

Based on our assessment, the United States should fundamentally rethink its strategy toward al Qaeda. U.S. efforts have relied too heavily on military force. This chapter is divided into five sections. First, it examines—and critiques—the current U.S. approach, which relies predominantly on military force to target al Qaeda around the globe. Second, it examines al Qaeda's attacks and geographic scope since 1995. Third, it assesses al Qaeda's organizational structure. Fourth, it outlines central al Qaeda's base of operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Fifth, it offers some brief conclusions.

The Limits of Military Force

The current U.S. strategy against al Qaeda centers on the use of military force. Military force was not, of course, the only instrument that the United States used against al Qaeda. The U.S. Department of State engaged in a range of diplomatic counterterrorism initiatives, including through its Antiterrorism Assistance Program. The FBI and local police agencies historically tracked and arrested terrorists in the United States. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security implemented numerous policies at ports of entry and critical infrastructure to secure the United States from terrorist attacks. The U.S. Department of Treasury targeted terrorist financial networks. And the CIA collected, analyzed, and conducted operations against terrorist groups abroad. While a range of instruments was used, the military component was paramount in two respects.

First, U.S. policymakers and key national-security documents referred to operations against al Qaeda as the *global war on terror*.¹⁰ The use of the word *war* to describe U.S. efforts had an important symbolic importance, since it suggested a military conflict that required a military solution. As the U.S. Department of Defense's 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* noted, "The United States is a nation engaged in

¹⁰ On the Bush administration debates, see Douglas J. Feith, *War and Decision: Inside the Pentagon at the Dawn of the War on Terrorism*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2008, pp. 47–87.