Chinese living and working in Algeria, days after the riots in Urumqī.\(^1\) Additionally, in a videotaped statement that featured senior al-Qā`ida leader Abu Yahya al-Lībi that appeared online on October 7, 2009, Abu Yahya called on Muslims to direct their attention to the plight of the Uighurs. Regarding the violence in Xinjiang, Abu Yahya declared:

This massacre is not being carried out by criminal Crusaders or evil Jews who have committed crimes against our nation...Today, a new massacre is being carried out by Buddhist nationalists and communists against the Muslim population in eastern Turkestan... It is a duty for Muslims today to stand by their wounded and oppressed brothers in East Turkestan...and support them with all they can.\(^4\)

Al-Qā`ida’s decision to single out China is noteworthy on a number of levels. Given al-Qā`ida’s unshaken focus on targeting the United States and U.S. interests abroad, it is unclear if the group is capable of or interested in expending resources to target China. In this regard, al-Qā`ida may not be interested in opening up another front in its campaign that would entail taking on China directly; this would likely encourage the United States and China to cooperate more closely in destroying the organization. Rather, al-Qā`ida may be content with providing moral support to others who may choose to strike China and Chinese interests in other countries independently.

AQIM, for instance, claimed responsibility for an attack on June 17, 2009 against an Algerian paramilitary police convoy escorting Chinese construction workers; 19 paramilitary police and one Chinese worker were reportedly killed in the incident.\(^4\) AQIM has a history of targeting foreigners in Algeria, including foreign workers, and the group’s apparent intent to target Chinese in particular following the July 2009 riots may lead to further attacks against Chinese interests in the region. It is also unclear if al-Qā`ida has the resources required, namely capable networks operating on Chinese soil, to strike inside China. At the same time, al-Qā`ida’s decision to exploit the July 2009 riots demonstrates its ability to harness current events dominating the news cycle to further validate its narrative as a vanguard of Islamic resistance. In this case, al-Qā`ida saw an opportunity to speak in defense of what it sees as a besieged Muslim minority suffering under an oppressive regime as most of the world—Muslims and non-Muslims alike—stand by in silence.

Conclusion
The nature and scope of the violence in Urumqī in July 2009 and the increasing international interest among Muslims and non-Muslims alike in the Uighur question will impact the future of the region. By all accounts, China will continue to treat the Uighur question as a vital security matter. In doing so, it will go to great lengths to root out all forms of dissent, peaceful or violent, under the guise of counterterrorism. Meanwhile, al-Qā`ida’s foray into the politics of Xinjiang should remain cause for further observation. Yet it is unlikely that the group will set their sights on China in the near future when there are far more pressing issues at hand, such as striking their primary targets: the U.S. homeland and U.S. interests abroad.

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The Post-Zarqawi Phase
Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi’s death in June 2006 dealt a serious blow to AQI. Since its birth, AQI was organized around al-Zarqawi, who offered charismatic, albeit controversial, leadership. The group was primarily guided by foreign fighters, with Iraqi militants substantially underrepresented in the upper echelons of the organization. After his assassination, the movement had to reorganize and overcome a crisis of legitimacy as it was increasingly marginalized from its Sunni Arab supporters in Iraq.

To stem losses of local support, the new AQI leadership tried to strengthen its links to Iraqi society. In October 2006, AQI was involved in the creation of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), an umbrella organization of Iraqi insurgent groups led by Abu ’Umar al-Baghdadi. AQI’s interest in creating the ISI can be seen as an attempt to limit the deepening divisions that were weakening the movement. Yet it did not move fast enough to prevent its near complete marginalization from Iraqi society. A growing number of Sunni Arab tribal elders—whose economic interests as well as authority had become seriously compromised by AQI—began to view the group as a more dangerous enemy than U.S.-led coalition and Iraqi government forces. As a result, a growing number of Sunni Arab tribal leaders began to cooperate with the new Iraqi regime and U.S.-led forces.

In a few months, and in large part due to the strengthening of the Awakening movements and the new strategic posture adopted by U.S. troops and ISF units in the wake of the “surge,” the ISI’s power waned and the movement lost much of its ground. Caught between two fires that threatened to put an end to its battle in the “land of the two rivers,” AQI gradually abandoned several of its traditional strongholds in central-western Iraq and sought shelter in areas that remained supportive of its cause. It also restructured its logistic and financial networks, strengthened cooperation with the remnants of the insurgency and crafted a new strategy favoring the continuation of its struggle.

Ninawa Province: AQI’s Main Stronghold
Ninawa Province is characterized by a series of intertwined elements that have made it the perfect base for AQI’s revival. It is situated in an ideal geographic position, it suffers from a strong insurgency not courted by Iraqi government reconciliation initiatives, and has a sociopolitical fabric fragmented along ethno-sectarian lines that is deeply affected by mistrust toward the central government. Select local communities are ready to consider insurgent groups as the only actors capable of restoring the old social order to the area.

The Geopolitical Factor
Ninawa’s geographic position has made it the perfect nexus between AQI’s needs and the traditional smuggling routes controlled by tribes and communities living on either side of the Iraq-Syria border. In a few months, and in large part due to the strengthening of the Awakening movements and the new strategic posture adopted by U.S. troops and ISF units in the wake of the “surge,” the ISI’s power waned and the movement lost much of its ground. Caught between two fires that threatened to put an end to its battle in the “land of the two rivers,” AQI gradually abandoned several of its traditional strongholds in central-western Iraq and sought shelter in areas that remained supportive of its cause. It also restructured its logistic and financial networks, strengthened cooperation with the remnants of the insurgency and crafted a new strategy favoring the continuation of its struggle. Smuggling routes are not the only element that has made Ninawa relevant for AQI. The economic importance of Ninawa’s capital Mosul, for example, is a major factor helping to transform the province into AQI’s main logistical and support center. Beginning with the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the area in 2004, the city became the most important financial hub for AQI, capable of providing up to 80% of its economic income. AQI has restructured its logistic and financial networks, strengthening cooperation with the remnants of the insurgency and crafted a new strategy favoring the continuation of its struggle.

5 Personal interview, Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, secretary-general of the al-Wasat Front and the former Iraqi national security adviser, Como, Italy, December 6, 2009.
6 AQI is now under the command of “Abu Hamza al-Muhajir,” who is presumably the Egyptian militant Abu Ayub al-Masri.
7 Another important source of hatred against AQI was the movement’s disregard of traditions, as described in David Kilcullen, “Field Notes on Iraq’s Tribal Revolt Against Al-Qa’ida,” CTC Sentinel 1:11 (2008).
8 For an in-depth analysis of the causes of AQI’s decline, see Brian Fishman, Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside al-Qa’ida in Iraq (New York: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009).
11 Levitt, p. 18.
12 “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq.”
This tactical cooperation shows that the dividing line between AQI and former Ba`athists is thin and at times overlaps. Moreover, a growing ideological rapprochement between the two movements appears underway, as demonstrated by the statement released on December 2, 2009 by Ba`athist leader Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, who invited the Iraqi resistance and the mujahidin to lay down the basis for the creation of a new Iraqi state founded on a legislative system that considers the Qur`an as its first and main legal source.

A Fragmented Sociopolitical Fabric

Ninawa Province’s ethno-religious mosaic represents another valuable asset for AQI’s revival. While historically dominated by a strong Sunni Arab majority, which traditionally held the levers of power, Ninawa is the seat of important Kurdish, Christian, Shabak and Yazidi communities that claim ancient and strong linkages to the territory. Under Saddam’s regime, the region witnessed the effects of a prolonged Arabization campaign—aimed at limiting the relevance of the Kurdish community and strengthening Sunni Arab identity in the area—that altered the original ethno-religious map, fueling the resentment of hundreds of families obliged to abandon their ancestral homes.

The fall of Saddam’s regime in 2003 and the transfer of control from U.S. to Kurdish security forces in 2004 in Ninawa pushed many of the Sunni Arab families, which settled in the area in the wake of the government-led Arabization process, to flee their homes. This added hatred to hatred toward the new Iraqi government, which was perceived hostile to the Sunni Arabs and allied with its worst enemies: the United States, Iran and the Kurdish leadership. Furthermore, the growing Kurdish military, economic and political influence in Ninawa, cemented by the victory of its list in the 2005 elections, created resentment among Sunni Arabs. This resentment has not been extinguished by the pro-Sunni al-Hadbaa coalition’s victory in the 2009 provincial elections. This has fueled a strong insurgency in Ninawa that the Iraqi government has been unable to tackle.

In this context, AQI has been able to exploit the anger of the Sunni Arab community and the existing local divisions. AQI has adopted a strategy that targets Ninawa’s minorities to prevent the stabilization of the area, to display the Iraqi government’s inability to provide security, and to perpetuate a climate of fear that sustains the movement directly (through its mafia-style network) and indirectly (by strengthening the perception that it still retains powerful military capabilities).

This strategy also underlines a deep understanding of the local ethnic-sectarian balance: by attacking these communities, AQI can continue its struggle without waging a bloody campaign against local institutions and security forces (which maintain strong linkages with the local Sunni community and have been accused of collaborating with insurgents) and peshmerga (or Kurdish militias whose presence in the area AQI recognizes as instrumental in fomenting Sunni Arab anger and distrust).
### Toward A Major Strategic Shift?

AQI has exploited local conditions to transform Ninawa into one of its main strongholds. Yet this achievement could represent just one element of a broader strategic shift by AQI aimed at reversing the debacle it suffered during the last three years. In this regard, the creation of a solid base in the province and the completion of theIraqification process of the group that started after al-Zarqawi’s death has been coupled with a series of initiatives aimed at adapting the movement’s strategy to local conditions and to exploit its traditional strengths.

The recent terrorist attacks that hit Baghdad indicate that AQI is increasing high-profile coordinated attacks against Iraqi political targets and institutions, in addition to continuing its campaign aimed at fostering sectarian divisions. The decision to focus on these types of attacks—widely recognized as an AQI trademark—could indicate a shift from the “ISI paradigm” of transforming areas under jihadist control into states or mini-states administrated according to Shari’a.23 By concentrating on high-profile attacks, AQI could be moving toward a more traditional terrorism campaign, aimed at reasserting AQI’s role in the country and limiting the huge losses experienced by the movement since 2006.

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### The French Approach to Counterterrorism

By Charles Rault

**IN THE LAST five years, a number of terrorist attacks have occurred in Western Europe. In March 2004, Islamist terrorists attacked Madrid’s commuter train system, killing 191 people. On July 7, 2005, Islamist terrorists struck London’s public transportation system, killing more than 50 people. A number of other plots in Western Europe have been disrupted. Since the 9/11 attacks on the United States, France has managed to escape a terrorist attack. Nevertheless, the threat to France remains high, and French authorities believe that it is only a matter of time before their country is targeted successfully, likely by militants associated with al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).**

There are a number of reasons why France has not suffered a terrorist attack in more than a decade. One reason is due to the successes of the country’s experienced and well-established counterterrorism apparatus. France’s security apparatus was strengthened in the last two decades in response to multiple terrorist attacks that struck the country in the 1990s—effectively foreshadowing today’s threat of Islamist terrorism. It is useful to review France’s domestic counterterrorism efforts to better understand how other governments have met this growing challenge. This article will provide background on previous terrorist attacks targeting France, the government’s overall view toward counterterrorism, and finally the tactics it uses to combat the ongoing terrorism threat.

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### History of Terrorist Violence in France

From the mid-1970s, France and other European countries faced threats from separatist or left-wing terrorists. In 1985, for example, General René Audran, the chief of arms sales for the French Ministry of Defense, was assassinated by the urban guerrilla group Action Directe.2 In 1986, the same group was blamed for the murder of Georges Besse, the director of the French automotive company Renault.3

From 1982 to 1987, terrorist violence in France peaked after state-sponsored terrorist groups from the Middle East targeted French interests in the context of East-West tensions generated by the Cold War.4 Groups such as the Palestinian Abu Nidal Organization (ANO) and Lebanese Hizb Allah, in addition to Carlos “The Jackal,” were the most active. In 1988, the ANO executed four French citizens on a Greek tourist boat, the *City of Poros*. Hizb Allah conducted a campaign of 13 terrorist attacks beginning in 1985 that culminated with an attack against the store “Tati” at Rue de Rennes in Paris in 1986, killing seven people and wounding 66.5 Known for having planned the attack on the headquarters of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Vienna in 1975, Venezuelan terrorist Carlos “The Jackal” first joined the Palestinian cause as a member of the leftist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) before operating undercover for East Germany’s Stasi and Romania’s Securitate.6 In 1982, Carlos was

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3 Action Directe denied any responsibility. In Dominique Lorentz’s and David Carr-Brown’s *La République atomique: France-Iran le pacte nucléaire* film documentary, the authors suggest that Besse might have been killed by Iranian operatives due to his previous involvement in the nuclear-related disagreements between France and Iran.

4 In this context, terrorist groups also targeted U.S. and Jewish interests.

5 There were a number of motives behind Hizb Allah’s targeting of French interests. The group demanded the release of Lebanese militant Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, which France refused to do. Moreover, France was targeted due to its alleged support for the Christian Maronites. Iran was also not pleased with French support to Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.

6 John Follain, *Jackal: The Complete Story of the Legendary Terrorist, Carlos the Jackal* (New York: Arcade Publish-