The Limits of America's al Qa'ida Strategy

So far, this book has examined how terrorist groups end. The rest of the book turns to implications for dealing with al Qa'ida based on this analysis. This chapter argues that al Qa'ida has been involved in more terrorist attacks in a wider geographical area since September 11, 2001, than it had been during its previous history. These attacks spanned Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Al Qa'ida's modus operandi evolved and included a repertoire of more-sophisticated IEDs and a growing use of suicide attacks. Its organizational structure has also evolved, making it a more dangerous enemy. This includes a bottom-up approach (encouraging independent thought and action from low-level operatives) and a top-down one (issuing orders and still coordinating a far-flung terrorist enterprise with both highly synchronized and autonomous moving parts).[1]

There has been some discrepancy about the effectiveness of U.S. strategy against al Qa'ida. In 2007, for example, vice president Dick Cheney stated that the United States had "struck major blows against the al-Qaeda network that hit America."[2] Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf claimed that "Pakistan has shattered the al Qa'ida network in the region, severing its lateral and vertical linkages. It is now on the run and has ceased to exist as a homogenous force, capable of under-

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[1]   See, for example, Hoffman (2006, pp. 285–289).

[2]   Dick Cheney, "Vice Presidents Remarks at a Rally for the Troops," USS *John C. Stennis*, May 11, 2007.