

matter how loose or flexible, provides an overall organizational framework and general strategic direction.

This study also made some a priori assumptions about why groups resort to terrorism and why they may end its use.⁷ First, terrorism generally has two proximate purposes: to gain supporters and to coerce opponents. Most terrorist groups seek both goals to some extent, often aiming to affect enemy calculations while mobilizing support for the terrorists' cause. In some cases, they may even try to gain an edge over rival groups. Second, terrorism is mainly utilitarian. Groups can reassess their goals and tactics in response to changes within the group, as well as changes within the larger political and social environment. Third, terrorist groups deliberately choose terrorism as one among a number of alternative means of pursuing political ends. Fourth, terrorist campaigns usually arise out of larger political movements or tendencies. Its practitioners are rarely loners, disconnected from society. Rather, they usually believe that they are acting in the interests of some larger group, such as fellow religious believers, workers, persecuted ethnic groups, or the Aryan race.⁸

Research Design

This study adopted two methodological approaches. One was to compile and analyze a data set of all terrorist groups between 1968 and 2006 (a total of 648).⁹ This approach included several steps.

⁷ On the logic of terrorism, see Jeffrey Ian Ross and Ted Robert Gurr, "Why Terrorism Subsidies: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States," *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 4, July 1989, pp. 405–426; Dershowitz (2002); Pape (2005); Lake (2002); and Kydd and Walter (2006).

⁸ Ross and Gurr (1989, p. 407).

⁹ We began with the year 1968 because that is the first year the RAND-MIPT database began to collect information. In addition, the database initially tracked only international terrorist incidents; it did not begin tracking domestic incidents until 1998. See National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base: A Comprehensive Databank of Global Terrorist Incidents and Organizations*, Oklahoma City, Okla., ongoing since 2003.