

both countries. If they withdraw they will lose everything and if they stay, they will continue to bleed to death.²⁴

Such images as the Abu Ghraib prisoners were sent around the globe via Internet, satellite television, and cell phone. The war in Iraq also created a perception that Islam was under threat. Many Muslims accepted al Qa'ida's argument that jihad was justified precisely because Islam was under attack by the United States. Consequently, fighting ground wars in the Muslim world appeared to inflame, not quell, Islamic terrorism.

The Return of al Qa'ida

Indeed, the evidence since September 11, 2001, strongly suggests that the U.S. strategy was not successful in undermining al Qa'ida's capabilities in the long run. Al Qa'ida remained a strong and competent organization. Its goals were the same: uniting Muslims to fight the United States and its allies (the far enemy) and overthrowing west-friendly regimes in the Middle East (the near enemy) to establish a pan-Islamic caliphate.²⁵

Al Qa'ida was involved in more terrorist attacks in the first six years after September 11, 2001, than it had been during the previous six years. It averaged fewer than two attacks per year between 1995 and 2001, but it averaged more than ten attacks per year between 2002 and 2007. Figure 6.1 includes attacks in which al Qa'ida was directly involved between 1995 and 2007. The database is available in Appendix A. We excluded attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan. Since al Qa'ida attacks were part of a much broader insurgency, we found it difficult to disentangle which attacks al Qa'ida perpetrated and which other

²⁴ Michael Scheuer, *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror*, Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2004, p. xxi.

²⁵ On the establishment of a caliphate, see, for example, Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage Through Which the Umma Will Pass*, Cambridge, Mass.: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 2006.