

effective coercive strategy.<sup>78</sup> As Rohan Gunaratna concluded, “Theorists have long argued that terrorism does not work, but the sad fact is that it does.”<sup>79</sup> Alan Dershowitz argued, for example, terrorism “works” and is “an entirely rational choice to achieve a political objective.”<sup>80</sup> Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter concluded that terrorist groups are “surprisingly successful in their aims.”<sup>81</sup> In addition, the finding that the success rate of terrorist groups corresponded to the breadth of their goals also cuts against explanations of why terrorists do not achieve victory. Some argue, for instance, that the key variable for terrorist success is a tactical one: target selection. Groups whose attacks on civilian targets outnumber attacks on military targets systematically fail to achieve their policy objectives, in part because they fail to communicate their policy objectives well. Even when a terrorist group has limited objectives, target countries infer from attacks on their civilians that the group wants to destroy the country’s values, society, or both. “In short,” one study concluded, “target countries view the negative consequences of terrorist attacks on their societies and political systems as evidence that the terrorists want them destroyed.”<sup>82</sup>

## Insights from the Statistical Analysis

The database of 648 terrorist groups forms the basis for the statistical results that follow. For each terrorist group, our data include the country to which it is best associated, the year it started, the year it ended, its primary classification, its goals, its peak size, and the income and political freedom of the associated country. Finally, we recorded whether the group is active. If it is not active, we examine how it ended:

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<sup>78</sup> Sprinzak (2000, p. 68); Pape (2005); Dershowitz (2002); Lake (2002); Kydd and Walter (2006); Trager and Zagorcheva (2005–2006).

<sup>79</sup> Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, p. 321.

<sup>80</sup> Dershowitz (2002, p. 86).

<sup>81</sup> Kydd and Walter (2002, p. 264).

<sup>82</sup> Abrahms (2006, p. 59).