rethink the group's strategy – and sparked a debate among experts over whether JI continues to pose a threat against the West (Gunaratna 2014; Jones
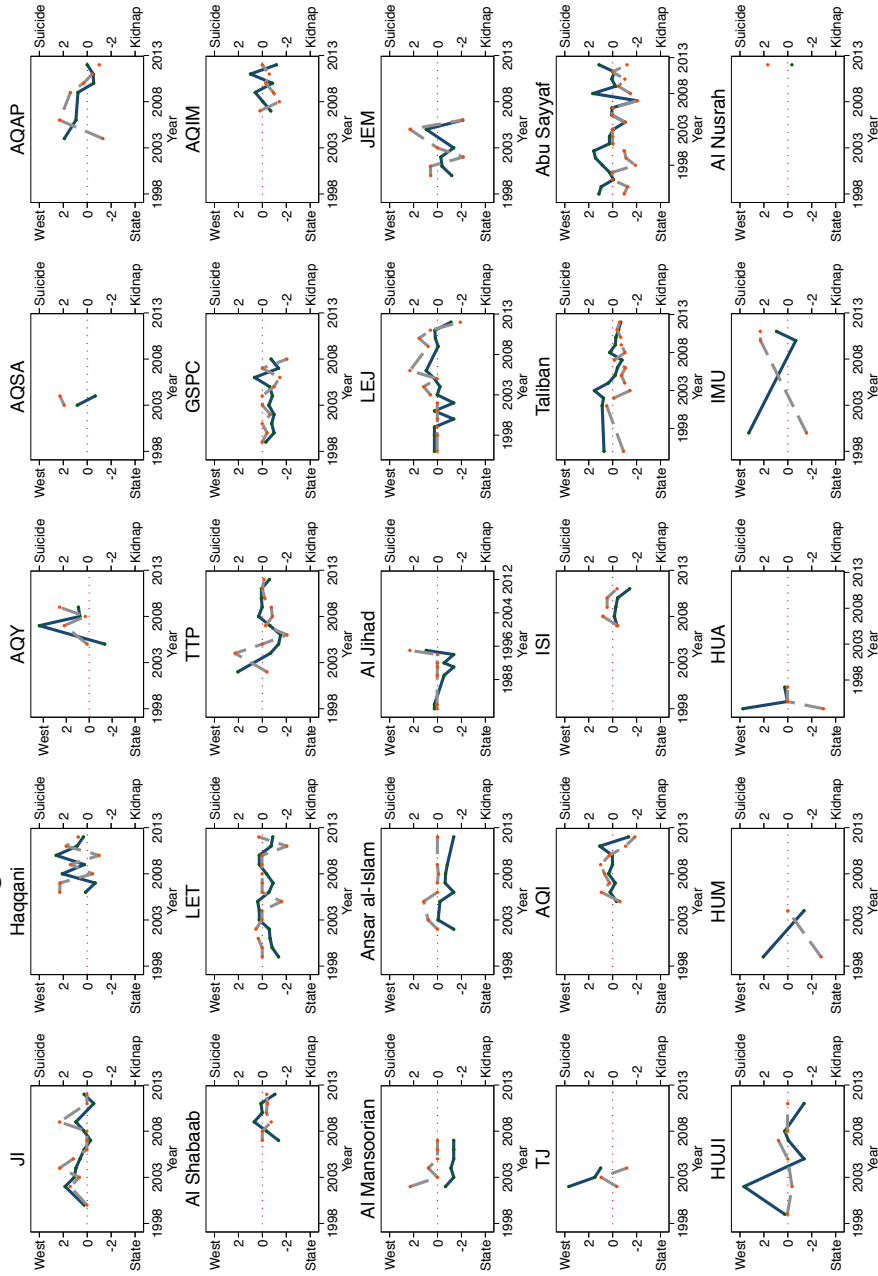
Target and Tactic Variation Over Time

FIGURE 3 Affiliate Targets and Tactics Over Time

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2011; Sidel 2008). The PCA fits with these details and shows that in 2009 and 2010, the group renewed its orchestration of anti-Western and suicide attacks as indicated by the upward spike in its targets and tactics in Figure 3. While there is a subsequent dip in 2011 (but a return to global affiliate behavior in 2012), overall any swing toward parochial behavior for JI has not been as strong as those of several other affiliates – including known parochial affiliates such as LET (row 2). This analysis of JI's movement over time, and the comparison to other affiliates, suggests that JI has not changed its anti-Western course.

Our methodology also aids in classifying affiliates whose motivations are unknown or unclear. A group that is difficult for experts to classify is the Algerian affiliate, AQIM, also known as GSPC before allying with Al Qaeda. Figure 3 reveals the dubious nature of AQIM's allegiance. In contrast to JI, Haqqani, and AQY (Row 1's global affiliates), nearly all points for both GSPC and AQIM are below the horizontal axis (Row 2), indicating that this affiliate seldom traverses outside of parochial classification. The only exceptions are in 2006, 2009, and 2011. How can these be explained? In 2006, the year of alliance, GSPC might have attacked Westerners as a signal of its commitment to Al Qaeda, or Al Qaeda may have injected leadership into this group. This leadership explanation is unlikely, because this affiliate returned to parochial behavior after 2006. In fact, despite AQIM's infamous December 2007 attack on the UN headquarters in Algiers, its PCA position suggests that AQIM focused its attacks mostly against its home state, and has continued to remain a greater threat to the state than to the West. In contrast to global affiliates in Row 1 Figure 3, in no year has AQIM or GSPC ever stood out as a global affiliate. Even in 2012, when AQIM coordinated with other local groups – Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, and AQAP – it directed its attacks primarily against the state as indicated by the solid line that decreases as we move toward 2013. The only difference in 2012 appears to be that AQIM increased its use of suicide tactics (the dashed line hits the zero axis), which suggests that AQIM used any additional funds and arms procured through

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its partnerships to enhance its suicide attacks against the state. Further, this suggests that AQIM's kidnappings of Westerners is likely not part of Al Qaeda's larger war against the West, but a tactic to seek increased funding. As this shows, one can gain substantial analytical utility, even when concerned with the internal workings of an illicit organization, by identifying an affiliate's type and analyzing its movement over time.

The Off-Diagonals

What should one make of affiliates in the off-diagonal positions in Figure 1? In the upper-left quadrant are affiliates that are parochial in their targets, but not their tactics. Several of these affiliates are engaged in civil warfare. For example, ISI and Al-Nusrah are active in the Syrian Civil War, and Ansar al-Islam has been fighting against the Iraqi and Syrian governments since the 2003 Iraq War. Why might these affiliates use suicide terror? We assumed that a parochial affiliate would be less likely to use suicide tactics in seeking to appeal to a majority. It is likely that these affiliates do not seek to appeal to a majority, but to a specific base – in particular, one that is not as turned away by suicide terror.

In the lower-right quadrant we find parochial affiliates that have targeted Westerners within their home states. For example, both the Taliban and Haqqani were active against the US-led coalition in Afghanistan. However, the results show that while Haqqani is more clearly a global affiliate, the Taliban returned to its parochial goals following Karzai's election in December 2004. This can be seen in Figure 3 (Row 4) where the Taliban switches to targeting the state and relying on kidnapping tactics after 2004: in contrast, Haqqani continues its global affiliate behavior (Row 1). Similarly, one can contrast Abu Sayyaf to Jemaah Islamiyaah; both southeast Asian affiliates. The data shows that both attack westerners, but while JI relies on suicide attacks, Abu Sayyaf tends to rely on kidnappings and executions. This suggests that Abu Sayyaf kidnaps and kills Westerners as part of its antistate insurgency, rather than as part of a global anti-Western war, resulting

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in its placement far from JI in Figure 1.

These off-diagonal positions improve understanding of key differences among parochial affiliates. Some parochial affiliates target Western actors through indiscriminate violence in insurgencies, or when the West fights a foreign war. Others use suicide terror in appealing to specific bases that are not turned away by these tactics.

Al Qaeda

Finally, this analysis raises three points about Al Qaeda. First, even though Al Qaeda is perhaps most well-known for its anti-Western jihad, many *if not most* of its affiliates are focused on attacking their own state governments, and have been so since Al Qaeda's inception. This is seen in Figures 1 and 2, where at most we could claim that seven out of 25 affiliates are global affiliates, and only three of those seven are consistently committed to attacking the West. The fact that the strongest source of variation in the data is determined by targets, and further, that only three affiliates are consistently in line with Al Qaeda's goals gives evidence that 1) there is a global-parochial divide within Al Qaeda, and 2) most of Al Qaeda's network is parochial.

Second, of the affiliates that do attack the West, many – such as Ansar al-Islam, the Taliban, and Abu Sayyaf – return to their parochial goals even if Western targets remain available. Given that Haqqani continues to target the West in Afghanistan, but that the Taliban does not, raises a key point. Even if foreign occupation incites initial attacks against the West, any continuation of anti-Western attacks depends on the group itself.

Third, this analysis presents a far less monolithic (and less nebulous) portrait of Al Qaeda. The view of all 25 affiliates over time in Figure 3 is especially telling. The top row contains what one might consider to be global affiliates, and the second row, parochial affiliates. By the third row, we see that affiliates can exhibit sharp breaks in their behavior. By the final two rows, we see that

several affiliates disappear. Some through splinters and mergers, for example, TJ transformed into AQI which splintered into ISI (Row 4). Others in row five appear as blips or exhibit what can only be described as spasmodic behavior in comparison. Rather than monolithic, Al Qaeda appears divided in its internal motivations toward global or parochial terror, and in terms of how much of the network is active, Al Qaeda appears to be highly fragmented over time.

These results suggest promising avenues for future work to consider questions of how parochial terrorists, global terrorists, and Al Qaeda's network as a whole relate to democracy, factors related to civil wars, and counterterrorism. We highlight these further in the conclusion.

Conclusion

We develop a classification scheme to investigate whether there is a duality within Al Qaeda, and find systematic and quantitative evidence of a global-parochial divide. Our classification scheme provides analytical utility in identifying affiliate types, and in visualizing their movement over time. This improves our understanding of affiliate behavior and the nature of Al Qaeda, an evolving global terrorist organization whose relationship to civil war is unclear. This research contributes by engaging with key issues concerning terrorism, affiliation, and Al Qaeda, all of which would benefit from more powerful theories and empirical analyses.

First, our global-parochial classification aids in identifying affiliate types, and tracking them over time. Our results align with expert analyses, suggesting disaggregated attack data can help policymakers and scholars classify affiliates *without* a priori knowledge of their goals. Our method improves understanding of an affiliate's latent motivations. For example, when compared to other Al Qaeda affiliates, Jemaah Islamiyah appears strongly committed to anti-Western attacks, despite variation in recent behavior. Meanwhile, AQIM appears equally committed to parochial goals. Our research provides a straightforward strategy to improve

understanding of affiliates and their behavior over time.

Second, targets and tactics improve understanding of Al Qaeda and its evolution over time. Targets provides the strongest source of variation in Al Qaeda's network, in line with recent research by Seifert and McCauley (2014) who analyze the use of suicide attacks in Iraq. However, we show that the ability to differentiate types is strengthened by considering tactical differences as well: global affiliates tend to rely on suicide attacks, whereas parochial affiliates tend to kidnap.

Further, and rather unexpectedly, we find that parochial affiliate kidnappings are more severe: global affiliates are more likely to release their hostages, while parochial affiliates execute them. Existing literature offers no explanation for the severity of parochial tactics. One possibility is that parochial affiliates seek to draw international attention to local causes. Another is that parochial affiliates are not concerned with local support; however, one should note that this would contrast with recent research showing that rebel groups seek to maintain local support (Stanton 2013). Overall, this finding suggests that more research is necessary to understand today's kidnappings, and the differences between a parochial group who affiliates, and one that does not.

Third, we find strong evidence that there is a global-parochial divide within Al Qaeda, and more importantly, that the majority of Al Qaeda's network is parochial. Few affiliates can be classified as global affiliates, and of the parochial affiliates that do attack the West, many have returned to parochial goals even though Western targets remain available. Even the affiliates in the unexpected regions of Figure 1, the off-diagonals, can be best understood as parochial affiliates that a) fought in Iraq or Afghanistan only to return to parochial goals, or b) are suicide attackers engaged in violent civil conflicts. Looking at affiliate behavior presents a far different view of Al Qaeda – not nebulous, not monolithic, and not necessarily anti-Western, but rather parochial and fragmented over time.

Our research is critical to several literatures in offering a simple empirical strategy to distinguish global from parochial terrorists – using widely-available

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attack data. Studies of the relationship between terrorism and civil war tend to examine *either* terrorist attacks, which lumps together both global and parochial terrorists, *or* rebel groups, which lumps together both parochial affiliates and unaffiliated groups. Since our method can help to separate parochial from global affiliates, follow up studies can more accurately specify the samples to which their theories apply. A promising next step is to explore the causes and consequences of affiliation. Why do some groups affiliate, but not others; and how does affiliation affect a group's survivability, membership, or lethality?

By linking disaggregated attack data to affiliate types, this research also assists the research on democracies and terrorism. This literature currently presents conflicting hypotheses in which democracy can promote or reduce terrorism. One explanation is that democracies might be *less prone* to parochial terror, and *more prone* to harboring global terrorists. This hypothesis can be easily investigated using our analysis. A more sophisticated approach might also account for factors relevant in the civil war literature to examine how political features that grant extremist groups political participation, or other factors such as resources, ethnicity, and state capacity affect global and parochial terrorists differently.

Further, since we show that attack patterns can identify quantifiable differences over time, our research enables better assessments of counterterrorism. How effective are strategies such as leadership decapitation, indiscriminate, or discriminate counterterrorism? These strategies are likely to have different effects on global affiliates or parochial affiliates. Further, these counter terror strategies may have simultaneous effects on Al Qaeda's network as a whole. Since today's threat is rooted in both civil conflict and international terrorism, our empirical identification strategy encourages research to examine all three effects – on global, parochial terror, and the network as a whole – simultaneously.

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