RATIONAL IDE ALOGUES OR ORTHODOX FANATICS? DISCERNING
IDEOLOGY’S ROLE IN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

There have long been divergent perceptions among scholars and policymakers regarding the relevance of a terrorist organization’s ideology to its actual decision making process. Some observers believe that terrorist organizations are legitimately committed to applying the methods and achieving the goals laid out in their respective ideologies. Yet others perceive ideology as irrelevant to terrorist behavior, or otherwise a veneer of legitimacy that terrorist organizations exploit to pursue self-interested goals. Discerning whether terrorist organization ideology, on balance, actually plays a significant role determining the policy options that such groups pursue can afford significant insight into their internal machinations.

This thesis paper seeks to weigh ideology’s relative influence on the decision making process of terrorist organizations by weighing it against two other factors that scholars frequently cite as consequential: a predilection toward rational choice, or strategic, utility-maximizing behavior, and the need to manage intra-organizational dynamics. The comprehensive scope of the paper wherein all three factors are considered against one another adds value to existing literature on this subject, which tends to focus on only one or two factors. Furthermore, the paper seeks to assess ideology’s role with respect to “strategic” terrorist organizations, or terrorist groups that possess concrete goals and direct ties with a constituency, and “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations, which lack constituent ties and maintain less concrete goals. It also works to ensure a thorough assessment of ideology’s role by examining a variety of terrorist groups with fundamentally different historical origins and goals. This thesis concludes with research and policy recommendations and suggests how they may be applied in efforts to fight the
Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), which poses arguably a larger threat to the U.S.
today than any other terrorist group.

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Thesis Introduction

The Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham’s (ISIS) successful summer 2014 Iraqi offensive came as a shock to many Western analysts. Observers questioned how ISIS was able to render consecutive decisive defeats against the Iraqi military and Kurdish peshmerga and seize control of large shares of Western and Northern Iraq, including the key population centers Mosul and Tikrit. The fact that ISIS’s military gains have rendered seismic impacts on the political and military balance in the Middle East to an extent forcing the United States to alter its fundamental approach toward the region demonstrates the importance of this question. Indeed, prior to summer 2014, the United States showed little predilection to directly intervene in Syria’s civil war. Washington showed even less interest in trying to facilitate a resolution of worsening sectarian tensions in Iraq, where Shiite Prime Minister Maliki’s heavy-handed policies contributed to both the central government’s eroding authority in Sunni-dominated Anbar province and protracted disputes with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over budgetary entitlements and oil export revenues. Yet the ISIS advance into Iraq caused the U.S. to swiftly adjust its policy. The U.S. has now built an international coalition that is, as of this writing, prosecuting air strikes against ISIS targets in Syria and Iraq. Additionally, the U.S. leveraged its influence, in part by conditioning future military assistance on a national unity government, to ensure that Prime Minister Maliki would not be afforded a fourth term following Iraq’s parliamentary elections earlier this year.


Threatened with the prospect of ISIS carving out a permanent base of operations on Iraqi territory, the U.S. ramped up military assistance to Iraq and even deployed around 1,600 military advisors and special operations forces there, less than three years after President Obama announced that the last U.S. troops had been withdrawn from the country.³

Policymakers, academics, and the news media have sought to explain how what seemed to be a ragtag group of Islamist militants was able emerge as one of the most significant threats to the Assad regime in Syria and then overwhelm the Iraqi army. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has criticized U.S. policy as abetting ISIS’s rise, arguing the U.S. decision to not arm “moderate” rebels in Syria created a vacuum then enabled the group to thrive and establish a position of dominance in the country.⁴

Although President Obama has been more reluctant to criticize his initial decision to refrain from arming the Syrian opposition, he remarked to 60 Minutes in a September 28, 2014, interview that the U.S. underestimated ISIS’s ability to leverage the instability in Syria to transform itself into a much stronger group.⁵ With specific regard to ISIS’s success in Iraq, some focus their blame on Prime Minister Maliki, arguing that his overly authoritarian and sectarian policies alienated Iraq’s Sunnis to an extent where they were willing to prefer ISIS control over their territory to that of the Iraqi government.⁶ Others highlight the weak state of the Iraqi army, noting that rampant corruption, incompetent

leadership, and chronic logistical mismanagement, including a failure to provide soldiers with food or water in 120-degree desert heat, prevented it from waging significant resistance against ISIS attacks and guaranteed that the group’s offensive would achieve its intended goals.7

These aforementioned factors likely played important roles in facilitating the emergence of ISIS. However, such explanations are explicitly contextual in nature — while they analyze the environment that allowed ISIS to emerge, they speak much less of the organization itself. The key assumption underlying these forthcoming three thesis chapters is that, in order to understand how certain terrorist organizations are able to emerge and why they carry out the kinds of operations they choose to implement, one must primarily understand unique internal factors of each group. This axiom especially applies to the policy options that terrorist organizations embrace. Indeed, it is difficult to ascertain why ISIS embarked on a campaign of public beheadings of American and British journalists and aid workers captured in Syria without asking several questions specific to the group. Questions that must be asked include, most prominently, what precisely ISIS thought it stood to gain from carrying out the beheadings? Do they offer the group any form of strategic benefit? Otherwise, do they fulfill some type of ISIS ideological goal? Alternatively, one must query whether the beheadings occurred with the permission of ISIS leadership to send a message to the West, or whether they were carried out exclusively to fulfill the murderous urges of directly involved rank and file perpetrators. The capability to answer such questions will provide counterterrorism practitioners, including senior U.S. officials, with necessary insight into the internal

machinations of terrorist organizations and allow them to develop actionable policy options based on their assessments. While recognizing the context through which terrorist organizations emerge is vitally important, a clear understanding of the unique characteristics of each group — their ideology, the extent to which they prioritize achieving strategic goals, and their intra-organizational dynamics — offers deeper knowledge of such groups. Understanding different terrorist organizations on this more granular level can enable policymakers to devise specific policies to erode the influence of a targeted group and helps avoid a “one size fits all approach” to counterterrorism. While these thesis chapters do not directly address ISIS, the methodology applied to the surveyed terrorist organizations here offers a blueprint that academics and/or policymakers could apply to draw similar conclusions about that group.

In line with the notion that policymakers must understand the unique characteristics of different terrorist organizations in order to craft policy to defeat these groups, this paper seeks to discern whether one such factor, group ideology, is the primary determining factor of the operational behavior of terrorist organizations. The several dozen foreign terrorist organizations that the United States, Israel, Germany, and others have designated as such possess variant ideologies, including the Marxist-Leninism and ethnocentrism espoused by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE), Hizballah’s religio-nationalist principles, and al-Qaeda’s brand of takfiri, universal militant Islam. Groups with variant ideologies tend to embrace different policy options. For example, suicide bombings comprised a key component of LTTE operations until the group’s destruction in 2009, while Hizballah has refrained from prosecuting suicide attacks for nearly the entirety of its existence. With this notion in mind, scholars have
long tested hypotheses alleging specific connections between a terrorist organization’s ideology and its means of operation. However, there is a divide among such analyses, as some scholars assume that terrorist organizations conceive their ideologies as inviolable laws demanding universal adherence, while others believe ideology comprises a set of “guiding principles” that terrorist organizations can strategically adjust to fit their current circumstances. Also, an examination of broader contemporary literature on this subject reveals other factors scholars frequently analyze as potentially shaping terrorist organization behavior. In addition to ideology, the two factors scholars most often examine are rational choice theory (RCT) and organizational dynamics. RCT refers to the view that organizations or individuals seek only to maximize either personal utility or the utility of the group to which they belong when weighing policy options, while organizational dynamics comprise several competing arguments asserting that the predilection of either a strong group leader or a collection of bureaucratic elites are primarily responsible for organizational decision-making.

The fact that other variables have also been frequently analyzed indicates that ideology’s relative utility can best be discerned by also considering the utility of both RCT and organizational dynamics. While existing literature primarily analyzing ideology sometimes provides attention to another competing factor, it still often suffers from refraining to embrace a more comprehensive scope where other factors receive thorough consideration. While this problem of a narrow frame of analysis applies both to scholarship conceiving ideology as a group of strict laws and that viewing the factor in a more strategic light, it is most persistent with regard to the former. Such scholarship conceives ideology as such a pervasive factor that it argues ideology fully prevents
organizations from acting rationally and entirely supersedes the relevance of intra-group
group dynamics. While those who view ideology in a more strategic, malleable way
often purport a complementary relationship between ideology and RCT, such scholars
have little to say about the relevance of organizational dynamics.

This persistent narrow scope is not limited to literature focused on ideology. Analysis espousing RCT as the primary determinant of terrorist organization behavior
often accounts for the utility of organizational dynamics but does not espouse any
complementary role for ideology. This view is offered in the context of the assumption of
many RCT scholars that utility-maximizing actions, which are primarily responsible for
organizational behavior, are mutually exclusive from a terrorist organization’s ideological
disposition. Additionally, other scholars arguing that select organizational dynamics,
specifically myth symbol complexes (an ethnocentric narrative justifying collective
action against a rival group) and groupthink (defined as conformity in decision making
among elites), are key factors determining terrorist organization behavior often both
interpret ideology as a set of immutable laws and cite it as a complementary factor.
However, they tend to either ignore RCT or view the notion of rationality as entirely at
odds with their arguments.

The nature of existing literature thus affords this paper the opportunity to add
value by conducting inquiry with a more comprehensive scope. This paper hypothesizes
not only that a terrorist organization’s ideology is the key factor affecting its operational

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Affairs* 15 (1): 11-20
9 Keohane, Robert and Judith Goldstein. 1993. *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political
behavior, but also that both RCT and organizational dynamics play key complementary
roles in this regard. Ideology is conceived here not as a set in laws written in stone, but
rather as a looser set of principles that terrorist organizations can apply to make decisions
that fit their strategic circumstances. A complementary relationship between ideology and
RCT is implicit within this assumption, as the hypothesis asserts that strategic
interpretations of ideology are in fact not mutually exclusive from utility maximizing
behavior, which is the premise that underlies RCT. The hypothesis also leaves open a role
for organizational dynamics, as it assumes that influential, high-ranking terrorists
responsible for policymaking, whether they comprise a unitary leader or a larger group of
elites, derive their legitimacy from a shared perspective among rank and file members
that the leaders are adherents of the organization’s ideology. It should be reasserted that
both RCT and organizational dynamics are viewed as complementary factors; in other
words, this paper hypothesizes that terrorist organizations will not maximize utility or be
driven by group dynamics in a way that supersedes their ideological principles. In making
these suppositions, the hypothesis falls within the epistemological scope of scientific-
realism, which seeks to use means of inquiry to discern human cognitive processes. This
differs from the scope of instrumentalist-empiricists, a separate school of epistemological
thought that asserts that such internal cognition factors are impossible for scholars to
verify.

This paper assumes that one cannot discern ideology’s utility in determining
terrorist organization behavior without weighing its worth relative to other factors.
Additionally, it purports that a full understanding of ideology’s relative influence cannot
be discerned without testing the hypothesis against a diverse set of terrorist organizations.
The second chapter of this paper tests the hypothesis against two case studies: the operational behavior of Hamas from its early days during the first intifada in 1987 to the start of the second intifada in 2000 and, separately, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) from its founding in 1980 to the beginning of the second intifada. Hamas constitutes a case where the hypothesis is likely to be fulfilled. The group fits Piazza’s\textsuperscript{11} description of a “strategic” terrorist organization more likely to leverage its ideology in an agile way that allows space for additional variables to impact group decision making. This is because strategic groups maintain concrete goals and ties to a well-defined constituency to which they are accountable, which Piazza argues induces them to refrain from carrying out indiscriminate attacks that could place either their goals or the well-being of their constituency at risk. On the other hand, the PIJ comprises a more challenging case for the hypothesis, as the organization trends closer to what Piazza calls “universal/abstract” groups that appear more prone to conceptualizing their ideology as a series of strict laws, in effect leaving less room for strategic decision making. Indeed, “universal/abstract” groups lack close constituent ties and broader, less tangible goals, rendering them less likely to refrain from indiscriminate violence.

The third chapter seeks to bolster the hypothesis by testing it against a case far removed from both Hamas and PIJ, which can both be characterized as Islamic extremist-oriented terrorist organizations that conducted most of their operations in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. Indeed, the German Red Army Faction (RAF) traces its lineage to entirely different historical circumstances and a distinct ideological disposition. The RAF was established in 1970 as an outlet for militancy among the Federal Republic of

Germany’s (FRG, or West Germany) far left, which felt increasingly excluded from the country’s political process. The RAF’s ideological values were an amalgamation of the views of several 20th century communist scholars, from Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong to the Brazilian Marxist Carlos Marighella. The RAF is yet another difficult case for the hypothesis, as, like PIJ, the group falls under Piazza’s “universal/abstract” umbrella. However, the hypothesis may retain utility even if the cases of RAF and PIJ disprove it, as a successful testing of the hypothesis relative to Hamas would demonstrate that it might have wide-ranging applicability with regard to “strategic” terrorist organizations, if not “universal/abstract” groups. Following the three chapters, the Conclusion section will provide a final evaluation on their findings. It will also offer any recommended policy options that can be discerned from this analysis.
CHAPTER ONE
Examination of Existing Literature

Introduction

This literature review seeks to provide a survey of contending arguments regarding the efficacy of ideology as a useful factor in explaining the operations of terrorist organizations. This review begins with a description of the most prominent competing definitions of ideology in relevant literature, and then looks at arguments espousing these different concepts. Most scholars agree an organization’s ideology comprises the foundational beliefs and assumptions that shape its views toward developments affecting its interests. However, they disagree over whether organizations conceive their ideological values as rigid, inviolable laws or guiding principles enabling them to adopt policies that closely adhere with their strategic interests. In order provide a comprehensive assessment of the extent to which ideology influences the operational behavior of terrorist organizations, the literature review will weigh ideology’s utility relative to the two most frequently cited competing factors: rational choice theory and organizational dynamics. Rational choice theory (RCT) purports that actors are self-interested entities that weigh only one consideration, their personal well-being, when making decisions. Most rational choice theory scholars deem ideology a marginal factor in influencing organizational behavior. This contention is derived from an assumption that ideological values preclude organizations or individuals from behaving in an strategically optimal way. The literature review will weigh the value of this assumption. Organizational dynamics refer to an umbrella of competing arguments purporting that the whims of a strong unitary leader or a group of bureaucratic elites is the primary factor influencing an organization’s behavior. Such arguments have divergent views regarding
ideology’s efficacy; while adherents of the strong leader contention often dismiss it, it plays a prominent role within the arguments those who examine the utility of myth symbol complexes and groupthink.

The literature review will conclude with a new hypothesis derived from this critical analysis. Keeping in mind that the literature review considers not only ideology’s role in shaping terrorist organization behavior, but also the competing positions of rational choice theory and organizational dynamics, the author projects the literature review will render a hypothesis where all three factors play a part. Indeed, it is expected the hypothesis will assert that while ideology is the preeminent factor influencing terrorist organization behavior, both rational choice theory and organizational factors are equipped to play important yet secondary roles. It is foreseen that while secondary factors will be found to render demonstrative impacts on the behavior of terrorist organizations, their role will not be so great as to induce terrorist organizations to take action that violates their core ideological values.

**Ideology**

While no consensus definition of ideology exists, there is some basic agreement regarding the concepts it entails. Eagleton discusses several of these concepts, the most apparent denoting ideology as “the medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world.”

Scholars have construed ideology both as a rigid, immovable set of beliefs that an organization adheres to at any cost and as important, yet less stringent guiding principles. These dueling conceptions have strong historical roots. In the early 19th century, Napoleon used the term “ideologue” to denigrate those who opposed his dictatorship and

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committed to democratic principles.\textsuperscript{13} This conception of ideology persisted over several decades, as scholars utilized the term in a similar way to criticize fascists and communists in the post-World War I period.\textsuperscript{14} Some scholars of terrorism studies continue to perceive ideology in this fashion. Yet with the rise of behavioral political science in the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} century, many academics began to conceptualize ideology as a “relatively benign organizing device” rather than a set of fixed principles.\textsuperscript{15} In other words, they began to perceive organizations’ ideology as a series of broad parameters they could utilize to embrace policies that were not only consistent with their foundational values, but also improved their strategic position. This was due in large part to the growing popularity of the left-right continuum in political science, which provided scholars a means to quantify ideology for the first time. For example, studies of roll call votes by American political scientists had revealed that one’s party affiliation did not always serve as an indicator of future voting behavior, suggesting that more detailed metrics were necessary. As a result, scholars began to use voting records to calculate the relative position of each member of Congress on the left-right continuum.\textsuperscript{16} Political scientists equated each member’s position with his or her ideological disposition and quickly found that the metric was a useful analytical and predictive tool. Now that it was a quantifiable metric, scholars began to perceive ideology as a key factor they could utilize to help them project and explain political behavior and, as Knight explains, exorcized the term of its pejorative connotations.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Knight, p. 619, 624
\textsuperscript{15} Knight, p. 622
\textsuperscript{16} Knight, p. 622
\textsuperscript{17} Knight, p. 622
Ideology as a benign organizing device

CJM Drake’s “The Role of Ideology in Terrorists’ Target Selection” is an example of scholarship that argues strongly in favor of Knight’s conception of ideology as a “benign organizing device.”18 The author asserts that a terrorist organization’s ideology helps guide the implementation of its strategic operations by providing it with a range of legitimate targets. Drake defines legitimate targets as institutions and individuals the organization believes have transgressed its ideological framework.19 He emphasizes that, by circumscribing the scope of a terrorist organization’s operations, a terrorist organization’s ideology prevents the occurrence of wild, indiscriminate attacks that could lead the conflict to spiral out of control.20 Drake assumes that a terrorist organization’s disposition to act rationally in a way that takes into account group resources and the existing security environment further induces it to abide by an ideologically-circumscribed scope of acceptable behavior.21 He demonstrates the veracity of his argument by examining the operational records of two groups — Irish republican terrorists and Ulster loyalist terrorists — that operated within the same geographical area and maintained a mutual communal antipathy yet held distinct ideologies.22 He found that Irish republican groups, whose ideologies stressed the need to eliminate those who were affiliated with foreign occupying forces, indeed prosecuted the majority of their attacks against British security personnel.23 Drake’s analysis further uncovers that Ulster loyalist groups, whose ideologies embraced a narrative that called for terrorizing the civilian

19 Drake, p. 53
20 Drake, p. 53-54
21 Drake, p. 54, 70
22 Drake, p. 61
23 Drake, p. 63
population (which was perceived as a strong basis of support for the republicans), did in fact implement most of their attacks against civilians rather than republican forces. The author therefore concludes that divergent ideologies among terrorist groups operating in the same context accounts for disparities in their operational histories and prevents the proliferation of unadulterated attacks that would accelerate the conflict to levels they would have thought unacceptable.

Like Drake, Keohane and Goldstein perceive ideology as a factor that guides organizations to select policies that are consistent with their strategic interests. In Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions, and Political Change, the authors identify three principal situations where an actor’s ideas play an important role in operational decision-making. First, in cases where the political actor faces a multitude of choices ridden with uncertainty in addressing even a single problem, the authors posit that the actor will naturally utilize its inherent ideological makeup, which provides a finite number of courses of action that could be seen as appropriate, to serve as a “roadmap” to guide its rational decision making process. While this analysis is quite similar to Drake’s, the two additional points Keohane and Goldstein raise go beyond what Drake considered. They note that shared ideas among actors facilitate efforts to reach joint decisions in cases where a solution serving the interests of the involved parties in a relatively equitable manner is otherwise not apparent. In such cases, “elites may settle on courses of action on the basis of shared cultural, normative, religious, ethnic, or causal beliefs,”

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24 Drake, p. 64
26 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 13
27 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 13
even at the expense of “institutional-based adherence to the rules of the game”.

Finally, the authors argue that ideas influencing an organization’s policy will become structurally embedded, which constrains the number of paths open to future decision makers in their policy making efforts and ensures the continued relevance of ideas long after their popularity culminates. It is important to note that the authors assert these three so-called “pathways” through which ideas can affect policy are often only opened after unrelated forces destabilize a policy consensus, prompting actors to judge in a rational manner that changes need to be implemented. Thus, like Drake, Keohane and Goldstein believe that a group’s efforts to fulfill its ideological mandates can occur in collaboration with, rather than at the expense of, rational self-interest.

James A. Piazza asserts that taking a firm ideological stance does not always imply rigidity. In fact, like both Drake and, separately, Keohane and Goldstein, he contends that ideology impels terrorist organizations to formulate and adhere to their respective self-interested goals. He expands upon their analysis by arguing that ideological differences among “universal/abstract” groups such as al-Qaeda and “strategic” groups including Hamas account for variant organizational frameworks and goal structures among terrorist organizations, which in turn provides for the divergent nature of their respective operations. Given that “universal/abstract” groups possess much more conceptual objectives, target audiences, and constituencies, Piazza argues that they have a predilection to carry out attacks with a symbolic, rather than strategic value that take little account of civilian casualties. While this analysis runs contrary to the

28 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 18
29 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 13, 20
30 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 26
previously discussed literature, Piazza also argues that because “strategic” groups espouse more concrete goals and maintain closer relationships with well-defined constituencies to which they are highly accountable, they are more likely to conduct attacks aimed at minimizing civilian casualties and realizing a well-defined strategic end in a way that Drake and Keohane and Goldstein envision.32

Rigid views of ideology

Former U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff discusses ideology as a much more rigid, broader determinant of terrorist organization behavior.33 Chertoff writes that “Al-Qaeda and like minded organizations are inspired by a malignant ideology characterized by contempt for human dignity and a depraved disregard for human life.”34 Rather than apply the more nuanced argument put forth by Piazza, he asserts that these ideological mandates apply not only to al-Qaeda and likeminded Sunni groups, but also to “the Shiite dominated movement led by the late Ayatollah Khomeini.”35 He traces the roots of this ideology back to 20th century Western totalitarianism, contending that like Marxism and Fascism, radical interpretations of Islam universally reject the distinction between combatants and noncombatants in the conduct of war; espouse a macabre celebration of death; and provide for the elevation of their movements above traditional secular and religious law. While Drake, Keohane and Goldstein, and Piazza argue that ideological precepts assist organizations in formulating what they view as rational goals and the means to achieving them, Chertoff implies that terrorist groups are held captive to

32 Piazza, p. 65-66
34 Chertoff, p. 11
35 Chertoff, p. 12
ideology and will adhere to certain beliefs in thought and practice whether or not they help such organizations articulate and attain their objectives.

Like Chertoff, Cash argues that ideology can serve as a set of fixed beliefs that impose significant constraints on organizational behavior. Yet while Chertoff concentrates his analysis on the negative implications of this state of play, Cash examines how ideology transforms into such a restrictive factor in the first place. Indeed, he asserts that the anger, hatred, and aggression that are often associated with extremist ideologies are not merely “crazy” and therefore closed to academic analysis. Instead, he assumes that while most groups are capable of rational calculation, they are also vulnerable to paranoid and depressive anxieties that spur the defense mechanisms that lead to ideological change. Cash borrows from psychoanalytic theory and argues that when moderate groups enter extreme periods of crisis, they will employ paranoid-schizoid defense mechanisms that cause them to embrace extremism. This process leads the group in crisis to conceive itself as beyond criticism while perceiving any threatening groups as sub-human and thus worthy of eradication. As a result, the once moderate group will comprehensively reorient its resources and goals toward the complete destruction of such threatening groups. While Chertoff views ideology as the only factor that frames a terrorist organization’s behavior, Cash argues that ideology is the strongest factor, and that it is capable eradicating the influence of competing factors during times of crisis.

37 Cash, p. 711
38 Cash, p. 708-709
39 Cash, p. 715
The preceding paragraphs offer a survey of competing conceptions of ideology and the role it plays in influencing terrorist organization behavior. Some scholars envisage ideology as a sequence of immutable laws organizations interpret in the same manner regardless of the particular situation at hand. Others perceive ideology in a different light, asserting that its true nature is that of a set of guiding principles that enable the adoption of policy options consistent with both the strategic interests and inherent values of the organization in question. However, scholars on both sides of the debate have not put forth comprehensive hypotheses that take strong potential secondary roles for both rational choice theory and organizational dynamics into account. Drake and, separately, Keohane and Goldstein factor prominently among scholars who argue that a symbiotic relationship between ideology and rational choice influences terrorist organization behavior. However, they refrain from considering any role for organizational dynamics. Cash, who holds different assumptions regarding ideology, asserts that its nature as a set of invariable set of laws demanding adherence under all circumstances means that organizational dynamics play only a marginal complementary role in shaping group behavior. Cash offers no equivalent role for rational choice.

**Rational Choice Theory**

*Introductory Concepts*

Rational choice theory (RCT) enjoys a great deal of prominence in international relations scholarship, as both realism and liberal institutionalism apply RCT models as starting points for their analysis.\(^{40}\) RCT has influenced the way political scientists analyze

\(^{40}\) Keohane and Goldstein, p. 4
several issues ranging from voting behavior to nuclear deterrence. There is some definitional consensus of RCT. Amartya Sen argues that RCT espouses a “self-interest view of rationality” in which one calculates his/her self-interest only as it applies to his/her personal well-being, mandating that the interests of others enter this calculation only as they apply to that individual’s own well-being and advantage. Both Sen and Paul MacDonald assert that RCT consists of three core components. The first component, known as “maximizing utility,” posits that goal oriented action, rather than habit, tradition, or social outcomes, is the best means to explain outcomes. The second component, termed “a stable set of preferences,” refers to the existence of ordered preferences derived from self-interest that guide the actor’s behavior. The final component, utility maximization, posits that one will take action only after accumulating optimal information and selecting a course that provides him/her with optimal utility. The importance attached to these three conditions on the part of many rational choice theorists is illustrated by their insistence that decisions made for social or moral purposes must be reinterpreted within their framework that provides for the intelligent pursuit of self-interest. Although ideology is acknowledged as a force within these conditions, this focus is often limited to the constraints it poses, rather than any utility it offers, toward the realization of optimal gains.

**Competing Epistemological Foundations**

43 McDonald, p. 552; Sen, p. 27  
44 McDonald, p. 552; Sen, p. 27  
45 McDonald, p. 552; Sen, p. 72  
46 Sen, p. 28  
47 Keohane and Goldstein, p. 4
While there is a general understanding of the principles RCT encompasses, there are competing arguments regarding precisely how it can be applied to conducting scientific inquiry and producing valid data on empirical phenomena. Instrumentalism-empiricism and scientific-realism are the two key epistemological foundations of RCT. Instrumentalist-empiricists believe that theories should be developed primarily with testability and generalizability in mind, and they value theoretical statements that can be tested against a wide variety of empirical phenomena. Instrumentalist-empiricists thus value RCT because they believe it can serve as a means for the construction of generalizable hypotheses that can be applied to a wide variety of case studies. In contrast, scientific realists prefer to construct hypotheses that “that clearly specify, describe, and explain the causal mechanisms that operate in a particular situation.” The divergence in scope between these schools of thought pertains largely to their difference of opinion regarding whether theory can discern processes of human cognition in particular circumstances. While instrumentalist-empiricists believe this is impossible, scientific realists assert that it is essential given their assumption that most successful scientific theories rely on indirectly observable phenomena. Thus, the forthcoming analyzed scholarship falls within the realm of scientific-realism. This is because scientific realists, unlike instrumentalist-empiricists, believe that one can utilize RCT to craft intricate hypotheses explaining the internal, cognitive factors that guide the decision making of specific organizations, groups, or individuals.

48 MacDonald, p. 551
49 MacDonald, p. 553-554
50 MacDonald, p. 554, 558
51 MacDonald, p. 555
52 MacDonald, p. 555
53 MacDonald, p. 555
Applied Arguments

Organizational Level of Analysis

Scholars espousing rational choice as an explanatory framework of terrorist organization behavior routinely apply the notion that all decisions, even those that on the surface appear unselfish, can be reassessed in terms of unabated self-interest. Ideology is viewed as a dependent factor, vulnerable to manipulation by the organization’s selfish whims. Demonstrating this relationship often entails shifting the context of research to the organizational level of analysis. For example, Pape argues that while implementing suicide terrorist attacks may be irrational for the foot soldiers carrying them out, they have historically served the strategic interests of the broader organization in question.54 Indeed, he argues that suicide terrorism maximizes group utility more than other means of terrorism because of the high rate of casualties it yields; he found that while suicide terrorist attacks accounted for only 3% of all terrorist attacks from 1980-2001, they were responsible for 48% of the casualties.55 Pape says the historical record makes clear that leaders of states that suicide terrorism campaigns have targeted often cite the destructive nature of suicide terrorism as a justification for conceding to some of the terrorists’ political goals.56 He notes that terrorist organizations are aware of suicide terrorism’s effectiveness in this regard and have demonstrated their predilection toward rationality by accelerating its use as a means to satisfy their strategic interests.57 He adds that many organizations have further illustrated their rational inclinations by suspending or ceasing

55 Pape, p. 347
56 Pape, p. 353
57 Pape, p. 350
suicide terrorism campaigns on occasions where they judge that more attacks would be counterproductive in garnering concessions from the target state.  

Sprinzak shares Pape’s view that terrorist organizations are rational actors that employ suicide terrorism attacks because they correctly judge that such operations are an effective means toward realizing their strategic goals. Like Pape, Sprinzak asserts that suicide terrorism’s utility is best assessed in the context of the organizational rather than individual level of analysis, as he views rank and file suicide terrorists as nothing more than instruments or pawns of strategically minded organizational leaders. Sprinzak’s argument that suicide terrorism is a product of the organization’s calculation of its strategic interests is most evident in his observation that terrorist organizations are prone to adopting the practice as a *temporary* strategy. He says that such organizations, regardless of their precise ideological or theological persuasion, are apt to grant ideological sanction for suicide attacks during times in which they are perceived to have positive utility, only to rescind the sanction when the operational effectiveness of the tactic decreases. He cites Hezbollah’s brief embrace of suicide terrorism in the early 1980’s as an example of this practice, noting that Hezbollah-affiliated religious leaders engaged in “theological hair-splitting” to justify a practice that they had previously disavowed but was proving to be strategically effective. Sprinzak added that that these leaders quickly re-embraced their previous characterizations of suicide terrorism as contrary to Islamic values when the decreasing utility of this practice became apparent.

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58 Pape, p. 347  
60 Sprinzak, p.72  
61 Sprinzak p. 69-70  
62 Sprinzak p. 69-70  
63 Sprinzak, p. 70.
Thus, in both Sprinzak and Pape’s view, terrorist organizations determine the nature of their operations principally on the basis of practical concerns derived from evaluations of the effectiveness of different tactics in conflict. In contrast, ideological precepts are not seen as key determining factors in the minds of terrorist organization leaders as they formulate operational strategies.

*Individual Level of Analysis*

In a manner similar to Pape and Sprinzak, Caplan argues that supposed irrational beliefs can be reassessed as perfectly rational convictions.\(^\text{64}\) However, unlike Pape and Sprinzak, Caplan contends that such actions are rational not only with regard to satisfying the aims of the group as a whole, but also for the involved individuals. Caplan makes this point through offering his model of “irrational rationality” in which actors will often choose to hold on to irrational beliefs in a rational fashion by judging that the costs of adherence are low.\(^\text{65}\) For example, he says that terrorist sympathizers remain likely to believe that suicide bombers will be rewarded for sacrificing their lives by being allowed entrance into paradise until they are personally tasked with carrying out a suicide attack. Those who continue to hold on to their beliefs in the face of these increased costs are hopelessly irrational, while those who abandon them, which Caplan contends is a vast majority, are rational actors.\(^\text{66}\) In an argument closely mirroring that of Sprinzak, Caplan contends that irrational ideological persuasions are malleable in the face stronger factors, which, principally in this case, is that of increased costs to the individual.

*Combined Arguments*


\(^{\text{65}}\) Caplan p. 98-191

\(^{\text{66}}\) Caplan p. 98, 101
Iannaccone borrows from the organizational and the individual levels of analysis when arguing that both terrorist organizations that sponsor suicide attacks and the individuals who carry them out are rational actors. On the organizational side, Iannaccone asserts that those terrorist groups that appear to be the most ideologically committed are also the most rational. According to Iannaccone, because these groups impose large costs on their members through measures including the thorough enforcement of stringent rules and regulations, they maximize operational capacity and reduce freeriding by “screening out the uncommitted and raising participation rates among those who remain.” In addition, he notes that such groups are often more capable than their less ideological brethren when it comes to acquiring access to tight social networks who share their views and are willing to provide them with material support and shelter from enemy authorities. Thus, unlike other scholars who espouse the utility of RCT, Iannaccone argues in favor of a complementary relationship between the RCT and ideology factors. Indeed, he implies that rational groups will most thoroughly fulfill their strategic interests through embracing rather than eschewing strict adherence to their ideological mandates. He argues that this can also be the case at the individual level. Indeed, he maintains that rational people are capable of sacrificing their health, status, or even their life for reasons other than personal benefit. He illustrates this point by arguing that the rational actor will consider communal, socially constructed benefits such as fame, value of accomplishment as judged by others, and beneficial rewards for loved ones when choosing whether or not to carry out a suicide attack. Iannaccone illustrates this argument by finding that highly

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68 Iannaccone, p. 13-14
69 Iannaccone, p. 15
motivated individuals with the broader interests of their community in mind, rather than despondent or irrational people with nothing to live for, make up most suicide bomber recruits in the Palestinian territories.\textsuperscript{70}

\textit{Perceived limits of RCT}

While scholars raise objections to RCT’s ability to provide a comprehensive explanation of how organizations make and implement policy on several grounds,\textsuperscript{71} Monroe and Kreidie’s “The Perspective of Islamic Fundamentalists and the Limits of Rational Choice Theory” is the most interesting for the purposes of this analysis. The authors assert that RCT is incompatible with the foundational worldview and assumptions that adherents of Islamic fundamentalism embrace.\textsuperscript{72} Indeed, Monroe and Kreidie argue that Islamic fundamentalists are unique in that they conceive themselves not as individuals, but rather a broader community whose \textit{shared} interests they are obligated to fulfill under any and all conditions.\textsuperscript{73} In addition, Monroe and Kreidie contend that the means through which Islamic fundamentalists can gather information to address these interests are limited to insight provided by a strict interpretation of sharia law, which in turn significantly circumscribes their freedom of action and ability to act in a manner consistent with RCT.\textsuperscript{74} Indeed, their analysis supposes that the means through which Islamic fundamentalists make decisions flagrantly violates the three core components of RCT as elucidated by Sen and McDonald. First, according to Monroe and Kreidie, it is habit and tradition, rather than goal-oriented action, which best explains

\textsuperscript{70} Iannaccone, p. 9
\textsuperscript{73} Monroe and Kreidie, p. 29, 35
\textsuperscript{74} Monroe and Kreidie, p. 29
Islamic fundamentalist behavior. Additionally, Monroe and Kreidie purport that the axioms of sharia law, rather than a set of ordered principles derived from self-interest, lead Islamic fundamentalists to act. Finally, Monroe and Kreidie contend Islamic fundamentalists do not accumulate optimal information before taking action; instead, their sources of insight are limited solely to sharia law. Thus, the authors conclude that because Islamic fundamentalists are not self-interested actors who utilize a set of ordered principles derived from self-interest to make decisions only after they accumulate optimal information, RCT provides quite marginal insight regarding the machinations of their decision-making.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{Organizational Dynamics}

While many scholars cite ideology or rational choice as the key element shaping terrorist organization behavior, others point to organizational dynamics as the most important factor. Scholarship of this type is divided into two distinct categories. Leadership-level analysis refers to scholarship asserting that the characteristics and behavior of a group leader are the most crucial agents influencing organizational behavior. Such arguments tend to pay little attention to the ideology factor, as they often assume that the group leader has the capacity to overrule it to satisfy his/her personal whims. Other scholars purport that a diffuse group of bureaucratic elites, rather than a singular group leader, play the paramount role in terrorist organization decision-making. Some proponents of this school of thought believe elites deliberate in a fashion where group ideology is not taken into account. For example, Allison argues that bureaucratic elites make decisions through a process of bargaining and compromise that is largely divorced from ideological concerns. Yet others maintain that ideology can profoundly

\textsuperscript{75} Monroe and Kreidie, p. 20
impact the manner in which they make decisions. Janis’ conception of organizational decision-making through groupthink is among such arguments, as it maintains that both organizational and ideological factors play important roles in elite decision-making.

**Leadership-level Analysis**

Scholars who employ the individual level of analysis to study the organizational dynamics of groups often argue that the characteristics of a group’s leader are a key determinant of the operational behavior of the group as a whole. Oberschall observes that the presence of a strong leader is necessary to facilitate the actions of strong insurgent groups that can utilize widespread communal discontent and existing organizational structures to craft plans of action to realize widely held goals. To demonstrate this, he explains how Osama bin Laden bolstered al-Qaeda’s fundraising and recruitment, and thus its capacity to act, by exploiting Muslim sensitivities regarding the presence of Western troops in Saudi Arabia and utilizing an existing network of sympathetic mullahs, mosques, schools, and foundations.  

Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco discuss the consequences of poor leadership, arguing that ineffective leaders who intimidate and oppress subordinates foment an atmosphere of collective distrust that erodes group productivity. Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco survey the means available to subordinates to combat destructive leader behavior, but they argue that many subordinates are risk adverse and thus often “lack the courage or commitment to challenge” autocratic leaders.  

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77 Oberschall, p. 33.  
78 Caldwell, Cam and Mayra Canuto-Carranco. 2010. “‘Organizational Terrorism’ and Moral Choices — Exercising Voice when the Leader is the Problem.” *Journal of Business Ethics* Vol. 97 159-171.  
79 Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco, p. 164
leader in determining broader organizational behavior, the group’s ideology is perceived as subservient to the whims of the group leader. While group leaders can successfully utilize components of an ideology to advance their group’s operational capacity, they are also seen as capable of ignoring ideology to either the benefit or detriment of the organization’s strategic interests.

*Arguments favoring powerful collective leadership*

Like Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco, Allison assumes that top-down directives often serve as the means that determine the nature of an organization’s operations. However, while Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco concentrate their analysis on the characteristics of the leader of the organization in question, Allison argues that a more diffuse group of bureaucratic elites guide the implementation of the group’s operational agenda. Indeed, he argues that national policymaking is often the result of bargaining among individual bureaucratic elites who head different government agencies and offices.80 The factors that contribute to the relative advantage of each actor include the legal authorities of the actors’ offices, each actor’s bargaining skills, the manner in which actors represent their respective organizations’ parochial interests, and the number and intensity of competing priorities for each actor’s time.81 Allison argues when decisions need to be made, bureaucratic elites will undergo a process in which each decision maker gives and takes certain individual prerogatives with the intent of compromising to reach a final decision. According to Allison, this process of “horse-trading” will eventually render mutual concurrence for a policy that no individual actor preferred when

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80 Allison, p. 708
81 Allison, p. 708-710
negotiations began.82 It can be clearly inferred from Allison’s argument that like
Oberschall and Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco, he does not have faith in the utility of
ideology as an organizational behavioral determinant. Instead, he argues that the process
of bargaining and compromise, rather than collective adherence to ideological dictates,
serves as the means through which bureaucratic elites make decisions.

Like Allison, Janis’ research concentrates on the ways in which collective
leaderships can influence broader organizational decision-making. Yet while Allison
asserts that bureaucratic principals can effectively negotiate amongst one another to reach
policy decisions, Janis maintains a much different view of deliberation among elites. In
Victims of Groupthink, he concentrates his research on instances of groupthink, which he
defines as poor decisions made by elites as a result of “mindless conformity and
collective misjudgment of serious risks, which are collectively laughed off in a clubby
atmosphere of relaxed conviviality.”83 Janis illustrates the existence of eight major
symptoms of groupthink, including an “illusion of invulnerability,” an “unquestioned
belief in the group’s inherent morality,” and “stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too
evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate.”84 Janis also makes note of several other
factors impacting the decision making of groups, implying that they often prohibit the
group from acting in a rational manner.85 These include instances of “extreme crisis” in
which “group contagion occasionally gives rise to collective panic, violent acts of
scapegoating, and other forms of what could be called group madness” and cases where
“the chief executive manipulates his advisors to rubber-stamp his own ill-conceived

82 Allison, p. 708, 710
83 Janis, Irving. 1972. Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign policy decisions and
84 Janis, p. 197-198
85 Janis, p. 3
proposals. Of all the arguments Janis puts forth, his conception of groupthink most directly attributes group behavior to a mix of co-existing organizational and ideological factors. Yet the manner in which Janis describes groupthink indicates that his conception of ideology is very different than that of either Oberschall or Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco, which analyze ideology as a factor that group leaders can utilize to satisfy their strategic interests. Janis’ conception of ideology, on the other hand, closely correlates with more orthodox conceptions of the term as a set of rigid laws that are often at odds with an organization’s strategic goals.

In a very similar argument, Kaufman points to both ideological and organizational factors that drive group decision making when outlining his process where ethnic groups and ethnically motivated terrorist organizations make decisions based on the dictates of their respective ideologically laden “myth symbol complexes.” It must be emphasized that Kaufman’s argument relates only to groups whose legitimacy is derived chiefly from ethnic concerns, as he does not attempt to apply his argument to cases where ethnic problems are subordinated to other types of disputes. According to Kaufman, a combination of this “group myth” justifying action against an ethnic rival and a prevailing collective fear of group extinction constitute preconditions for an ethnically based terrorist organization to begin operations. Thus, a symbiotic relationship between collective, rigid adherence to ideological laws and groupthink acts as the primary stimulant for ethnically-motivated terrorist behavior. Related sub-factors illustrating the power of ideology and groupthink as determining factors of terrorist organization

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86 Janis, p. 3
88 Kaufman, p. 47
behavior include extreme hostility toward the rival group expressed in broader popular
culture, the use of symbolic appeals to promote fear and hostility by chauvinist elites, and
the creation of a security dilemma in which the increasing extremism of one group’s
leadership radicalizes that of its rival. \(^89\) Thus, like Janis, Kaufman asserts that ideological
and organizational factors can work in concert to shape group behavior. His argument
that strongly held views among the organization’s broader constituency can influence
group behavior is unique. The other surveyed authors broadly assumed that either a group
leader or bureaucratic elite serves the primary architect of a group’s operational program.

Kaufman’s study is also valuable in that it directly emphasizes the primacy of his
argument at the expense of RCT on multiple counts. He disagrees with a prominent
subset of RCT asserting that ethnic conflict occurs due to so-called “information failures”
or “commitment problems,” citing cases in which ethnic conflict ensued when the sides
were aware of both the likely outcome of the fighting and the hostility of their opponents,
while possessing the capacity to adhere to peace agreements. \(^90\) Furthermore, with regard
to the strain of RCT arguing that “predatory elites” cause ethnic wars, through the use of
terrorism or other means, to fulfill their own interests, Kaufman asserts that while elites
often foment ethnic conflict, they do so at their own peril as this often results in the
erosion or even complete loss of their power. \(^91\)

While Janis and Kaufman assert that both groupthink and popular adherence to
unalterable ideological laws often act in tandem to determine organizational behavior,
McCormick contends that groupthink alone is a sufficient determining factor. Indeed, he
asserts that groupthink alters an individual’s strategic thinking and perception of risk

\(^89\) Kaufman, p. 58  
\(^90\) Kaufman, p. 57  
\(^91\) Kaufman, p. 57
when that individual joins a terrorist organization. This is because, according to McCormick, an individual’s act of casting his/her lot with an organized, cohesive group impels that individual to remove any disparity between his/her views and those of the organization as a whole.92 Furthermore, he contends that although successful terrorist organizations carry out operations to fulfill defined political objectives, several organizational constraints cause them to pursue their goals in manner divorced from the precepts of rational choice.93 Building on Janis’ argument that organizations often make irrational decisions in times of crisis, McCormick notes that terrorist organizations achieving some manner of success are often pushed underground by state authorities, cutting them off from society.94 McCormick contends that this isolation causes organizations to feel that their existence is severely threatened, giving rise to trends within the group such as blind adherence to the group leader, the view that any criticism of the group’s strategy is a form of treason, and a perceived need to undertake high-risk offensive operations to fulfill the group’s defensive needs. These lines of thinking foment poor decision making at the expense of an overarching ideology that would guide group behavior under these difficult circumstances. Thus, it is apparent that McCormick’s argument supports the notion that organizational dynamics, rather than ideological factors, are the primary determining factor of terrorist organization behavior.

Assessment of Literature

This literature review finds that there are several competing arguments regarding the precise manner in which ideology, disposition toward rational choice (RCT), and

93 McCormick p. 473-507
94 McCormick p. 484
organizational dynamics interact with one another to shape group behavior. Whether scholars conceive ideology as synonymous with a rigid, immovable set of beliefs that an organization will adhere with under all circumstances or a set of important, but comparatively less stringent guiding principles that facilitate strategic decision-making, plays an important role in determining their views. Those who conceive ideology as a set of strict laws tend to believe either that ideology is the only factor capable of influencing organizational behavior, or that the strength of the ideology factor is so apparent that it almost completely extinguishes the influence of all competing factors. Yet academics advocating for the interpretation of ideology as a more strategic, inclusive factor believe that an organization’s efforts to satisfy its ideology can actually lead the group to conduct operations in a way that is consistent with the utility maximizing principles of RCT. Drake’s argument that both Irish republican and Ulster loyalist groups were able to prevent the conflict between them from spiraling out of their control by carrying out attacks that adhered with their respective ideologies serves as one example of this line of thinking.

While many scholars who argue that an organization’s ideology is the factor that most significantly impacts the nature of its operations believe that RCT also plays an essential role in this regard, those who center their research on RCT tend to possess much less positive views of an equivalent complementary role for ideology. This inherent opposition may be traced to two key theoretical foundations of RCT that Sen and McDonald explain. It should be recalled that these scholars maintain that goal-oriented action, which they define in a narrow way that excludes habit, tradition, or ideology, is the optimal means to explain outcomes. Additionally, they argue that actors accumulate
optimal information before undertaking utility maximizing activities. Yet, as Keohane and Goldstein note, ideology offers uncertain actors a finite number of courses of action they can exploit to resolve a policy issue. Thus, ideology in effect relieves actors from considering policy in a fashion that scholars of RCT believe is absolutely essential to discerning group behavior.

It thus logically follows that many proponents of a cardinal role for RCT in determining organizational behavior downplay or dismiss any meaningful role for ideology in contributing to this process. The views of Sprinzak and Pape, who study RCT in the context of the organizational level of analysis, clearly demonstrate this. Both scholars determine that terrorist organizations formulate their strategies solely on the basis of practical evaluations of the relative effectiveness of different tactics used in conflict. This reason-based conception provides little breathing room for ideology to play an important role. While Caplan studies RCT’s applicability from the vantage point of the individual, his assessment of ideology is quite similar to those of Sprinzak and Pape, who analyze it at the organizational level. He contends that while individuals may embrace their organization’s ideology when the costs of adherence are low, they will quickly embrace rationality when these costs increase. Caplan thus concludes that the degree to which an actor is ideologically compliant is malleable in the face of RCT, which he sees as a stronger, more compelling factor. Of the RCT literature surveyed, Iannaccone’s argument is unique as it promotes a more complementary relationship between the RCT and ideology factors. He reasons that organizations which embrace a strict adherence with their ideological mandates demonstrate substantial rationality, as they realize important strategic benefits from this practice that groups who perceive their ideology as
a less stringent set of organizing principles fail to obtain. Iannaccone also examines the relationship between these factors using the individual level of analysis. He concludes here that individuals who tightly conform to their organization’s ideological mandates can be rational even if those mandates espouse concepts such as self-sacrifice, as truly rational actors will consider not only individual, but also communal benefits before judging whether to sacrifice their lives to their organizations’ cause.

While scholars who advocate for the efficacy of RCT as the predominant factor molding group behavior tend to discard ideology, those who perceive the strong influence of organizational trends on collective behavior often view ideology as a more active, complementary factor. However, these scholars differ in their assumptions of ideology’s foundational characteristics. Oberschall and Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco, both of whom argue that a strong group leader plays an essential role in formulating and carrying out a group’s operational agenda, understand ideology’s determining power as weak relative to the group leader’s personal prerogatives. Yet ideology is not entirely dismissed, as Oberschall explicitly notes that a group leader is capable of using their organization’s ideology as a means to either satisfy or undermine the group’s strategic interests. It is thus clear that Obserschall views group ideology as a strategic tool that leaders can exploit to attain strategic goals. Allison, who argues that a bureaucratic elite is the responsible force behind organizational decision-making, pushes aside the notion of ideology as an influential factor in a manner similar to that of RCT theorists. He asserts that a process of bargaining and compromise among elites in which adherence to ideology is largely ignored serves as the means through which group decisions are made.
Most scholars who advocate for groupthink or myth symbol complexes as a factor guiding organizational decision-making tend to embrace an even more robust complementary role for ideology than do Oberschall and Caldwell and Canuto-Carranco. They tend to view group ideology in a more traditional light, arguing that it often leads organizations to behave in a manner contrary with their strategic imperatives. Janis notes the existence of eight “symptoms” of groupthink which include an “illusion of invulnerability,” “stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate,” and “unquestioned belief in the group’s inherent morality.” Similarly, Kaufman argues that the emergence of a “group myth” advocating action against an ethnic rival and a prevailing fear of collective extinction often induce ethnically-motivated terrorist organizations to begin conducting operations against a rival group. Of the surveyed scholars who analyze groupthink, only McCormick believes that the phenomena completely overwhelms rather than complements an organization’s ideological mandates in determining collective behavior.

Hypothesis

The main purpose of the forthcoming hypothesis is to determine the relative influence of a terrorist organization’s ideology in shaping its operational behavior. However, the epistemological aspirations of this research are borrowed from previously reviewed RCT literature. The hypothesis will aspire to discern factors of human cognition that lead different terrorist organizations to act in particular, unique circumstances. This objective fits within the scope of scientific-realist RCT literature, as scientific-realists embrace hypotheses that seek to identify cognitive mechanisms that influence behavior while instrumentalist-empiricists believe the relative utility of such
internal factors is impossible to verify. It should be noted that the forthcoming thesis chapters do possess a tinge of instrumentalist-empiricism in that they will seek to apply this hypothesis to the behavior of several different actors, rather than to one unique case. However, this analysis is clearly within the realm of scientific-realist literature, as it comes down firmly on the side of scientific-realists over the biggest issue of dispute between scientific-realists and instrumentalist-empiricists, which pertains to whether it is possible for scholars to make credible arguments characterizing a group’s cognitive behavior.

The preceding literature review yielded hypotheses offering different conceptions of the interplay between the factors of ideology, rational choice, and organizational dynamics and how this interplay impacts the operational behavior of terrorist organizations and other groups. These hypotheses choose to acknowledge the utility of either one or two of the factors at play. Chertoff serves as one example of the former phenomena, as he contends that because terrorist organizations are prone to stringently comply with their ideological dictates under all circumstances, ideology is the only relevant factor impacting the nature of terrorist organization behavior. Oberschall’s work is indicative of literature that considers two factors, as he argues that while strong group leaders (an example of an organizational dynamics) play the preeminent role determining organizational behavior, such leaders often utilize their group’s ideology to achieve their aims. Yet rather than seeking to chart a comprehensive relationship among all three of the factors this literature review considers, those who focus on two factors directly or indirectly deny that the third renders any impact at all. This is most apparent within the
arguments of groupthink advocates, who believe the phenomena removes any impetus for organizations to consider rational choice when weighing policy options.

While this literature review has shaped the nature of the hypothesis guiding the two proceeding chapters, these chapters will not adopt a hypothesis identical to that of any surveyed literature. Instead, the chapters will consider the relative impacts of ideology, rational choice theory, and organizational dynamics in a much more comprehensive light. Indeed, the hypothesis purports that while ideology remains the most important factor shaping terrorist organization behavior, both rational choice theory and organizational constraints play essential complementary roles. This hypothesis incorporates all three of the most-cited factors impacting terrorist organization behavior and refrains from entirely dismissing any one factor as completely at odds with the others. The hypothesis’ precise view of the relationship among the three factors is spelled out below.

The hypothesis purports that terrorist organizations act in a way that is consistent with their respective ideologies. In this context, an organization’s ideology is not understood as a series of ironclad laws that the organization complies with at any cost. Instead, ideology is perceived as Knight’s “benign organizing device” which, as Drake and Keohane and Goldstein and Piazza argue, guides terrorist organizations to operate in a manner that is consistent with their strategic interests. This view of the relative power of the ideology factor is quite different than that of Cash, who argues that a group’s ideology can be powerful enough to completely eradicate the influence of other factors that impact group decision-making. In this case, a conception of ideology as a frame of reference that terrorist organizations utilize to make strategic decisions affords room for
both RCT and organizational factors to play important, yet secondary roles in determining terrorist organization behavior. Indeed, while both factors can have important effects on the manner in which a terrorist organization operates, they cannot influence a group to operate in a way that is entirely inconsistent with its ideological mandates. This is because the organization’s ideology still acts as the principal factor driving group actions.

While this hypothesis views RCT and organizational dynamics as influential yet secondary factors determining group behavior, it maintains more specific views of the precise utility of both factors. The hypothesis contends that the mistakes of those scholars who espouse the viability of RCT in determining group behavior while dismissing a complementary role of ideology lies in their excessively orthodox interpretation of RCT’s first and second components. It disputes the assumption that many RCT adherents associate with the first component, which is that “goal-oriented” actions and actions derived from habit or tradition are mutually exclusive. Instead, this hypothesis seeks to demonstrate that that terrorist organization can act in a manner that is both goal-oriented and derived from ideologically based traditions. With regard to the second component, the hypothesis argues that while ordered preferences derived from self-interest can indeed guide organizational behavior, “self-interest” preferences and ideologically-derived preferences should not be juxtaposed, as ideologically-derived preferences can guide groups to act in a manner that is consistent with their self-interests. Thus, while many adherents of RCT argue that goal-oriented, self-interested actions must be entirely separated from actions influenced by group ideology, this hypothesis asserts that an
organization’s ideology can actually impel organizations to act in goal-oriented ways that are consistent with their strategic interests.

This hypothesis also foresees a complementary role for organizational dynamics and ideology in determining terrorist group behavior. It asserts that this relationship is evident either in cases where there is a strong leader who possesses requisite influence to determine a group’s organizational program or, separately, if a collective leadership group is responsible for developing and implementing organizational activities. With regard to the first case, this hypothesis assumes that terrorist organization leaders who are powerful enough to set their groups’ operational agendas derive much of their legitimacy from a perception among the group’s rank and file that that leader is an adherent to the organization’s ideology. Thus, the hypothesis expects that a powerful leader will be unwilling to blatantly breach a groups’ ideology, fearing that doing so would undermine his/her legitimacy. Instead, leaders will invoke their organization’s ideological tenants in justifying new policies as means to maintain their positions of strength within their group’s organizational hierarchy. In cases where organizational decision-making is determined by a larger group, the hypothesis differs from suppositions in the reviewed literature that organizational dynamics such as groupthink can cause a group to fall into collective madness and act in a non-strategic way. Instead it argues that competing sub-groups will seek to utilize components of group ideology most aligned with their strategic goals as a means to advance their goals at the expense of intra-group competing interests.

Conclusion

The following two chapters will hypothesize that while ideology serves as the key factor determining the behavior of terrorist organizations, both RCT and organizational
dynamics play essential complementary roles. This hypothesis provides added value to existing literature surveyed above in two key ways. First, while the reviewed literature vigorously analyzes the utility of ideology, RCT, or organizational dynamics as determinants of terrorist organization behavior, it tends to not weigh the relative value of all three terms in a simultaneous, equally thorough fashion. In contrast, this analysis is conducted under the assumption that the utility of these three factors cannot be adequately assessed unless they are weighed equally. Additionally, the two subsequent chapters will go beyond a theoretical discussion of the existing hypothesis and test it against three distinct case studies with the intent of discerning whether or not it is applicable among a diverse range of terrorist organizations. Chapter Two will focus on Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). While both groups are prominent actors with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they are unique from one another in that Hamas fits the bill of what Piazza describes as a “strategic” terrorist organization, with concrete goals and close ties to a specific constituency, while PIJ aligns closer with what Piazza denotes as a “universal/abstract” group that lacks such ties and maintains less tangible goals. Chapter three will then turn to the German Red Army Faction (RAF), which comes from entirely different historical circumstances and possesses a completely distinct ideology from both Hamas and PIJ. Like PIJ, RAF is a “universal/abstract” group. After the hypothesis is weighed against all three groups, one will be able to see whether it offers any explanatory utility for different terrorist organizations that have unique goals, ideologies, and histories.
CHAPTER TWO
The Cases of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad

Introduction

Since the founding of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, several parties have jockeyed within and without the grouping to attain a dominant position in Palestinian politics and overturn Israel’s near monopoly of power in the internationally recognized Israeli state and the Occupied Territories. Efforts toward the former have long targeted the Fatah movement, which gained control of the PLO in 1969 and is viewed by many Palestinian actors as insufficiently dedicated to the armed struggle and too willing to accommodate Israeli demands. While these actors often turn to political activity and social work as means to challenge Fatah and Israel, they also consistently use violence to realize their objectives. There is no question that Israel has utilized its military means to respond to these groups, and that it has done so in some cases with Fatah’s assistance. While interpretations of Israel’s behavior differ, some scholars assert that its leaders seek to liquidate these groups under the implicit assumption that they interpret their respective ideologies, principally the desirability of Israel’s extermination, as strict mandates they will fulfill under any circumstances, even if it means their own death.95 The question of whether or not Israel’s supposed assumption holds true merits further analysis. This paper seeks to ascertain the role played by ideology in determining the actions of two organizations which serve as test cases: Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). The clearest way to determine the relevance of each groups’ ideological mandates is to weigh their relative impact on the decision-making processes of the organizations in question. Therefore, this paper also

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considers the impact of two additional factors that are frequently espoused as having utility in explaining terrorist organization behavior: rational choice theory (RCT) and, separately, organizational factors.

Theory and Hypothesis

The forthcoming hypothesis is intended to assess the extent to which an organization’s ideology determines its operational activities relative to two of the other most-cited factors, which are RCT and organizational factors. However, before these factors are discussed in more detail, the hypothesis’ epistemological scope must be clearly defined. The hypothesis’ epistemological framework borrows from RCT scholarship, wherein instrumentalist-empiricists and scientific-realists have developed competing arguments over the extent to which RCT can be used to produce valid data on empirical phenomena. The scope of the following hypothesis is in line with the preferences of scientific-realists, who assert that theory must seek to discern processes of human cognition pertinent to the case study to demonstrate its validity, an aspiration that instrumentalist-empiricists deem impossible. Indeed, this paper will seek to determine whether key cognitive mechanisms, namely the inherent value group members place on adherence to ideology, influence that group’s behavior. However, the beliefs of instrumentalist-empiricists still render influence on this text. The chapters will seek to apply this hypothesis to different case studies, which is what instrumentalist-empiricists prefer, rather than one single case study, which follows conventional scientific-realist behavior. Yet these chapters remain firmly within the realm of scientific-realism, as they adhere with scientific-realist views on the issue that largely defines their dispute with

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97 McDonald, p. 555
instrumentalist-empiricists: whether it is possible for scholars to weight hypotheses by discerning and subsequently making conclusions regarding internal processes of human cognition.

The thesis contends that the respective ideologies of Hamas and PIJ constitute the most important factor determining their operational behavior. This statement warrants further clarification, as the previous chapter revealed the existence of very different conceptions of ideology. One view contends that ideology consists of broad standards guiding the calibration of policies beneficial to the organization’s strategic interests, while another conceives ideology as a set of strict, concrete laws to which the organization must adhere whatever the cost. This hypothesis embraces the former conception. Indeed, in an assertion similar to that of Cash (1989), it argues that ideology’s preeminent role in shaping terrorist organization behavior is derived from its ability to serve as a flexible frame of reference from which policies beneficial to an organization’s strategic interests are constructed. This broad conception of ideology provides room for both RCT and organizational factors to play important roles shaping terrorist organization behavior.

This thesis thus posits that Hamas and PIJ have consistently conceived their ideologies as important sets of guiding principles allowing them to act in ways beneficial to their strategic interests. While ideology remains the lead factor determining group decision making, this strategic conception of the term enables RCT and organizational dynamics to render significant influence on group behavior. However, the viability of

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these secondary factors is inherently limited, as their influence cannot transcend the group’s ideology, which is the driving force of group behavior. Therefore, the hypothesis’ conception of RCT differs from that put forth by scholars in the previous chapter, the majority of whom asserted that RCT is the primary factor that determines organizational decision making and denied any influential role for ideology. While these scholars argue that rational actors always behave on the basis of “self-interest” preferences, this hypothesis does not assume that behavioral preferences based on self-interest and those derived from ideology are mutually exclusive. Thus, it provides room for organizations to carry out operations in a manner that is self-interested and goal-oriented yet also consistent with ideological traditions.

The hypothesis also provides a strong complementary role for organizational factors to influence group behavior in situations where a strong group leader or a collective leadership holds power over the movement in question. When a strong group leader is present, the hypothesis asserts that a prevailing conception among group membership that the leader is a strong adherent of the organization’s ideology underlies his or her support base. Thus, the leader will be deterred from flagrantly violating his or her organization’s ideology for fear of a loss of influence. Instead, the leader will utilize that ideology to help shape new organizational policies and maintain support among the rank and file. In cases where a more dispersed leadership wields influence, the hypothesis argues that competing bases of power will seek to utilize segments of group ideology closely associated with their goals to strengthen their relative positions within the broader group. While much of the scholarship in the literature review concentrates on efforts by
more militant sub-groups to obtain power through this tactic, this hypothesis does not rule out dovish or moderate forces utilizing it as well.

**Methodology**

The hypothesis of this paper argues that the ideologies of Hamas and PIJ serve as the preeminent factor directing their respective decision-making processes. Additionally, it maintains that these groups’ conception of ideology as a framework of principles consistent with their strategic interests provides room for both RCT and organizational factors to influence their operations. In order to clarify the manner in which the hypothesis functions, it is essential to precisely lay out the process wherein either Hamas or PIJ makes decisions derived from either rational or organizational factors that conform to its ideological principles. While the proceeding examples discuss Hamas, they are solely for purposes of illustration and similar scenarios could be applied to PIJ. The first example is as follows: Diplomatic progress between Israel and the PLO may lead Hamas to discern that support for the peace process among Palestinians is high. The movement may then respond by shifting its resources away from the armed struggle and toward the maintenance of its social institutions. In response to inevitable criticism that it is going easy on Israel, Hamas can cite ideological decrees that it respect the will of the Palestinian public and work diligently to improve their material conditions. While such a move therefore clearly conforms to Hamas’ ideological principles, it is also inherently rational because it enables Hamas to improve its strategic position by increasing, or at least maintaining, its popularity among Palestinians given their preference for peace. Thus, Hamas interprets its ideological prerogatives in a hierarchical way that is reflective of its needs at that moment. As circumstances change, this hierarchy can be rearranged.
This process is very similar with regard to decisions influenced by organizational factors. For instance, should a sub-group within Hamas prosecute several deadly attacks against Israel that invite a devastating response, that sub-group may be criticized by others in the organization for threatening its overall ability to operate. However, the sub-group could defend its behavior by arguing that Hamas’ ideology gives it an opening to interpret the armed struggle as an essential component to the destruction of Israel and the creation of an Islamic Palestinian state. If a majority of the Palestinian people were frustrated with the state of the peace process at that time and were open to settling accounts with Israel through armed conflict, that sub-group could even gain influence within Hamas. In both cases, Hamas (or a prominent sub-group within) is essentially grasping upon one central component of its ideology to justify moves that satisfy rational concerns and/or reflect competing interests of different bases of power.

In contrast, the hypothesis would not be satisfied should the Results section show that Hamas and PIJ consistently fail to adjust the manner in which they interpret their ideological mandates to prevailing rational concerns or organizational dynamics. The former situation would be apparent in concrete terms if, for instance, Hamas increased its reliance on the armed struggle at a time when most Palestinians favored negotiation with Israel, while a group leader’s adherence to an ideological dictate despite widespread opposition within his or her organization would illustrate the latter circumstance. The hypothesis would also be disproved should the Results section indicate that each group’s decision-making process is propelled primarily by RCT or organizational factors. Policymaking and implementation that occurred in a manner entirely at odds with the group’s clearly defined ideological principles would demonstrate this condition.
Examples include hypothetical decisions by Hamas to permanently recognize Israel’s right to exist or categorically disavow the use of the armed struggle to realize its objectives.

The forthcoming Results section first examines Hamas’ actions from its creation during the early days of the first intifada in December 1987 to the ensuing of the second intifada in September 2000. Hamas serves as an adequate case because the West has long considered it a terrorist organization; Israel has treated Hamas as such since the early years of its existence and the United States added the movement to its list of foreign terrorist organizations in 1993.99 The case of Hamas represents a circumstance in which the hypothesis is likely to be fulfilled. The movement’s inherent nature as a “strategic” terrorist group with concrete goals and close ties to a defined constituency renders it more likely than a “universal/abstract” group such as al-Qaeda to possess an inherently wide-ranging ideology conceptualized as a set of guiding principles rather than ironclad dictates.100 Therefore, if the Results section demonstrates that an ideological framework did not serve as the key reference point used by Hamas to make decisions in the thirteen years subsequent to its founding, then the overall usefulness of this hypothesis must be strongly questioned.

Following its concluding analysis on Hamas, the Results section will examine the ideological and structural foundations of the PIJ and offer an operational history of the organization. PIJ constitutes an adequate case study because, like Hamas, the group is among the most prominent Islamist organizations that led the armed opposition against

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Israel throughout the 1990’s. It is considered a terrorist organization by the United States and Israel and is consistently treated by both countries as an even more intransigent actor than Hamas. The PIJ case represents circumstances where the hypothesis will be more much more difficult to fulfill. This is because PIJ is understood to have more freedom than Hamas to conduct attacks against Israel in a way that would demonstrate strict adherence to its ideology at the expense of strategic concerns. This supposition is derived from PIJ’s status as a “universal/abstract” terrorist group that both lacks ties to any core constituency to which it is accountable and clearly delineated strategic goals. Should the data analyzed in the Results section demonstrate that PIJ utilized a broad ideological framework to guide an inherently flexible decision making process, the hypothesis’ utility will be significantly strengthened.

**Results**

*Hamas: Founding, Ideology, and Structure*

Hamas emerged on the Palestinian political scene by releasing a communiqué declaring its existence on December 14, 1987, days after the intifada, or uprising, against Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza began on December 8.\(^\text{101}\) Hamas’ founding signified the offering of an Islamic alternative to the largely secular mainline political representation of the Palestinian people personified by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).\(^\text{102}\) The movement was born after a period of intense debate among the leadership of the traditionally politically quietist Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood

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\(^{101}\) Hroub, p. 12

(PMB), which resulted in its decision to create a resistance wing tasked with directly confronting the Israeli occupation through participation in the intifada.\textsuperscript{103}

Although Hamas quickly engulfed the entirety of the PMB, its incorporation of the Brotherhood’s core beliefs within its own ideology guaranteed its existence as an organization with concrete strategic goals and a deep seated interest in improving the day-to-day well-being of the Palestinian people and promoting their engagement in civic life. Indeed, the PMB and Hamas agreed that a legitimate Islamic state in Palestine could be brought about only through the consent of an engaged, united, and politically literate population; and that \textit{sharia} law could be enforced only when socioeconomic conditions guaranteed no Palestinian would have to violate it to ensure his or her survival.\textsuperscript{104} To realize these ends, Hamas continued the Brotherhood tradition of providing social services to underserved Palestinians; operated within a structure in which decisions were made by a directly elected \textit{shura} (consensus) council and, later, an indirectly elected Political Bureau; and committed itself to the maintenance of intra-Palestinian unity at nearly any cost.\textsuperscript{105}

While Hamas shared PMB’s view that alleviating poverty among the Palestinian people, fostering a culture of democratic inclusion, and advocating on behalf of Palestinian unity were all enterprises beneficial to the creation of a true Islamic state in Palestine, the movement disagreed with PMB that these were the \textit{only} ways in which such a state could be created.\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, Hamas also believed in the necessity of

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{104} Gunning, pp. 55-60, 90, 97
\item\textsuperscript{106} Mishal and Sela, p. 28
\end{enumerate}
simultaneously employing violent force against Israel with the aim of seizing power through revolutionary struggle. Yet Hamas’ clear vision of a socially just, competently administered Palestinian state rendered its inclination to be more inherently strategic than those of many other groups, including PIJ, which focused exclusively on destroying Israel without considering the nature of the Palestinian state that would replace it. While Hamas’ vision of a Palestinian state was nationalistic, it was also religiously mandated, as Hamas from the outset considered all of Palestine to be a sacred, indivisible Islamic waqf (endowment) under the sovereignty of Allah. Similarly, the organization interpreted Israeli attempts to make their home in Palestine as not only an attack against the Palestinian people, but also an assault against Islam itself that must be immediately repelled. Therefore, it can be inferred that because Hamas is both strategic and religiously absolutist in nature, it has a very diffuse ideology in which its inherently divergent religious, nationalistic, democratic, and humanitarian components offer its decision makers a wide range of ideologically acceptable policy options.

_Hamas Decision Making and Theoretical Underpinnings, December 1987-September 2000_

Before Hamas was officially established in 1987, the perceived need among some elements of the PMB to engage in armed struggle against Israel led the PMB, under the direction of Hamas’ eventual founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, to acquire weapons. Despite this initial phase of militarization, Hamas engaged almost exclusively in nonviolent activity against Israel in the early days of the intifada. This policy of
nonviolence was led by Yassin himself, who utilized his charisma and stature as a figure above the squabbles of second-tier commanders to maintain a large measure of control over Hamas’ decision making.\textsuperscript{111} Yassin was a pragmatic operator fully cognizant that Hamas was a young organization vulnerable to severe consequences if it engaged in a large-scale violent confrontation with Israel.\textsuperscript{112} Additionally, given that the sentiment at the time among the Palestinian rank and file was that non-violence was an effective strategy toward garnering Israeli concessions, Yassin was aware that Hamas had scarce room to implement a violent resistance strategy.\textsuperscript{113} While this policy was reflective of the balance of power within Hamas’ organizational structure and implemented with rational concerns in mind, provisions of Hamas’ ideology also served to sustain it. Indeed, a leaflet distributed in January 1988 invoked the concept of \textit{sabr} (self-restraint), which is rooted in the Quran, by imploring the movement’s followers to “know that victory demands \textit{sabr} and God is on the side of the righteous.”\textsuperscript{114} Hamas could also justify its non-violent position by arguing that a direct confrontation with Israel would bring about attacks against the movement’s social institutions, which would negatively impact the lot of everyday Palestinians and slow the creation an authentic, popularly mandated Islamic state.\textsuperscript{115}

As the intifada continued, many Palestinians began to doubt the nonviolent struggle’s effectiveness given that no significant concrete gains had been achieved. This prevailing sense of defeat was a contributing factor to the increased Islamization of

\textsuperscript{111} Hroub, p. 124; Mishal and Sela, p. 155
\textsuperscript{112} Mishal and Sela, p. 56, 64
\textsuperscript{113} Hroub, p. 53
\textsuperscript{114} Mishal and Sela, p. 63
\textsuperscript{115} Mishal and Sela, p. 15.
Palestinian public opinion at this time.\textsuperscript{116} Sensing that the Palestinian people were losing faith in the PLO’s largely nonviolent efforts at achieving a Palestinian state, Hamas rationally began to emphasize more violent aspects of its multifaceted ideology. While the movement’s official charter, which was released in August 1988, at points emphasized several of the diverse, somewhat contradictory facets of Hamas’ ideology, the bulk of this document marked this shift very clearly. In what was perhaps a reference to Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s publically declared policy of “force, might, and beatings” against intifada participants, the charter declared that Israel administered an occupation where “breaking bones, firing on women, children, and old people, with or without reason, and throwing thousands and thousands of people into detention camps where they must live in inhuman conditions” was common practice.\textsuperscript{117} It prescribed that the only way to remedy this situation and achieve justice for Palestinians was to fight Israelis until they were “vanquished” and then “raise the banner of Allah over every inch of Palestine.”\textsuperscript{118} A separate leaflet, which was also issued by Hamas in August 1988, reiterated this point in its call for “complete liberation of every grain of soil of…Palestine.”\textsuperscript{119}

This shift in ideological emphasis was functionalized within Hamas’ organizational structure after Sheikh Yassin instructed Hamas operative Salah Shehadeh to establish Hamas’ military wing, which later became known as the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (hereafter, al-Qassam), and focus its efforts entirely on conducting

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Mishal and Sela, p. 88
\item \textsuperscript{117} Mishal and Sela, p. 188; Tessler, Mark. 1994. \textit{A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.} Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, p. 697
\item \textsuperscript{118} Mishal and Sela, p. 178-179
\item \textsuperscript{119} Mishal and Sela, p. 51
\end{itemize}
violent attacks against Israel. On February 16, 1989, with Sheikh Yassin’s blessing, al-Qassam carried out its first confirmed fatal attack against Israel when a small group of members abducted and subsequently killed an Israeli soldier. A nearly identical attack, also resulting in the death of one Israeli soldier, took place on May 3, 1989.

After the May 1989 attack, Israel immediately declared Hamas a terrorist organization and strengthened its efforts to track down the movement’s core leadership, which culminated in the arrest and subsequent long-term imprisonment of Sheik Yassin in June 1989. Despite these punitive measures, sympathy for Hamas increased among Palestinians during this time. This was due largely to Israel’s decision to air the entirety of Yassin’s year long trial on live television. With huge swathes of the Palestinian people watching, Israeli authorities allowed only Israeli police and intelligence officials to testify and prohibited Palestinians from participating substantively in the trial’s proceedings, leading many Palestinians to view Yassin as a victim of Israeli repression and fear-mongering.

While Hamas was cognizant that its successful attacks against Israel and the Israeli response had increased the movement’s popularity among the Palestinian people, it was unable to employ more violence because of the disastrous effects of Israel’s retaliatory actions on its organizational structure. Indeed, several senior Hamas operatives attempted to fill the leadership vacuum left by Sheikh Yassin’s imprisonment. Yet no

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123 Mishal and Sela, p. 56.
single leader proved capable of commanding widespread obedience among Hamas’ rank and file to a comparable extent. Hamas thus began to fragment, as operatives such as Mousa Abu Marzook, widely seen as pragmatist willing either to negotiate with Israel or plan suicide attacks against it depending on the circumstances; the more moderate Mahmoud Zahar, who stressed Hamas’ Muslim Brotherhood roots and focused his efforts on improving the movement’s social welfare institutions; and Abdul-Aziz Rantisi, a hardliner more disposed to using violent force against Israel, all began to accumulate bases of power. However, these leaders respected Hamas’ wide-ranging ideology and made no overt attempts to transform the movement into an exclusively militaristic organization or a non-violent political party. This adherence to Hamas’ ideology on the part of these leaders was also a rational calculation, as none of them could realistically project power over the entire movement to the same extent as Sheikh Yassin. While it is difficult to determine whether this decentralization of power took place organically or by design, the end result significantly enhanced Hamas’ capacity as both a military actor and a force for social change by strictly compartmentalizing these respective activities. Largely free from the influence of those who feared that continued attacks against Israel would undermine the movement’s social apparatus, the al-Qassam Brigades were provided more room to carry out the armed struggle. Additionally, because the political leadership was now at least theoretically isolated from Hamas’ military activities, its

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members were able with some success to generate sympathy for their cause by arguing that Israeli attacks against their social infrastructure were unjustified.  

Hamas’ restructuring in a manner strengthening its ability to satisfy all of its ideological mandates, including the prosecution of the armed struggle, quickly brought about a new succession of attacks against Israel. Many of these attacks were small in scale and, while planned at the grassroots level, carried out with the broad consent of Hamas leaders. Both the December 14, 1990, fatal stabbings of three Israelis in Tel Aviv and an unsuccessful attempt by a Hamas operative to run over four IDF personnel with his vehicle on March 11, 1992, represent the nature of the attacks carried out at this time. Although Hamas may have had the capacity to conduct larger operations, the movement broadly felt that a deliberative approach beginning with smaller attacks offered a more effective path toward achievement of its ideologically mandated goals.

Intra-Palestinian unrest also increased during this time as several factions sought to improve their position relative to their rivals through the use of military force. Although encouragement of Palestinian unity was a cardinal feature of Hamas’ ideology, the movement knew that to defend its interests it would have to engage in some level of violence against other Palestinian groups. To reconcile these priorities, Hamas laid out very clearly a crude due process it employed when interrogating and punishing its Palestinian enemies, whom it labeled uniformly as “collaborators” with Israel. The movement claimed that it executed “only” about 30 percent of apprehended collaborators,

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127 Chehab, p. 53
and that each guilty collaborator was shown evidence before punishment was carried out.\footnote{131}{“The Hamas Way of Death.” 1993. \textit{The New York Times}, April 16, 1993. \url{http://proquest.com}.} While it is impossible to verify whether this was actually the case, the fact that Hamas felt the need to justify these practices underscored the importance of the movement’s ideological dictum to support Palestinian harmony even during times of communal strife.

As Hamas’ small attacks increased in effectiveness, its military wing became emboldened to transition hostilities to a much larger scale.\footnote{132}{Katz, p. 75} Israeli retaliation to date had not seriously threatened Hamas’ operational capacity since the arrest of Sheikh Yassin. Additionally, Israel’s ability to carry out comprehensive counterterrorism activities in the Occupied Territories was somewhat hampered by its continued engagement in the peace process and the international condemnation it endured after deporting 415 Islamic activists, including members of Hamas, to South Lebanon in December 1992.\footnote{133}{Chehab, p. 116} Hamas thus judged rationally that the movement would not face severe repercussions if it carried out a larger scale attack.\footnote{134}{Katz, p. 75} On April 16, 1993, a Hamas operative detonated a car bomb in between two large buses at a rest stop off the Jordan Valley Highway. Although the bomb used for the operation was fashioned to kill hundreds, only the bomber and one bystander were killed, as the former was apparently unaware that both buses were empty at the time of the explosion.\footnote{135}{Katz, p. 76} However, this attack still represented an attempt by Hamas to kill an unprecedented number of Israelis in a single operation and also constituted the movement’s first use of a suicide bomber. Thus,
despite its modest casualty count, this attack signaled the beginning of a Hamas effort to substantially escalate hostilities.

Immediately after the April 16 bombings, Israel conducted thorough retaliatory operations in the Occupied Territories, which resulted in the arrest of 124 members of the al-Qassam Brigades. This unexpectedly harsh retaliation, which temporarily crumbled the Brigades’ ability to operate, coupled with the signing of the then-popular Oslo Accords on September 13, 1993, and subsequent hope among many Palestinians that a peaceful solution to the conflict was possible, compelled Hamas to temporarily suspend major operations against Israel. The organization reoriented its military policy by demanding that significant attacks be carried out only in direct response to specific Israeli measures. This directive sought to harmonize Hamas’ competing ideological priorities. It aspired to maintain unity among the Palestinian people, who were increasingly divided in terms of support for the peace process, by allowing al-Qassam to only conduct attacks that could be justified as self-defense. Yet it also enabled the armed struggle, an undertaking of immense ideological value to Hamas, to continue.

Hamas’ al-Qassam Brigades received the cause it needed to re-accelerate large-scale attacks against Israel after an American Jewish settler killed 29 unarmed Palestinians inside of a Hebron mosque on February 25, 1994. This attack, which later became known as the Hebron Massacre, galvanized public opinion and induced the Palestinian street to transition from broad support for the peace process to demands for retaliation against the Israeli government, which itself condemned the attack. In its call for vengeance, Hamas stuck to its ideological roots by emphasizing a united Palestinian

136 Katz, p. 79
137 Katz, p. 79
138 Gunning, p. 216
response. One unidentified Hamas leader remarked that the line between “so-called moderate Palestinians who supported the peace process and us in Hamas has evaporated.” Hamas carried out three fatal suicide bombings on April 6 (Afula), April 13 (Hadera), and October 19, 1994 (Tel Aviv). These attacks employed far more unrestrained violence than those perpetrated in the past; they were the first large scale operations to specifically target civilians inside the borders of Israel proper rather than the Occupied Territories. They also rendered many more casualties than past Hamas operations; the October 19 attack alone resulted in twenty-two fatalities, which was the highest death toll for any single suicide attack in Israel at the time. In statements issued after the attacks, Hamas was careful to emphasize adherence to its new policy of conducting hostilities only as retaliatory actions against Israeli aggression, contextualizing each attack as part of a broader retaliation campaign against the Hebron Massacre. For example, after the April 6 attack, Hamas disbursed a leaflet characterizing the operation as the first of five attacks to avenge the massacre, making clear that more hostilities would be carried out that Palestinians should perceive as retaliatory rather than offensive acts.

Although Hamas continued suicide attacks against Israel well into 1995, the movement lacked a fresh casus belli as profound as the Hebron Massacre that it could use to justify these offensives. Instead, the movement sought to publically legitimize these operations as a form of pressure on Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories and

offer more concessions than it was willing to provide under the Oslo Accords.\textsuperscript{141} However, as the rage that followed the aftermath of the Hebron Massacre began to dissipate, more Palestinians once again supported implementation of the Accords as agreed to by Israel and the PA and argued that Hamas’ suicide attacks were not worth the severe economic hardships they imposed. Indeed, Palestinians whose livelihoods depended on employment in Israel proper routinely condemned the attacks, which often prevented them from going to work for long periods of time. Polling conducted in the West Bank and Gaza in mid-1995 indicated that only small numbers of Palestinians supported military operations against Israel.\textsuperscript{142} By carrying out a large frequency of violent attacks that increasingly alienated both Hamas’ more moderate factions and Palestinians as a whole, al-Qassam risked violating the multifaceted ideology that played a key role in sustaining Hamas’ popularity.\textsuperscript{143}

Threatened with losing their remaining base of grassroots support, Hamas’ political leaders worked to shift the movement away from an overemphasis on the armed struggle that was inconsistent with its broader ideological values. This adjustment was most evident with regard to Hamas’ official position on the 1996 Palestinian elections. In late 1995, Hamas’ political leaders came to an agreement with Yasser Arafat’s Fatah party that they would not support actions to disrupt these elections.\textsuperscript{144} Hamas could justify this policy on the basis of its ideologically derived support for Palestinian unity, as


\textsuperscript{144} Mishal and Sela, p. 107
approximately 70% of Palestinians favored the elections taking place. The political wing also sought to craft policy in a deliberative, more ideologically consistent fashion. While several of the attacks perpetrated by al-Qassam in early to mid 1995 took place without the permission of many Hamas factions, the political wing relied on the movement’s ideologically held value of *shura* (consensus) when calibrating its official policy toward the 1996 elections. Not even the opinions of powerful members such as Ismail Haniyah and even Sheikh Yassin himself, who lent his support to Hamas participation in the elections from an Israeli prison, were enough to override the organization’s careful process in which it established a position respecting the occurrence of election but discouraging actual participation.

Although Hamas’ political leadership made efforts to promote organizational unity, the January 5, 1996, Israeli assassination of Hamas bomb maker Yehiya Ayyash and the events that followed exposed severe rifts between different factions. After Ayyash’s assassination, al-Qassam released a statement that not only held Israel responsible for his death, but also alleged that the PA cooperated with Israel in the operation that killed him. Yet after the elections concluded, Sheikh Yassin congratulated Yassir Arafat on his victory and wrote that the elections benefitted Palestinian efforts to “fix themselves on their holy land and recapture their rights.” Some interpreted this statement as a pragmatic response to public opinion, as most

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145 Gunning, p. 205
146 Gunning, pp. 103, 110-11
147 Chehab, pp. 107-108
Palestinian voters dismissed Hamas’ call to refrain from participating in the election. Al-Qassam undertook its own efforts to appeal to broader shares of Palestinians angry at Israel’s counterterrorism incursion to improve its relative position within Hamas. On February 25, 1996, it carried out two suicide bombings in the cities of Ashkelon and Jerusalem resulting in an unprecedented twenty-seven casualties. The military wing sought widespread approval for the attacks by reiterating that it had timed them to occur on the second anniversary of the Hebron massacre and fifty days after Ayyash’s assassination. These efforts failed. While al-Qassam calculated that most Palestinians would not be disturbed by Israel’s closure of the West Bank and Gaza after the attack occurred, many Palestinians lodged complaints about the economic impacts of the closure and Hamas’ popularity failed to increase.

Al-Qassam’s unsuccessful efforts to enlist Hamas’ political leadership and larger shares of the Palestinian public behind its use of violence against Israel did not stop an extremist splinter within the military wing, the New Disciples of Yehiya Ayyash, from carrying out two more suicide bombings in Jerusalem on March 3 and Tel Aviv on March 4. These operations were even more deadly than the al-Qassam attacks that preceded them, as they resulted in 27 casualties. Both the political leadership and al-Qassam spoke out against the attacks, the latter publicly commanding the sub-group to “immediately and absolutely obey the central decisions taken by the Qassam leadership to halt

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martyrdom attacks against the Jews."154 The political leadership and al-Qassam united to impose a unilateral ceasefire immediately after the March 4 attack.155 The fact that the political and military wings were able to find common cause is further illustrative of their mutual recognition of Hamas as an ideologically diverse movement that balances its social welfare and armed struggle components rather than overemphasizing one at the expense of the other. Despite misgivings among most of Hamas regarding the wisdom of the March 3 and 4 attacks, they did guide the movement to a relatively ideal strategic position. Indeed, the attacks disrupted the peace process and sowed discord between Israel and the PA, as the former had significant difficulties compelling the latter to carrying out genuine crackdowns against Hamas.156

Shortly after this series of attacks, Hamas encountered a game-changing event when Benjamin Netanyahu’s hardline Likud party narrowly won the May 29, 1996, Israeli elections. Netanyahu’s pledge to take a more hawkish stance toward the Palestinians strongly resonated with the Israeli public given the devastating suicide attacks that had occurred just two and a half months before the vote.157 Some in Hamas welcomed the change, asserting that the suicide bombings were intended to bring Likud to power and kill the peace process.158 Events immediately following Likud’s rise further enhanced Hamas’ strategic position. Netanyahu pledged to implement Oslo only if the PA undertook more genuine efforts to clamp down on Hamas and other rejectionist

154 Ibid
groups. The PA rejected Israel’s conditions and instead released hundreds of Hamas prisoners and made efforts to increase broader engagement with the movement. Both the political leadership and al-Qassam reacted by voicing public support for reconciliation with the PA and drew upon Hamas’ ideological value of unity among the Palestinian people to justify their position. The PA’s rapprochement toward Hamas rendered the latter key strategic benefits, enabling al-Qassam to rebuild its operational capacity that Israel damaged after the February-March suicide bombing campaign. The PA’s refusal to cooperate with Israeli demands also ensured that peace process implementation would remain stagnant. Frustrated with the lack of progress, greater shares of Palestinians lost faith in Israel’s ability to serve as an honest broker of peace and embraced Hamas’ resistance agenda.

Hamas’ strengthened ties with the PA and increased grassroots support continued into 1997. Al-Qassam was well positioned to escalate hostilities with Israel and elected to do so on March 21, 1997, carrying out a suicide attack in Tel Aviv that killed three. The military wing deftly portrayed the attack as a response to Israeli efforts to construct the new Har Homa settlement in East Jerusalem, a move Palestinians nearly universally opposed. The attack clearly benefitted Hamas’ strategic interests, inducing Israel to cut off all political negotiations with the PA and further endangering the moribund peace process.

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process. After the PA gradually became more responsive to Israel’s demands and started to take an active role in security operations against Hamas’ infrastructure, al-Qassam tried to reignite distrust between the parties by carrying out another suicide bombing in Jerusalem on July 31. This tactic worked, as Israel cancelled a round of peace talks with the PA on the basis that it was not undertaking requisite efforts to combat Hamas. When US Secretary of State Madeline Albright declared her plan to visit the region to try to revive the peace process, al-Qassam prosecuted a suicide attack in Jerusalem on September 4 intended to force her to cancel or limit the scope of her visit. While Hamas had to endure enhanced Israeli security operations after attack occurred, the movement also realized immediate strategic benefits as Israel cancelled upcoming meetings with US and Palestinian intelligence officials, extended closures of the West Bank and Gaza, and withheld PA funds.

Although Hamas enjoyed short-term gains resulting from its mid-1997 suicide bombing campaign, some of the long-term ramifications negatively impacted the movement’s strategic interests. Secretary Albright kept her promise to visit the region and helped spearhead US efforts to bring Israel and the PA closer together. Her initiative immediately faced a challenge, as Israel surprisingly released Sheikh Yassin from prison to secure the return of two Mossad agents that had unsuccessfully tried to assassinate

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Hamas political leader Khalid Mishaal in Amman. Hamas enjoyed a boon in popularity as rank and file Palestinians expressed adoration for Hamas’ widely revered spiritual leader. Fully cognizant of the need to maintain his own public support, Arafat curbed PA operations to combat Hamas. Yet the US and Israel kept the pressure on the PA to cooperate. Their efforts were ultimately successful, as the US successfully brokered a framework at the end of 1997 through which Israeli-PA security cooperation was enhanced. The PA carried out an unprecedented campaign in which it arrested key Hamas members, shut down Hamas media outlets, and forcibly closed charities and other social programs affiliated with the movement. These efforts inflicted great harm on Hamas’ operational capacity, as senior officials and key operatives were arrested or killed while several bomb-making facilities were uncovered.

Israel realized a key important strategic breakthrough on September 11, 1998, when it assassinated brothers Imad and Adil Awadallah. The brothers were high-ranking officials in the al-Qassam Brigades that had planned several suicide bombings, and the military wing promised to retaliate against Israel at a scale similar to the attacks that followed the death of Yehiya Ayyash. Yet Hamas was unable to do so, as the PA and Israeli had killed many key Hamas operatives who possessed the technical expertise

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172 Ibid
needed to carry out successful suicide bombings.\textsuperscript{175} Hamas was thus forced to increasingly turn to smaller-scale operations such as tossing grenades, stabbings, and shootings.\textsuperscript{176} The most noteworthy of such attacks occurred in Beersheba in October 1998, when an al-Qassam operative lobbed two grenades into a large crowd, injuring more than 100. While this attack was timed to impact ongoing negotiations of the Wye River Memorandum, which was calibrated to transfer administrative authority of larger shares of the West Bank from Israel to the PA, the agreement nonetheless was signed without delay.\textsuperscript{177} Hamas did attempt to carry out two suicide car bombings in Haifa and Tiberius in September 1999, but the Haifa bomb exploded prematurely while the bomb used in Tiberius was not powerful enough to cause any casualties.\textsuperscript{178} Continued Israeli and PA operations against Hamas prevented the movement from carrying out any successful attacks until the second intifada began in September 2000.\textsuperscript{179}

\textit{PIJ: Founding, Ideology, and Structure}

In 1980 Dr. Fathi Shiqaqi, inspired by the Iranian Revolution and disaffected with the programs of both the nationalist and Islamist Palestinian factions, brought together a group of similar-minded Islamists who came to comprise PIJ.\textsuperscript{180} According to Ramadan Shallah, who was among the “founding fathers” of PIJ and Shiqaqi’s eventual successor, the movement was born out of Shiqaqi’s views that the nationalist factions were keeping

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\bibitem{178} Cockburn, Patrick. 1999. “Bombs kill three and threaten Wye Deal in threat to peace deal three die as bombs hit Israeli towns.” \textit{BBC Summary of World Broadcasts}, September 6, 1999. \url{http://proquest.com}
\end{thebibliography}
Islam at a distance from the conflict with Israel while the Islamists were practicing unwarranted political quietism. The establishment of PIJ therefore ended the prevailing status quo where “there were nationalists without Islam and Islamists without Palestine.” PIJ emerged under the assumption that religious prescriptions, specifically dedication to *jihad* and adherence to Islamic moral principles, were the only solution to bring about a fully independent Palestinian state that would satisfy nationalists’ demands.

PIJ’s core belief that Israel’s destruction was the sole precondition for the emergence of an Islamic Palestinian state sharply distinguished it from the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and its successor, Hamas. As previously demonstrated, Hamas contended that the destruction of Israel was necessary but not sufficient for an Islamic Palestinian state to materialize. In addition, the consent of an educated, socioeconomically secure Palestinian population was required. This line of thinking induced Hamas to dedicate substantial resources toward building, sustaining, and protecting an infrastructure providing social services to underserved Palestinians. PIJ viewed Hamas’ behavior in this regard as not only worthless, but also detrimental to efforts to bring about a Palestinian state. Indeed, PIJ contended that Hamas’ social programs were the product of Western and Israeli manipulation that diverted Hamas resources from the ultimate, sacred task at hand: Israel’s forced demise and the establishment of a Palestinian state in its place.

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183 Gunning, pp. 55-60, 90, 97
One should not conflate PIJ’s view that all of its resources must be dedicated toward bringing about Israel’s destruction through force with the notion that its ideology prevents it from acting strategically. In fact, PIJ’s ideology assumes a very strategic disposition towards the armed struggle. The PIJ Charter states that the armed struggle should be carried out with the intent of “obstructing peace agreements between the treacherous Arab regimes and the Zionist entity” and “creating an emotional barrier between the Jews and the Muslim Palestinian people and combatting advocates of Arab-Israeli coexistence.”\footnote{Hatina, p. 163} The Charter provides contradictory counsel regarding cooperation with non-Islamic groups, hinting in certain passages that such behavior is permissible while alluding elsewhere that it should be avoided.\footnote{Hatina, p. 162} Yet it unequivocally conceives the armed struggle as a strategic campaign. Disrupting the peace process and fomenting polarization between ordinary Israelis and Palestinians are identified as intermediate objectives that must be satisfied before the ultimate goal, Israel’s destruction, is met.\footnote{Hatina, p. 162}

PIJ’s ideological heritage is unique in that it champions the Iranian Revolution as a model Palestinians can utilize to bring about Israel’s destruction and the formation of their own state. In the months prior to PIJ’s establishment, Shiqaqi published a book titled, “Khomeini: The Islamic Solution and the Alternative,” which served as the ideological foundation for the group’s political and ideological ties with the Islamic Republic. Like Khomeini, Shiqaqi asserted that only revolutionary behavior rooted in Islam could satisfy nationalist demands for greater political autonomy. He also found common cause with Khomeini’s insistence that Islamic movements employ self-criticism

\footnote{Hatina, p. 163} \footnote{Hatina, p. 162} \footnote{Hatina, p. 162}
within their ranks to ensure better policy outcomes.\textsuperscript{188} This is reflected in the PIJ Charter, which promotes the Islamic concept of \textit{shura}, or openness and responsiveness, among its members.\textsuperscript{189} The PIJ functionalized this value by maintaining a multi-tiered organizational structure where, at least in theory, collective decision-making occurred. Those occupying positions in all three bodies, which were the general congress, advisory council and general secretariat, enjoyed freedom of opinion. Many were even elected by PIJ members, as the group sought to project itself as an inclusive organization with democratic values.\textsuperscript{190} Admission into the PIJ is also reflective of the group’s close identification with \textit{shura}. One only had to meet two conditions: acceptance of the movement’s political platform and a commitment to eschew immoral behavior. Gender and even religious persuasion were not taken into account, at least officially.\textsuperscript{191}

\textit{PIJ Decision Making and Theoretical Underpinnings: 1980-September 2000}

In the months immediately after it was founded, PIJ’s activities were limited to recruiting and mobilizing members with the intent of educating them on the notions of \textit{jihad} and the armed struggle. Although PIJ was in a sense defying its most sacred ideological imperative by failing to dedicate any resources toward prosecuting the armed struggle, this policy was likely implemented out of necessity because of the group’s small size and limited resources. Yet PIJ began to grow in 1981, when it experienced its first significant influx of personnel after several Palestinian Islamists forcibly repatriated from Egypt joined the organization.\textsuperscript{192} However, PIJ did not subsequently reorient significant assets and personnel to the armed struggle; instead, it elected to continue focusing on

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{188} Hatina, pp. 24, 53
\bibitem{189} Hatina, pp. 161-162
\bibitem{190} Hatina, p. 44
\bibitem{191} Hatina, p. 44-45
\bibitem{192} Mannes, p. 196
\end{thebibliography}
recruitment and indoctrination activities. Ramadan Shallah later justified this behavior, asserting that efforts by the PMB to misrepresent PIJ as a heretical Shiite sect forced it to undertake efforts to set the record straight with the Palestinian people at the expense of implementing the armed struggle against Israel.

Shallah’s argument indicates that PIJ rationally decided its strategic interests would be better served by carrying out an engagement campaign to improve its image among Palestinians than carrying out hostilities against Israel. PIJ’s leadership neglected to even attempt portraying this policy decision as harmonious with the PIJ Charter, as the means through which it was carried out clearly transcended anything the PIJ Charter allowed. While the Charter did authorize the dissemination of the movement’s ideas by the use of “every available channel,” PIJ’s activities quickly transitioned from idea spreading to institution building, which the Charter forbid. Beginning in 1982, PIJ constructed a strong infrastructure on the campus of the Islamic University of Gaza that participated in the University’s student council elections and became embroiled in campus disputes. However, the rhetoric PIJ was employing paradoxically indicated that dedicating resources toward involvement in campus politics violated the movement’s ideological principles. Indeed, it released a publication during the same period arguing that the establishment and maintenance of Islamic educational institutions diverted resources from the armed struggle, robbed Islam of its ability to serve as a political force to bring about necessary change, and therefore perpetuated the Israeli occupation.

193 Hatina, p. 28
194 Shallah and Khalil al-Ayid, p. 62
195 Hatina, p. 164
196 Hatina, p. 29
197 Hatina, p. 31
PIJ’s campaign of armed struggle against Israel began when a group of operatives killed Aharon Gross, a nineteen-year-old yeshiva student in Hebron, in July 1983.\textsuperscript{198} Testimony by Ramadan Shallah implies that Shiqaki personally planned and authorized this operation.\textsuperscript{199} The broader context in which the attack took place indicates that it closely adhered to PIJ’s ideological conception of a strategic armed struggle where the foundation for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation is destroyed prior to the extermination of the Israeli state. Tensions were exceptionally high in Hebron prior to the attack, as Jewish settlers were attempting to reestablish the long-abandoned Jewish quarter of the central city despite Palestinian protests. Thus, PIJ could reasonably expect that a successful attack in Hebron would significantly aggravate Israeli-Palestinian acrimony throughout Israel and the Occupied Territories. Although tensions brought about violent clashes between settlers and Palestinians prior to the attack, the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) had judged that the best way to mitigate further violence was to place increased restrictions on the use of force against Palestinian agitators while on patrol.\textsuperscript{200} Hebron thus not only presented a situation where an attack could have a multiplier effect by fomenting broader unrest, but also a setting where there was a reasonable chance that a successful operation could be carried out, as IDF patrols in the area were circumscribed.

In one sense, the murder of Mr. Gross was a clear victory for PIJ as it helped undermine support for West Bank autonomy talks that the United States was pushing at the time.\textsuperscript{201} It also validated PIJ’s claim that Islamists could play a key role in conducting

\textsuperscript{198} Hatina, p. 32
\textsuperscript{199} Shallah and Khalil al-Ayid, p. 62
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid
the armed struggle and did not have to be reduced to political quietism.\textsuperscript{202} However, Israel’s strong response to the operation forced PIJ to fundamentally restructure itself. Shortly after the attack took place, Israel arrested Shiqaqi and 25 additional PIJ activists. While PIJ succeeded in maintaining its ability to carry out small-scale operations similar to the Hebron attack, it did so only by replacing its top-down operational structure where Shiqaqi and his close associates made key decisions to one comprised of several loosely affiliated cells. This made it much more difficult for Israel to kill PIJ strategists and preserved the group’s operational capacity. Yet it also forced the movement’s remaining central leadership to cede large measures of their authority.\textsuperscript{203} Shiqaqi remained a universally revered figure among the PIJ and provided both moral support and strategic advice to PIJ cells. However, it was now those cells rather than Shiqaqi himself who assumed primary responsibility for planning and carrying out attacks.\textsuperscript{204}

Although PIJ was able to continue carrying out operations against Israel by virtue of its newly-decentralized structure, the movement’s revitalized organizational framework caused it to act less faithful to its ideology than it had when it perpetuated the Hebron attack. Many of PIJ’s newly established cells were constructed with the close assistance of Fatah and operated at least in part under Fatah’s auspices. This occurred despite the fact that PIJ’s Charter vacillated on matters pertaining to cooperation with non-Islamic forces, appearing to allow such action only if organizational independence was maintained.\textsuperscript{205} Even as PIJ worked with Fatah, it publicly declared that those who espouse Palestinian nationalism as the force to unify Palestinians to wage the armed

\textsuperscript{202} Hatina, p. 32  
\textsuperscript{203} Hatina, pp. 32-39  
\textsuperscript{204} Martin, Patrick. “After bombing, Islamic Jihad a force to be reckoned with Palestinian secretive society is known for its uncompromising militancy in its campaign to destroy Israeli state.”  
\textsuperscript{205} Hatina, pp. 35, 162
struggle were at complete odds with the PIJ view that Islam, rather any secular value, is the key means through which the Occupation will be defeated. It thus is clear that PIJ was much more interested in utilizing Fatah’s robust infrastructure to help it continue the armed struggle, especially given its comparative lack of resources, than it was in litigating the Charter’s provisions to judge whether such behavior was acceptable. In addition to bringing about cooperation with secular forces, the movement’s decentralized structure also caused the PIJ brand to become associated with operations that sharply diverged from its core values. PIJ’s leaders were traditionally been averse to involving the movement in minute matters of religious practice among the Palestinian people, contending that such behavior diverted attention from the successful prosecution of the armed struggle. This did not preclude several cells from becoming involved in growing religious fervor in the Occupied Territories in 1985-1986 and carrying out several attacks against Palestinians suspected of what they viewed as lax religious practices.

PIJ’s success at creating and maintaining an organizational structure capable of withstanding repeated Israeli crackdowns paid immediate dividends when the intifada began in December 1987. Indeed, PIJ was the first Palestinian faction to call for a general strike among Palestinians and led initial efforts to instigate unrest despite the fact that nearly all of its senior leaders were detained in Israeli prisons. PIJ attempted to capitalize on its growing influence by altering the inherent nature of its clandestine disposition through engagement in activities intended to turn the movement into a more

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206 Hatina, p. 35
207 Hatina, p. 30
208 Hatina, p. 35
popular, broad-based organization. Unlike the movement’s efforts at institution building in the early 1980’s, these initiatives were limited to actions sanctioned by the PIJ Charter such as issuing leaflets and starting demonstrations. It also tried to improve its standing among secular elements of Palestinian society, as it lauded Fatah activists who died during the intifada as Islamic martyrs. Israeli authorities were well aware of PIJ’s growing prestige and acted accordingly by exiling both Dr. Shiqaqi and the movement’s spiritual guide, Sheikh Abd Al Aziz Awda, to Lebanon. Shiqaqi’s deportation was a significant setback for PIJ. As the group’s most recognizable figure, both his removal from the Palestinian scene and the emergence of Hamas diminished PIJ’s influence relative to other groups in planning and coordinating intifada activities.

In an interview conducted years after Dr. Shiqaqi was deported to Lebanon, Ramadan Shallah commented that this event brought about “a new phase in the life of the [PIJ] at all levels.” The group’s comprehensive disposition did in fact dramatically change. The geographic separation of the movement’s leadership from the Occupied Territories led them to abandon all serious attempts to transition PIJ into a popular movement in historical Palestine itself. Recruitment and indoctrination continued, but activities were limited to Palestinian refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon. PIJ sought to alleviate its loss of influence in recruiting members and garnering popular support by concentrating more of its resources on carrying out attacks against Israel. The PIJ was successful in this regard, as its operations yielded casualty figures that appear small today.

209 Hatina, p. 39
210 Hatina, p. 39
211 Hatina, p. 39
212 Hatina, pp. 40-41
213 Shallah and Khalil al-Ayid, p. 63
214 Hatina, pp. 41-42
215 Hatina, pp. 41-42
but were unprecedented at the time. The fatal stabbing of two Israelis in Jerusalem by a PIJ operative on May 3, 1989, marked the deadliest attack against Israelis in the city since the onset of the intifada, while the deaths of fifteen Israelis and one American during a PIJ attack on a public bus on July 6, 1989, constituted the bloodiest Palestinian assault on Israeli territory since 1978.216 Both attacks also fulfilled inherently strategic objectives. The May operation took place while PLO leader Yasser Arafat was on a key mission in Paris and was widely interpreted as an attempt to undermine his diplomatic efforts.217 The July attack brought about a temporary but significant decline in Israeli support for dialogue or even coexistence with the Palestinians. Israeli activists attacked Vice Premier Shimon Peres at the funeral for the victims while others incited mob violence against Palestinian civilians.218

After the central leadership’s displacement from historical Palestine, PIJ certainly reallocated a lion’s share of its resources toward conducting the armed struggle. This led to the occurrence of several attacks against Israel that fulfilled defined strategic objectives. On the surface these developments suggest PIJ was moving into more stringent compliance with its ideology and the plan of action espoused in its Charter. However, PIJ was paradoxically able to appear more ideologically compliant by implementing a policy that was clearly outside the Charter’s boundaries. PIJ’s expulsion to Lebanon and Syria necessitated that the movement cultivate relationships with the governments of both countries if it wished to maintain an operational presence close to

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the Palestinian homeland. However, the Charter proclaimed that all “Muslim” regimes with the exception of Iran were “products of imperialism and an expression of separatism and Westernization” that “should not be cooperated with or assisted” in the shorter term and overthrown in the longer term.\(^{219}\) Despite this clear injunction against cooperation with the Syrian and Lebanese regimes, PIJ crafted relationships with both that enabled the movement to plan attacks in those countries that were perpetrated in Israel.\(^{220}\) PIJ thus chose to act rationally rather than to conform to its ideology and marginalize itself by limiting the location of its planning efforts to Iran, which lies on the geographic periphery of the conflict. PIJ’s partnerships with the Syrian Government and Lebanese factions remained a core feature of the movement throughout the period catalogued in this paper.

As the drive toward peace between Israel and the Palestinians accelerated in the early 1990’s, Shiqqai, from his exile in Lebanon, authorized PIJ operatives to continue carrying out attacks to derail efforts to reach a sustainable compromise. Some operations were calibrated to disrupt specific, high profile international efforts to bring about peace, while others sought to undermine the public support among Israelis and Palestinians that such initiatives required. A key example of an operation with the former intent is the October 28, 1991, PIJ assault on a bus carrying Israeli activists to Tel Aviv to participate in a rally against the Madrid Peace Conference, which was to begin two days later.\(^{221}\) While the operation did not ultimately attain the desired result of inducing the parties to cancel the conference, it did briefly call its occurrence into question by reigniting debates

\(^{219}\) Hatina, pp. 161-169.
\(^{220}\) Hatina, pp. 41, 44.

PIJ adhered more closely to its ideology during the period between its leadership’s forced exile to Lebanon and Syria in 1988 and the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 than it had at any time since it carried out its first fatal attack in Hebron in 1983. During this period, the movement exploited nearly all of its resources on prosecuting the armed struggle in a way that was also inherently strategic. Only PIJ’s cooperation with the Syrian and Lebanese regimes and Fatah rendered its behavior less ideologically compliant than it was in 1983. This pattern appeared to continue around the time the Oslo Accords were signed. Shiqiqi let it be known that he opposed to the Accords to their very foundation, arguing that Arafat should remain steadfast in advocating for complete control of all of historical Palestine rather than seeking a compromise with the Israelis. He rejected the PLO chief’s attempts to solicit his support for the agreement, adding that Arafat was merely an instrument the West and the Arab regimes were using to separate Islam from the conflict.\footnote{Hatina, p. 86-87.} PIJ operatives even...
unsuccessfully attempted to undermine the Accords just one day before they were signed, carrying out an ambush against IDF personnel in Gaza City that killed four.\textsuperscript{225}

Despite Shiqaqi’s expressions of absolute opposition to the Oslo Accords and PIJ’s exertions to undermine their signing, the movement sought to create and maintain a satisfactory working relationship with the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA). Although PIJ’s ideology rejected any political solution to the Palestinian question and sanctified “cooperation and tactical alliances” with rejectionist organizations only, the movement’s leadership justified this decision on ideological grounds.\textsuperscript{226} They alluded to the Charter’s conception of PIJ as an organization supportive of Islamic unity and stressed the need to avoid fomenting the sort of internal strife (or \textit{fitna}) that was prominent in early Islamic history.\textsuperscript{227} However, it was the means for which PIJ sought to utilize this cooperation that most dramatically represented its newfound efforts to embrace many of the Charter’s more rational, strategic provisions. In exchange for providing tacit support to the PA, PIJ demanded that the Authority allow it to participate in Palestinian municipal elections.\textsuperscript{228} This action was acceptable under the Charter, which explicitly accepts PIJ participation in civic bodies.\textsuperscript{229} During the elections, PIJ candidates elucidated a narrative that made clear that the movement wished to gain control of municipal posts to dramatically strengthen their faction’s popular support.\textsuperscript{230}

Thus, rather than violate a core ideological belief by allocating resources to building an independent social services infrastructure, PIJ sought to simply gain control of one that

\textsuperscript{226} Hatina, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{227} Hatina, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{228} Hatina, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{229} Hatina, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{230} Hatina, p. 93-96.
already existed. Although these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, they constituted a
deft attempt by PIJ to reformulate the movement into a broader based group in way that
was consistent with its ideological values. Indeed, the Charter did not call on PIJ to
remain small and chronically under resourced; instead, it simply prohibited efforts to
build its own apparatus tasked with disbursing patronage and social welfare.

PIJ’s engagement with the PA was constantly under stress because of the former’s
decision to continue prosecuting the armed struggle. As Israel’s Palestinian partner in
bringing about a two state solution within the Oslo framework, the PA was forced to
assist Israel in cracking down on rejectionist movements such as PIJ. Ramadan Shallah’s
remarks that the movement around this time was “a target of vicious Zionist attacks” that
“led to the liquidation of a number of PIJ’s political and military leaders” indicate that
joint Israeli-PA efforts enjoyed large measures of success. Indeed, the PA was less
reticent to crack down on PIJ than it was Hamas, as the latter commanded much more
support among the Palestinian people through its provision of social welfare.231 As a
result, PIJ lost the capacity to carry out attacks on its own. However, the movement was
able to maintain relevance by entering into a close partnership with the much larger and
more well resourced Hamas. This decision was acceptable under PIJ’s Charter, which
endorsed cooperation with other rejectionist groups. Even though this move was
ideologically permissible, it still illustrates PIJ’s occasional disposition to prioritize its
strategic interests over other considerations. Indeed, PIJ was able to forge an agreement
with Hamas despite the fact that the groups still competed for influence among
Palestinians rejectionists and were engaged in a protracted, public dispute over whether

231 Shallah and Khalil al-Ayid, p. 63.
Hamas’ reasoning for forging a *hudna* (temporary truce) with Israel was actually justified by the Quran.\(^2\)

The Hamas-PIJ partnership culminated on January 22, 1995, when two suicide bombers detonated themselves at a bus stop north of Tel Aviv frequented by Israeli soldiers, killing 20. While PIJ operatives carried out this attack, renowned Hamas bomb maker Yehiya Ayyash crafted the explosives.\(^3\) PIJ’s behavior in the attack’s immediate aftermath provides an excellent example of the practical benefits offered by the group’s strategically minded ideology, which enabled it to stress its independent nature while simultaneously working with other rejectionist groups. After the movement gained substantial publicity for its role in the operation, a PIJ spokesman publicly expressed the benefits of the PIJ remaining small, commenting that, “We prefer it that way. It means we are not beholden to anyone and don’t have to follow anyone else’s orders.”\(^4\) PIJ went further, explicitly denying that Hamas played any role whatsoever in the prosecution of the attack.\(^5\) It also publicly criticized Hamas’ social welfare programs, arguing that the attack demonstrated that the PIJ’s model of eschewing social welfare and dedicating attention and resources exclusively to the armed struggle was a viable framework.\(^6\)

At the time of its occurrence, the January 22, 1995, operation was among the most catastrophic suicide attacks perpetrated against Israel. It invited a particularly harsh

\(^2\) Hatina, pp. 90-91.
\(^4\) Patrick Martin, “After bombing, Islamic Jihad a force to be reckoned with Palestinian secretive society is known for its uncompromising militancy in its campaign to destroy Israeli state.”
\(^6\) “Palestinian Opposition Reaction; Gaza Islamic Jihad Leader Calls for more attacks; supporters celebrate Beit Lid Attack.” *Summary of World Broadcasts*, British Broadcasting Corporation. [http://lexisnexis.com](http://lexisnexis.com)
response, culminating with Fathi Shiqaqi’s assassination at the hands of Mossad agents in October. Shiqaqi’s death and subsequent Israeli countermeasures significantly altered PIJ’s behavior, damaging its capacity to serve even as an effective junior partner to Hamas. PIJ’s significant decline in operational capacity underscored the importance of Shiqaqi’s continued leadership to the group’s enduring viability. His successor Ramadan Shallah tried to press on as he sought to consolidate his power by professing strict adherence with PIJ’s overarching ideology, declaring at Dr. Shiqaqi’s funeral that “the armed struggle will remain the only path of Islamic Jihad” and placing renewed emphasis on the group’s theological disputes with Hamas.237 Shallah took a much more nuanced approach behind the scenes, working to maintain the group’s operational relationship with its larger partner. However, his rhetorical blustering still constituted a serious risk, as it emphasized that PIJ’s raison d’être was its strong willingness to carry out attacks against Israel at a time when the group’s capacity to do so was at a near all-time low. With the intent of saving face, PIJ played a small role in the Hamas-led March 4, 1996, bombing of a shopping center in Tel Aviv, which killed 13. Although PIJ’s responsibility in the attack was limited to ferrying the Hamas bombers into Tel Aviv, the movement exaggerated its role and claimed that the attack was PIJ’s response to the assassination of Fathi Shiqaqi.238 PIJ’s narrative was superseded by that put forth by Hamas, which made clear the attack was the latest in a long series of bombings carried out in retaliation for Israel’s assassination of Yehiya Ayyash.239

237 Hatina, pp. 4, 104-105.
After the March 4, 1996, operation, PIJ vowed that it would continue to carry out violent attacks against Israel. However, Israel and the Palestinian Authority retaliated against both Hamas and PIJ in an unprecedented fashion, conducting sweeps throughout the territories that resulted in the deaths or arrests of scores of Hamas and PIJ operatives. This forced Hamas to temporarily postpone attacks while nearly destroying the more vulnerable PIJ altogether. This state of affairs was expounded upon by Shallah, who said that PIJ was forced to undergo a period of “thorough self-examination” and was severely limited in its ability to prosecute the armed struggle up until the onset of the second intifada. Indeed, until 2000 the group’s operational activities were limited to one failed 1998 attack where the only casualties were PIJ bombers.

Discussion

This paper hypothesizes that Hamas and PIJ conceive their ideologies as collections of guiding principles allowing them to make policy conducive to their strategic interests rather than axioms that brook no violation under any circumstances. It further contends that while ideology is the most important factor determining each group’s operational behavior, factors pertaining to rational concerns or organizational dynamics can play key secondary roles informing policy development as long as they conform to the organization’s broader ideological principles. With regard to Hamas, the preceding data largely fulfills this hypothesis.

The Results section demonstrates that from the period of December 1987 to September 2000, Hamas possessed a multi-faceted ideology providing the movement with several ideologically acceptable policy options to fit its strategic needs and

240 “Islamic Jihad claims Tel Aviv Suicide Bombing,” Agence France Press.
accommodate intra-group organizational dynamics. Indeed, Hamas’ roots in the Muslim Brotherhood ensured that efforts to assuage Palestinian poverty, support political engagement among the Palestinian people, and promote Palestinian unity remained key components of Hamas’ ideological orthodoxy. The eradication of Israel through carrying out the armed struggle assumed equal importance in the movement’s ideology, as Hamas was also a violent, Islamist resistance group that viewed Israel’s very existence as an insult to Islam that must be erased. However, these diverse ideological components ensured Hamas possessed characteristics consistent with what Piazza called a “strategic” terrorist organization, as it maintained concrete goals and close ties to a defined constituency, in effect preventing it from engaging in random, uncontrolled violent activity.242

The previous survey of Hamas’ operational history indicates that the movement took full advantage of this ideological flexibility. There were several clear cases where Hamas’ operational behavior was shaped by its ideology, but also reflected both rational calculations and intra-organizational dynamics. Many of Hamas’ suicide bombing attacks were among such instances. The organization’s three suicide attacks from April to October 1994 were certainly consistent with the group’s ideological mandate to wage war against Israel to expel it from the Middle East, but they were also inherently strategic. Hamas was aware at the time in which the attacks were prosecuted that it stood to gain popularity from their implementation, as Palestinian rage was surging after a Jewish extremist killed twenty-nine unarmed Palestinians in Hebron. The operations also reflected Hamas’ intra-organizational dynamics, as Hamas’ political leadership provided

al-Qassam with tacit permission to carry out the attacks because it fully understood the strategic benefits to be derived, despite its general inclination to be more selective than al-Qassam regarding the appropriate time to implement the armed struggle. Hamas’ leadership calculated, albeit incorrectly, that by authorizing the attacks it could influence when al-Qassam chose to carry out the armed struggle and ensure it had less capacity to do so at a future time when the political leadership thought perpetuating violence would not contribute to the group’s strategic needs. Additionally, Hamas’ decisions to refrain from suicide attacks during periods where they did not benefit the organization’s strategic interests were also illustrative of all three factors, with the group’s ideology playing the primary role molding Hamas’ policy. Indeed, Hamas justified its decision to not carry out suicide attacks in the months prior to the 1996 Palestinian elections on the basis of its ideologically derived support for Palestinian unity at a time when a strong majority of Palestinians supported the election’s occurrence. There were obvious strategic calculations underpinning Hamas’ decision to emphasize this component of its ideology, as group leaders knew Hamas stood to lose popularity among Palestinians if it prosecuted attacks when most wanted the political process play itself out. The fact that Hamas’ leaders were mostly but not wholly successful in preventing on onslaught of unsanctioned attacks spoke to the group’s organizational multi-polarity at this time. Some al-Qassam militants who operated autonomously from the political leadership did in fact carry out what were ideologically justifiable smaller scale attacks, despite the leadership’s broader temporary injunction against violence.

There were several other cases during Hamas’ history where the policies it embraced reflected the group’s ideology yet were also underpinned by both rational
choice and intra-organizational dynamics. During Hamas’ infancy, the organization primarily embraced the social welfare components of its ideology, as it focused on tending to the material needs of Palestinians rather than carrying out the armed struggle. This policy was put forth and sustained by Sheikh Yassin, who was able to do so because of his absolute control over the group and the lack of rival commanders to challenge his position. Yassin implemented this policy with rational, utility-maximizing convictions in mind, as he calculated that Hamas’ existence would be threatened if it tried to use violence against Israel at such an early, fragile stage of its existence when it was still cultivating the ties with its Palestinian constituency that would eventually help secure its existence. The hypothesis retained its validity in mid-1988, when Hamas began shifting emphasis to components of its ideology calling for Israel’s destruction. Sheikh Yassin implemented this policy in large part to ensure that Hamas retained its burgeoning popularity among Palestinians, many of who were increasingly frustrated with Israel’s violent response to the initially nonviolent first intifada and demonstrated growing support for violent retaliation. Yassin used his position of unrivaled authority to functionalize this ideological shift within Hamas’ organizational structure through authorizing the establishment of the al-Qassam Brigades.

The above data therefore indicates that Hamas’ ideology is the key factor determining its operational behavior. It also makes clear the ideology factor allots sufficient space for both rational choice and organizational dynamics to play meaningful secondary roles molding the group’s decision making. While the data thus satisfies the hypothesis, its ability to do so in this instance represents an easy case. Hamas’ status as a “strategic” terrorist organization renders it much more likely than other types of terrorist
groups to adhere to a conception of ideology offering it substantial freedom of action. PIJ constitutes a harder case, as it shares characteristics with “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations that have more abstract goals and lack ties to a defined constituency, which prompts them to carry out attacks with symbolic rather than strategic value. The Results section reveals that under select circumstances, PIJ’s ideology, supplemented by rational choice and organizational dynamics, enabled the organization to operate in a manner that satisfied its strategic interests. Yet there are also clear instances where the policy options PIJ embraced were fundamentally at odds with more restrictive facets of its ideology, indicating that rational considerations and/or organizational dynamics, rather than ideology, served as the primary factors influencing the group’s decision making. These findings indicate that while PIJ’s behavior and the factors that molded it were at times consistent with the hypothesis, in other situations PIJ behaved in a way that violated the hypothesis’ suppositions.

In certain circumstances, PIJ’s ideology provided the organization’s leaders with the means to conduct operations in a manner consistent with rational choice. The group’s ideology conceived the armed struggle as an inherently strategic enterprise, mapping out intermediate goals that must be achieved before the final goal, Israel’s destruction, was realized. This interpretation of the armed struggle clearly informed PIJ’s decision to kill Hebron yeshiva student Aharon Gross in 1983. The attack fulfilled one of PIJ’s clearly delineated intermediate goals, which was the obstruction of the peace process, as it imperiled United States-supported West Bank autonomy talks that were scheduled to occur shortly after the operation took place. The attack was also strategic in that it had a high probability of success, as IDF personnel in Hebron had chosen to assume a less
confrontational disposition toward Palestinian agitators prior to its occurrence and trimmed back their patrols. Finally, its occurrence was reflective of PIJ’s organizational dynamics, as PIJ leader Fathi Shiqaqi, who had total control over the movement, used his position of strength to plan and authorize the implementation of the attack without fear than an influential peer within the group would object to his plans.

Another strategic facet of PIJ’s ideology was its endorsement of partnerships between the organization itself and other rejectionist groups. PIJ utilized this mandate in 1995 when it partnered with Hamas in carrying out a series of high-profile suicide bombings in Israel. While the group’s organizational dynamics do little to demonstrate how and why PIJ made this decision to partner with Hamas, this policy did reflect PIJ’s rational, strategic interests. Indeed, PIJ had previously been decimated by Israel-PA joint counterterrorism operations, and no longer had the capacity to carry out large-scale attacks without the assistance of a larger partner. Therefore, it was consistent with PIJ’s interests in maximizing its utility to take advantage of this ideologically sanctioned option of partnering with Hamas to ensure that it maintained its status as a well-renowned Palestinian rejectionist group. This proved successful and for a time enabled PIJ to argue that its ideological values, wherein it concentrated its efforts solely on carrying out the armed struggle, were superior to Hamas’ ideological inclination to dedicate some of its resources toward improving the material conditions of Palestinians. Indeed, PIJ was able to assert this argument despite the reality that it was clearly a junior partner to Hamas during this period, and probably would have lacked the capability to participate in larger-scale suicide bombing attacks without Hamas’ assistance.
The preceding data indicates that there were certain provisions of PIJ’s ideology that allowed the organization to embrace policy options that reflected its ideological values, and also both its rational interests and intra-organizational dynamics. This fact demonstrates that on some occasions, PIJ viewed its ideology as a set of malleable principles allowing the group to make policy that fulfilled its broader needs rather than a collection of strict laws that it must not violate under any circumstances. However, there were other cases where PIJ’s ideology proved so rigid that the group was forced to violate its foundational principles to survive. One of the most restrictive provisions of PIJ’s ideology was the rule that all of its resources must be allocated to implementing the armed struggle against Israel. Yet even after the organization was able to organize itself on the most basic level and gain the capability to prosecute small-scale attacks, it elected to instead continue focusing its efforts to building a base of support at the Islamic University of Gaza. This was clearly a utility-maximizing decision, as PIJ was looking to combat a perception held among largely Sunni Palestinians that it was an instrument leveraged by the Shiite Ayatollah Khomeini to strengthen Iran’s influence in the Occupied Territories. Yet it also conflicted with PIJ’s clearest ideological values, and marks a case where the organization’s desire to fulfill its strategic needs overrode any inclination to adhere with its ideology. PIJ’s organizational structure also played an important, albeit secondary, role in PIJ’s decision to embrace this policy option. Indeed, PIJ leader Fathi Shiqaqi had requisite control over the organization at that time to pursue this policy without worrying that a popular, perhaps more conservative rival commander would challenge his decision and seek to gain a greater measure of control over the group at his expense.
There were yet additional cases where PIJ was forced to violate fundamental provisions of its ideology to ensure the survival of the group. After both Fathi Shiqaki and Sheikh Abd Al Aziz Awda, PIJ’s religious guide, were exiled to Lebanon, the PIJ was forced to cultivate close partnerships with both the Lebanese and Syrian governments to ensure that it was able to continue functioning as a militant group. The organization’s decision to forge these pacts reflected strategic inclinations, as PIJ would have had significant difficulties continuing operations had it not brought about more amiable ties with both Lebanon, which hosted Shiqaki on its territory, and Syria, which rendered significant influence over all Lebanese political developments. Yet it also reflected a clear breach of PIJ’s ideology, which asserted that the Lebanese and Syrian governments were apostate regimes that should be eventually overthrown, and were not worthy of cooperating with the PIJ, even for a short period of time after which PIJ would turn on the regime in question and work to bring about its demise. However, PIJ’s remaining leaders judged that such partnerships were necessary, and chose to embrace the organization’s strategic needs at the expense of close compliance with the group’s ideological values.

The instances explained above demonstrate cases where, when making policy decisions, PIJ’s rational concerns overrode any inclination for ideological compliance. They also make clear that there were several circumstances wherein PIJ’s ideology shared characteristics with that of a typical “universal/rejectionist” group, and PIJ was forced to violate its ideology in order to guarantee its existence. The Results section also exposes select circumstances where organizational dynamics within PIJ, rather than the group’s ideological provisions or inclination to maximize utility, played the most
...important role influencing the groups’ behavior. The clearest example of this occurred after PIJ leader Fathi Shiqaqi became subject to additional surveillance, and occasional arrest, by Israeli authorities and lost some capacity to administer control over the group. These problems were exacerbated when Shiqaqi was exiled to Lebanon. The increased surveillance and eventual exile of Shiqaqi changed the organizational structure of PIJ, as the group no longer had an undisputed leader within the Occupied Territories who was capable of leveraging significant influence over the entire organization. As more independent PIJ cells began to carve out their own influence within the group, some chose to take advantage of growing religiosity within the Occupied Territories and participate in attacks against Palestinians who were seen by others as insufficiently devout. These attacks occurred despite calls within PIJ’s ideology on the group to refrain from monitoring the religiosity of ordinary Palestinians and instead concentrate on prosecuting the armed struggle itself. Had Shiqaqi somehow been able to maintain a stronger measure of control over the group, it is less likely that these cells would have been afforded the flexibility to participate in such operations in any consistent fashion.

**Conclusion**

The hypothesis of this paper clearly asserts that Hamas and PIJ consistently maintain strategic conceptions of their respective ideologies, and leverage them as guidance to help carry out policy that is ideologically compliant and also reflective of their need to both maximize utility and manage intra-group organizational dynamics. The hypothesis adds that ideology is the preeminent factor shaping organizational behavior, but that rational concerns and organizational dynamics can play important secondary roles in this regard. The data reveals that the case of Hamas comprises one where the
hypothesis is fulfilled. In fact, there were several circumstances where Hamas applied its ideological provisions in a strategic way that ensured the policy options it embraced were both ideologically complaint and reflective of other group needs. This should not be surprising, as Hamas shares many characteristics with what Piazza calls “strategic” terrorist organizations that possess less rigid ideologies and keep close ties with a defined constituency, leaving the organization in question more capable of leveraging that ideology in a strategic fashion. The data pertaining to PIJ is decidedly more mixed. While it makes clear that there were certainly cases where, like Hamas, PIJ applied strategic components of its ideology to pursue policies that were beneficial to the group’s aggregate needs, there were other instances where PIJ was forced to violate the foundations of its ideology to ensure its survival. Again, this is not a particularly alarming find, as PIJ is similar to Piazza’s conception of “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations that have ideologies which are not frequently calibrated with the groups’ strategic needs in mind.

These findings indicate that the hypothesis has explanatory utility with regard to strategically minded terrorist organizations that have flexible ideologies they can leverage to fit their needs at the time; and ensure that the policies they pursue both remain ideologically compliant while satisfying their broader imperatives, including the need to remain in existence so they can continue pursuing their goals. However, it appears the hypothesis is not as good of an explanatory tool regarding the behavior of more “universal/abstract” groups such as PIJ. This appears intuitive, as the ideologies of such groups are restrictive by definition, making it much more difficult for the group in question to apply its ideological provisions in a utility maximizing way. However, a close
examination of PIJ, which is widely viewed as an extreme, even more intransigent cousin to Hamas, revealed that its ideology indeed includes certain strategic provisions that, on at least some occasions, allowed the group to use its ideology in a way similar to Hamas. This indicates that the hypothesis is not entirely non-applicable with regard to terrorist groups that are viewed as especially extreme, and merits more detailed analysis. The subsequent chapter will thus test the hypothesis against another terrorist organization that is perceived as espousing a considerably hard line approach, with the intent of more precisely discerning the hypothesis’ applicability to such groups.
CHAPTER THREE
From the Crescent to the Hammer and Sickle: The Red Army Faction

Introduction

The previous thesis chapter hypothesized that both Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) viewed their ideologies in a strategic way, and applied them to implement policies that conformed to their ideological norms while enabling them to fulfill their rational, strategic interests and manage intra-group dynamics. Thus, while ideology served as the most important factor shaping organizational behavior, both elements of rational choice theory and organizational dynamics were capable of playing key supplementary roles. The data revealed that, with regard to Hamas, the group interpreted its ideology in a way that provided it requisite flexibility to act in a fashion that was strategic, reflective of group dynamics, and still ideologically compliant. While these findings validated the hypothesis, it bears mentioning that Hamas constitutes an “easy case.” This is because Hamas possesses many components of what Piazza terms a “strategic” terrorist organization; indeed, Hamas, during the time period surveyed in this study, was found to have a strategically-minded ideology with concrete goals and close ties to a defined constituency. This rendered Hamas inherently more likely to avoid operating in strategically questionable ways that threaten to alienate its support base. On the other hand, PIJ lacks such constituent ties and thus represents a more difficult case for the hypothesis. The data demonstrated that PIJ’s ideology had undeniable strategic components, enabling the group to behave in a manner that was both utility maximizing and ideologically compliant on several occasions. Yet the data also revealed that, in other cases, PIJ’s ideology was so strict that the group was forced to violate its foundational elements to ensure its survival. Therefore, PIJ’s ideology failed to serve as the consistent,
preeminent factor shaping its operational behavior. Restrictive facets of the group’s ideology instead enabled both rational choice and organizational factors to shape the nature of PIJ’s activity, leading the group to take actions that violated its ideological constitution in several cases.

This forthcoming chapter aspires to strengthen the hypothesis’ explanatory utility by testing it against another difficult case comparable to the PIJ. The previous chapter demonstrated that “strategic” terrorist organizations like Hamas, with their concrete goals and ties to defined constituencies, are prone to interpreting their ideologies as guiding principles enabling them to maximize utility and address intra-group dynamics in an ideologically consistent way rather than stringent regulations that cannot be broken under any circumstances. While the hypothesis proved less sufficient as an explanatory tool for PIJ’s behavior, it did demonstrate some limited utility. In fact, as noted above, there were several documented cases in the previous chapter where PIJ did leverage its ideology in a utility-maximizing fashion. While there were several other instances where PIJ was forced to act in a way entirely contrary to its ideological principles to survive, the mixed nature of these finding justifies further inquiry into the applicability of the hypothesis with regard to “universal/abstract” groups.

Therefore, this chapter will seek to weigh the hypothesis against the behavior of a “universal/abstract” group that lacks constituent ties, presumably leaving it more prone to seek fulfillment of narrow, ideological aims at the expense of more tangible strategic goals. It also seeks to strengthen the hypothesis by moving outside the Israeli-Palestinian arena and looking at a case comprising entirely different historical circumstances. Indeed, the hypothesis’ validity will be better demonstrated should it be proven applicable among
a diverse collection of terrorist organizations whose ideologies, religious beliefs, enemies, and goals bear little to no resemblance to one another.

With these intentions in mind, this paper will test the previous hypothesis against the case of the German Red Army Faction (RAF). The RAF fulfills the requisite criteria set above for a case that, if proven, would strengthen the hypothesis’ validity. First, the RAF is indeed best classified as a “universal/abstract” group. It was an underground organization that was ideologically obligated to use violence as an exclusive means of resistance against what it perceived to be an imperialistic and oppressive Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) government that was entirely subservient to the interests of the United States and NATO. As the Results section will demonstrate, this ideological obligation led the RAF to focus exclusively on combatting FRG authorities and ruled out any efforts to operate peacefully within the status quo or act as a sort of German Hamas working to implement the armed struggle while also improving the material well-being of FRG citizens. Indeed, from the RAF’s inception, its goals were abstract and difficult to discern beyond a broader desire to impose a Marxist order over West Germany and eventually Western Europe. While a “universal/abstract” group, RAF was also fundamentally different from the Palestinian actors examined in the previous chapter. The RAF did not share Hamas or PIJ’s ideology, religious beliefs, enemies, or goals. Its main concern was carrying out violence in the FRG, and it had limited interest in Israel or events in the greater Middle East. Furthermore, its members were not demonstrably influenced by any forms of Islamic thought, instead basing their views on interpretations of the work of several communist scholars and historical figures. Their operational record.
comprised a small front in the Cold War and was not directly intertwined with the Palestinian armed struggle of the 1980’s and 1990’s.

Theory, Hypothesis, and Methodology

This paper seeks to assess the utility of the hypothesis expounded upon in Chapter Two by testing it against the operational record of the RAF from its official founding in 1970 to the arrest of the final significant remnants of its leadership corps in March 1984. While individuals continued to operate under the RAF’s name until 1998, the last of those leaders directly associated with the RAF founders were permanently removed from the battlefield in 1984. Their successors operated largely autonomously of one another and had little connection with the historical RAF. These individuals were also very secretive, and to this day scholars find it difficult to verify the comprehensive nature and scope of their operations. With these circumstances and constraints in mind, this chapter’s scope will be limited to the RAF’s period of operations from 1970 to 1984.

This chapter hypothesizes that RAF’s ideology is the predominant factor shaping its operational behavior. As in Chapter Two, “ideology” is conceived not as a set of rules written in stone, but rather a flexible frame of reference that organizations can apply to carry out policies beneficial to their strategic interests. This strategic, inclusive view of ideology enables both rational choice and organizational factors to play important yet secondary roles shaping RAF’s behavior. The hypothesis challenges traditional conceptions of rational choice theory (RCT) as fundamentally divergent from ideological or tradition-based decision making, arguing instead that actors are capable of maximizing

245 Moghadam, p. 168
utility in a way that is simultaneously ideologically complaint. Organizational factors are defined as intra-group dynamics, such as the presence of a strong group leader or several competing bases of power, that are capable of influencing broader organizational activity. The hypothesis is applied under the epistemological assumption that it is indeed possible to discern processes of human cognition to test hypotheses’ validity.

The manner in which the hypothesis is intended to function is identical to that of the previous chapters. One should reassert that the hypothesis complies with scientific-realist principles. Scientific-realists assert that theory must seek to discern processes of human cognition pertinent to the case study to demonstrate their validity, an aspiration that instrumentalist-empiricists, whose epistemological assumptions are quite different, believe is not possible is carry out.246 Examples follow to illustrate the way the hypothesis operates. First, facing resource constraints, a group of RAF members break into the vaults of several high-end department stores in West Berlin. German media cites the heists as clear evidence that the RAF is a criminal gang seeking to line their own pockets rather than a communist organization resisting against the state. In response to such accusations, the RAF cites previously issued ideological communiqués mandating that the group not prosecute the revolutionary activities on the basis of “supply and demand,” but rather seize bourgeois assets as necessary to sustain their cause.247 Such circumstances would serve as evidence validating the hypothesis. Not only are the heists rational in that they bolster the RAF’s strategic position by providing it with more resources to carry out operations, they also comprise operations that the group’s ideology

explicitly permits. An example pertaining to decisions emanating from intra-organizational dynamics follows. An RAF cell operating in Hamburg spends six months setting up a network of safehouses yet refrains from carrying out any attacks. Other commandos criticize the cell for failing to plan or carry out the armed struggle for a prolonged period. The Hamburg cell addresses such concerns by noting RAF’s ideological affinity for Carlos Marighella’s writings on urban guerilla warfare, in which he calls for the need to set up a strong underground operational infrastructure before carrying out attacks. The Hamburg cell’s patience is eventually rewarded, as the group’s members carry out several successful attacks in the city after the six-month period concludes. The cell’s influence within the RAF grows, enabling it to gain sway over broader group decision-making. Such events would affirm the hypothesis, as they constitute a clear case in which a sub-group applies a component of group ideology to improve its strategic position both within its theatre of operations and subsequently among its peers elsewhere in the organization.

As with the cases of Hamas and the PIJ, there are clear sequences of events in which the hypothesis would not be validated. Indeed, as shown at times in the previous chapter, the hypothesis would be fundamentally disproved should the Results section indicate RAF’s decision-making processes are at times propelled primarily by either RCT or organizational factors, with little to no regard for the group’s ideological goals due to their perceived rigidity. One example demonstrating such a case is the emergence of an influential, charismatic RAF leader who saw the movement’s ideology as excessively rigid, and sought to build popular support for the organization’s goals by dedicating a significant share of its resources to building a support base among of large share of
lower-class West Germans. This would comprise a blatant violation of the group’s ideology, which calls for dedicating all resources toward the armed struggle. Rather than ideology playing the primary role shaping RAF’s operational behavior, in this hypothetical case it is intra-organizational dynamics, coupled with an explicit desire to act in a rational, strategic manner, that shape behavior at the expense of adherence with the group’s ideological norms.

The Results Section analyzes the RAF’s operational record from its founding in 1970 to the arrest of its leadership in 1984. Unlike Hamas or the PIJ, the United States never designated the RAF as a foreign terrorist organization. However, it still serves as an adequate case study comparable to the Palestinian groups. Similar to both groups, it carried out a prolonged period of armed struggle nearly exclusively in the territory of one state. Additionally, like Hamas and the PIJ, the RAF was forced to combat counter-terrorism efforts prosecuted against it by the government it was seeking to destabilize. Finally, the FRG did define the RAF as a terrorist organization and treated it as such. As previously noted, the RAF poses a challenging case for the hypothesis. “Universal/abstract” terrorist organizations such as the RAF are less likely than “strategic” groups like Hamas to interpret their ideologies in a rational, strategic fashion. This is due largely to strategic groups’ concrete goals and their responsibility to tend to the social and material needs of defined constituencies, characteristics that universal/abstract groups lack. Thus, if the Results Section illustrates that the RAF interpreted its ideological mandates in a strategic way that took both rational concerns and organizational dynamics into account, it would demonstrate that the hypothesis could be applied to some universal/abstract groups. Failure to do so would indicate that the
hypothesis’ explanatory utility appears largely limited to more strategically-oriented
terrorist organizations.

**Results**

*The RAF: Emergence, Early Organizational Structure, and Ideology*

Longstanding grievances among the West German left with their country’s political, economic and social conditions were key factors facilitating the RAF’s emergence.\(^{248}\) In the years following World War II, many on the left complained that the FRG was willfully subjugating the country’s political and economic machinations to U.S. and NATO interests. In exchange, the left argued, the U.S. allowed the West German elite to avoid thorough denazification and impose a politically and culturally conservative post-war order.\(^{249}\) The retention of former Nazis in the civil service and judiciary was perceived as particularly egregious, as was the active suppression and outlawing of revolutionary left-wing parties, including the German Communist Party in 1956.\(^{250}\) Within this context, a 1966-67 recession pushed FRG unemployment over one million for the first time, increasing popular alienation with the country’s ruling class.\(^{251}\) Yet the establishment was able to retain its control of the political system, as the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the center-left Social Democratic Party (SPD) formed the “Grand Coalition” in the Bundestag in 1966. Together, the parties controlled 95% of all seats of the body, effectively exiling the far left from parliamentary politics.\(^{252}\)

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\(^{248}\) Moghadam, p. 158  
\(^{249}\) Moghadam, p. 158  
\(^{251}\) Smith and Moncourt, p. 29  
\(^{252}\) Moghadam, p. 158
Following the establishment of the Grand Coalition, the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) emerged and became the key vehicle for the far left’s organizing efforts and protest activity. The APO endured violence perpetrated by the FRG security forces and far-right political parties on several occasions. The attempted assassination of leading APO figure Rudi Dutschke in April 1968 was one key event that convinced some within the group that violence was the only means through which they could achieve their goals. Future RAF co-founder Gudrun Ensslin wrote after the attempt that, “We must organize resistance. Violence can only be answered with violence. This is the generation of Auschwitz, you cannot argue with them.” Ulrike Meinhof, a prominent leftist journalist who would also join the RAF, similarly wrote that, “the boundaries between protest and resistance were exceeded…the paramilitary deployment of the police will be answered with paramilitary methods.”

Among those in the APO who most vigorously embraced the notion that their demands could be met through violence alone were Ensslin and Andreas Baader, who, along with other future RAF members, firebombed two Frankfurt department stores on April 3, 1968. Ensslin and Baader were each sentenced to three years in prison and earned the support of many on the far left, including Meinhof. The prisoners appealed their sentences and were able to secure temporary release, but their appeal was denied and they were ordered back to jail. Baader chose not to report and went underground, but he was soon captured and returned to prison. Meinhof arranged a plot to free Baader, as

254 Moghadam, p. 158
255 Smith and Moncourt, p. 38
256 Michael, p. 347
she convinced German prison authorities to allow her to meet with him at a Berlin library to assist her with a research project. Meinhof and a few colleagues were able to break Baader out of the library, shooting two security officers in the process.\(^{258}\) This operation was that which brought about the official establishment of the RAF.

At the onset of its creation in 1970, the RAF was a small, heavily centralized group. Andreas Baader was the organization’s undisputed leader, as he was understood to be its “chief organizer, theoretician, strategist, and tactician.”\(^{259}\) Ensslin, Meinhof, and Horst Mahler, a lawyer who had defended the others in the Frankfurt Department store trial, were also influential members. Even as the RAF spent much of its first year actively recruiting new members and creating the contacts it would need to successfully prosecute the armed struggle, its decision-making circle remained small.\(^{260}\) With regard to its theoretical foundation, the group chose not to portray itself as overly ideological. Its leadership criticized “senseless” theoretical discussions among the left that it felt distracted their energies from carrying out the armed struggle to force tangible change. This was made clear in one of the group’s earliest manifestos, titled *Build The Red Army!* and released in June 1970. In the text, Ensslin asserted that the RAF would not bother justifying its actions to the “babbling intellectuals” that questioned the utility and morality of applying violence to achieve one’s goals.\(^{261}\)

Although the RAF disavowed excessive theoretical debate, it clearly utilized revolutionary leftist scholarship to develop its core values and operational disposition. In one of its landmark early ideological tracts, titled *The Urban Guerilla Concept* and

\(^{258}\) Michael, p. 348  
^{259}\) Michael, p. 348  
^{260}\) Moghadam, p. 158  
released in April 1971, the RAF applied the works of Marx, Mao, Lenin, and Brazilian Marxist writer Carlos Marighella to serve as the basis of its key values. *The Urban Guerilla Concept* argued that the West German government’s persecution of organized communist parties that sought to operate within the established political system rendered nonviolent change impossible, while also validating Mao’s dictum that the armed struggle was “the highest form of Marxist-Leninism.”262 The RAF criticized those who espoused seeking political change through nonviolent means, arguing that the armed struggle was unrivaled in its capacity to open up political possibilities for revolutionaries that were unattainable under the capitalist model.263 The RAF also disavowed the efforts of leftists to provide social welfare to needy West Germans, arguing it perpetuated the existing political and economic system, thereby limiting the scope of society’s potential well being. It thus effectively eliminated the prospect that it would ever seek to build a broad based coalition of support among West Germans through providing them with material goods, assuming that such efforts were detrimental until after the goals of the armed struggle were achieved. The movement favored the concept of an “internationalized” armed struggle in which revolutionary activities comprised a broad, united front resisting imperialism and capitalist domination. This assertion satisfied two important priorities many RAF members held. First, it enabled the group to contextualize its armed activities as actions that demonstrated solidarity with resistance efforts worldwide, primarily communist guerillas in the third world. Yet this concept of the need for a global, multifaceted armed struggle also allowed members to argue for the necessity

of armed operations to enact political change not only in far off locales such as Algeria and Vietnam, but also within Western Europe itself.264

While the RAF utilized communist scholarship to establish the theoretical basis for its core values, it did the same to craft its goals and the operational posture it would assume to attain them. The details the group put forth demonstrate mixed appreciation for utility maximizing activities and pursuing strategic initiatives. While the RAF certainly desired a new political order in Western Europe, it spoke of the FRG’s downfall in exclusively vague terms, and it rarely spoke of the political order that would emerge thereafter.265 However, the RAF possessed concrete tactical goals that it believed, if attained, were capable of helping pave the way for a new, if ill-defined, global order. Most importantly, the RAF conceived itself as a unifying force capable of using the armed struggle to foment broader opposition to the capitalist order among the FRG’s working class, even if it disavowed creating social welfare programs to attract their support.266 This vision of an organic, popular revolution largely reflected foundational communist thought and demonstrated the RAF’s awareness that its small ranks alone were incapable of waging an existential struggle against the FRG without ample outside help. Although RAF chose to not provide material help to the FRG working class, its members were instructed to avoid operations that would put the lives of ordinary citizens at risk. Such protections were even extended to members of the police and security

forces, as the *Urban Guerilla Concept* asserted they were mere “capitalist pawns” that should be spared unless they initiated hostilities against RAF militants.\(^\text{267}\)

While the RAF sought to maintain and grow popular support for its cause by sparing ordinary citizens and low-level security forces from the brunt of the violence, the key means through organization sought to attract such support focused on using the armed struggle to raise class-consciousness and demonstrate that a better order was possible. To do so effectively, the RAF drew upon Marighella’s view of the urban guerilla, which “requires the organization of a illegal structure including safe houses, weapons, cars, and documents” before the actual armed struggle began. Furthermore, there were almost no restrictions on the means to finance this infrastructure, as the *Urban Guerilla Concept* claimed revolutionary activities could not be waged in a manner “dependent on supply and demand” and permitted efforts to expropriate “bourgeois” assets, including bank robberies.\(^\text{268}\) The regulations circumscribing the scope of allowable armed activities, while fairly limited, also kept the group’s strategic interests in mind. The RAF asserted it was “incorrect to push revolutionary forces into confrontations that can only lead to defeat” and that poorly planned operations would leave the RAF vulnerable to retaliation from state authorities.\(^\text{269}\) Additionally, as noted above, members were ordered to refrain from endangering members of the public and in some cases the security forces when carrying out violence.

*Operational History Through 1984*


The RAF’s operational history commenced after Baader’s escape from custody, when its members fled to the Middle East to receive training from Palestinian militants for several weeks. They returned to West Germany and began building a logistical infrastructure by recruiting members, stealing cars, locating safe houses, stealing passports and other documents, and robbing banks. Their activities quickly attracted the West German authorities’ attention, as Minister of the Interior Hans-Deitrich Genscher designated the organization “public enemy number one” in April 1971. In response to the growing prominence of the RAF and other far left factions, police established more checkpoints nationwide and deployed additional officers to areas where the RAF maintained a presence. RAF member Petra Schelm was killed during the course of a Hamburg shootout with police in July. Such encounters continued into 1972 and some brought great success to police forces, which detained several newly recruited RAF commandos during this period. In March 1972, RAF member Thomas Weisbecker was killed by a police officer in Augsburg; shortly thereafter, two RAF members killed a police officer that had discovered one of the organization’s Hamburg safe houses.

Following the start of these sporadic, small-scale clashes with police forces, the RAF issued one of its longest and most significant theoretical tracts, titled *Serve the People*, in 1972. The document was published in large part to defend the group’s leadership and their decision-making, both of which had endured recent public criticism propagated by both former RAF members and the German mainstream press. The RAF

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270 Michael, p. 348
272 Smith and Moncourt, p. 60
273 Merkl, p. 182-183
274 Merkl, p. 182-183
275 Merkl, p. 182-183
criticized those who deemed its members as too slow to implement a broader armed struggle, restating ideological and theoretical justifications for concentrating initial efforts on building a logistical infrastructure and declaring in *Serve the People* that “without guaranteeing the organizational permanence of the revolutionary process, the revolutionary process is left to the anarchy of the system, to chance, to historical spontaneity.” The RAF therefore framed its preparatory efforts not as means for self-preservation, but rather a necessary component to sustain a later campaign to achieve its ideological goals. The authors also defended their conception of an international armed struggle, pushing back against those critical of the group for allegedly fixing its gaze abroad rather than concentrating attention on socioeconomic challenges within the FRG. *Serve the People* described ties between the FRG and the Shah of Iran as an example of the way “capital thinks in a multinational context,” arguing that communist revolutionaries must do the same to sustain the armed struggle, and that failure would exacerbate the split between the working class among national lines. The RAF also pushed back against sentiments that it consisted principally of elitist, upper-middle class members who presumed to speak for the middle and lower classes by calling for solidarity among all who wished to carry out the armed struggle. The group further sought to refute claims that its bank robberies constituted criminal activities, noting past

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assertions that they were instead “expropriation actions” necessary for financing its operations.  

The RAF transitioned from logistical planning efforts and defending its gains against police incursions to implementing a more offensively minded armed struggle in mid-1972. The group’s first campaign, which later became known as the “May Offensive,” began on May 11 when a group of RAF commandos detonated bombs at the U.S. Army V corps headquarters in Frankfurt, injuring thirteen and killing one. The following day, RAF members bombed the police headquarters in Augsburg, injuring one; twelve were injured in a separate car bombing the same day in Munich. On May 16, a bomb was placed in the car of Federal Supreme Court Judge Wolfgang Beddenberg, the lead judicial official handling RAF cases. The bomb detonated when Beddenberg’s wife was driving his car alone, seriously injuring her. On May 19, six bombs were detonated in the Hamburg office of the Springer Press, a conservative German publishing house, injuring seventeen. The campaign’s final operation took place May 24, when two car bombs were detonated at the U.S. Army’s Heidelberg base. Three soldiers were killed, and an additional six were injured.

The prosecution of the “May Offensive” suggests the RAF possessed a strategically oriented ideology that enabled it to pursue its goals in a utility maximizing way. Each attack was circumscribed in scope and targeted entities the RAF’s ideology clearly labeled as adversaries. This was especially clear with regard to the attacks against U.S. installations and the Springer Press Building. In both cases where U.S. military facilities were attacked, the bombs were timed to detonate during early morning hours.

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280 Merkl p. 182-183; Smith and Moncourt p. 163-174
when a minimum number of staff was present. Additionally, RAF commandos warned personnel in the Springer Press building to evacuate the area before the bombs were detonated. The reasoning for this behavior is clear. RAF’s ideology did not call for it to carry out attacks that maximized casualties; rather, it instructed them to conduct symbolic attacks to incite a more popular uprising against the FRG and its policies. This rendered strategic benefits for the group. While the West German government’s response to the May Offensive was robust, the RAF could have been completely eradicated had its operations resulted in the deaths of larger numbers of U.S. forces or German civilians. This development could have invited a much stronger government response, potentially with significant U.S. or NATO support.

While the May Offensive demonstrated the strategic facets of RAF’s ideology, it also reflected changing intra-organizational dynamics. The RAF grew modestly decentralized as it worked to consolidate a broader logistical support base. By May 1972, the RAF comprised eight cells that depended on the central leadership for logistical support but were afforded significant operational autonomy. The May Offensive in part reflected both the parochial interests of the RAF’s cells and the extent of their autonomy. The targeting of the Augsburg police headquarters best represents this, as it was Augsburg where police forces killed RAF member Thomas Weissbecker two months beforehand. Those who carried out the attack were likely Weissbecker’s former associates. They labeled themselves the “Thomas Weissbecker Commando,” and released a communiqué after that attack asserting that it satisfied both their personal desire for

281 Smith and Moncourt, p. 163, 165
282 Smith and Moncourt, p. 165
283 Smith and Moncourt, p. 173
revenge and the RAF’s core ideological goals.\textsuperscript{284} Communiqués following other operations did not allude to the specific concerns of the cell that carried them out, focusing instead on RAF’s widely held goals.\textsuperscript{285} Thus, while changes in intra-RAF group dynamics led the concerns of individual cells to influence operational priorities, these concerns did not contradict or supersede the RAF’s central ideological imperatives, as espoused by the core leadership.

The FRG police launched a major crackdown against the RAF following the May Offensive. By June 1972, most of the RAF’s leadership, including Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, Holger Meins, and Jan Carl Raspe, were imprisoned.\textsuperscript{286} Rather than ceding power to operatives on the outside, they consolidated their control over the RAF while in custody and largely eradicated any further movement toward decentralization.\textsuperscript{287} They quickly shifted RAF’s key focus from carrying out the armed struggle to attracting popular support for measures to improve their conditions in prison, including transferring all RAF members to a single facility and allowing them to receive treatment from independent doctors not employed by the prison system.\textsuperscript{288} Although operationally incapacitated, the RAF made headlines when the Palestinian Black September group killed eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. The demands Black September issued after initially taking the Israelis hostage included the immediate

\textsuperscript{286} Merkl, p. 183-183
\textsuperscript{288} Merkl, p. 183
release of both Baader and Meinhof. The RAF prisoners praised their efforts and issued a document titled *The Black September Action in Munich: Regarding the Strategy for Anti-Imperialist Struggle*, which commended the operation and framed it as a crucial event in the “anti-imperialist and internationalist” struggle against the United States and its allies.

While the *Black September Action* was named after the Summer Olympics operation, its content largely reflected the same tensions evident among the German left when *Serve the People* was published. Divergent accusations against the RAF, ranging from those purporting that the RAF’s support for communist insurrections abroad demonstrated it was out of touch with the needs of ordinary West Germans, to assertions that guerilla operations unduly interrupted or even threatened the lives of the FRG working class, proliferated. While the FRG’s mainstream and conservative press had long deemed the organization an inherently criminal group with a political façade, this view began to gain currency even among other far left leaders and organizations. Concerns were also raised about the group’s endorsement of Black September’s activities, which many interpreted as a clear indication of anti-Semitic tendencies. While the RAF did little publicly to combat assertions that it was anti-Semitic, it attempted to use the *Black September Action* as a means to attack and refute those who accused it of elitism while staying compliant with its unique ideological constitution. *Black September Action* derided the RAF’s opponents within the left as members of the “labor aristocracy,” a Marxist-Leninist term referring to those in the working classes who

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289 Smith and Moncourt, p. 189  
290 Smith and Moncourt, p. 200  
291 Smith and Moncourt, p. 205-206  
292 Smith and Moncourt, p. 195
perceive no material incentive to partake in violent unrest against capitalist rule.\(^{293}\) This term contained loaded connotations, as Lenin argued that imperialist gains at the expense of working class interests generally served as the means to placate and enrich the labor aristocracy.\(^{294}\) Black September Action further interpreted the entrenched position of the labor aristocracy as evidence that the armed struggle would continue in the West, forecasting that it would enable citizens to grasp the inherently shallow nature of consumer culture and “find their identity on the side of the liberation struggles.”\(^{295}\)

RAF efforts to establish a stronger base of support among West Germany’s radical left were not limited to appeals in ideological tracts such as Black September Action. As previously noted, the group’s imprisoned leaders sought to attract popular sentiment for the RAF’s cause by staging a number of hunger strikes aimed at improving their prison conditions. The leadership issued a harrowing narrative of their situation behind bars, asserting German authorities totally isolated them from each other and frequently kept them in total solitary confinement.\(^{296}\) This action paradoxically served to marginalize the RAF among ordinary West Germans, who were more liable to trust mainstream press accounts of their prison conditions claiming members were regularly allowed to watch television, listen to the radio, and read magazines in their cells. Mainstream opinion also increasingly embraced the notion that the RAF prisoners were carrying out the hunger strikes to delay legal proceedings against them, and, after some initial captivation within some circles regarding the daring nature of the RAF attacks,
perceived them as extremist rabble rousers rather than any genuine alternative political movement.\(^{297}\) While the hunger strikes succeeded in generating increased sympathy for the RAF among some within the far left, only a small minority of sympathizers took the leap of joining the underground and prosecuting the armed struggle.\(^{298}\) The RAF’s newfound focus on the prisoners was in no way derived from the group’s ideological and theoretical traditions, which focused solely on prosecuting the armed struggle to overthrow the capitalist establishment in Western Europe and lending support to others engaged in similar activities elsewhere. This shift in priorities alienated some members, and even caused Horst Mahler to leave the group altogether.\(^{299}\) While the RAF’s third hunger strike in the autumn of 1974 galvanized more support among the far left than others, this came at a significant price, as the results were apparent only after RAF leader Holger Meins died of starvation during its course. Upon hearing news of his death, thousands protested in West Berlin and small-scale violence proliferated in urban areas throughout the FRG. The most significant operation occurred on November 10, when another militant leftist group, the 2nd of June Movement (2JM), killed West Berlin Supreme Court Judge Gunter von Drenkmann and promptly issued a communiqué claiming it was payback for Meins’ death.\(^{300}\)

As imprisoned RAF leaders continued carrying out hunger strikes throughout the early 1970’s with limited success, commandos in the field moved to seize control of and revitalize the organization. They issued a communiqué in February 1975 ordering the prisoners to cease their hunger strikes, arguing such actions would no longer “contribute

\(^{298}\) Smith and Moncourt, p. 248  
\(^{299}\) Smith and Moncourt, p. 244  
\(^{300}\) Merkl, p. 183
anything qualitative to the struggle” and that their release could be secured only through resumed hostilities.\textsuperscript{301} These commandos staged an attempt to free their leaders on April 25, 1975, storming the FRG Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, and taking twelve hostages. The FRG refused to accept their demands even after the RAF began killing hostages; security forces instead stormed the embassy, capturing or killing all the commandos. These casualties comprised RAF’s primary fighting force at the time, and their demise significantly eroded the movement’s capacity to prosecute hostilities. The imprisoned leaders again assumed dominance over the group and remain fixated with improving the state of their confinement, deciding in January 1976 to seek prisoner of war status under the Geneva Convention.\textsuperscript{302} This decision especially alienated many RAF supporters, who felt the group’s focus on prisoners was occurring at the expense of lending support to third world liberation struggles and amounted to an arrogant elevation of the RAF prisoners over all other West German prisoners.\textsuperscript{303} Although remaining field operatives were unable to carry out significant attacks following Ulrike Meinhof’s prison suicide that May, sympathizers in the FRG and elsewhere in Europe accused the FRG of orchestrating her death and carried out several attacks and demonstrations, including a violent protest in Frankfurt in which the police and the demonstrators clashed. The scale of this violence shocked many of the far left’s protest leaders. Shortly thereafter, two of them, one of whom was future German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, gave a public speech disavowing the future use of violence and condemning guerilla organizations such as the RAF. Many of their compatriots accepted their decision and began gravitating

\textsuperscript{302} Merkl, p. 187
\textsuperscript{303} Smith and Moncourt, p. 456
toward the political process, leaving extra-establishment militants increasingly isolated.\footnote{Smith and Moncourt, p. 389-391}

The center of gravity within the RAF again shifted in 1977, when Brigitte Monhaupt, one of the many operatives detained after the May Offensive, was released from prison. Monhaupt immediately went underground and assumed a leadership role amongst remaining militants.\footnote{Smith and Moncourt, p. 444-445} Her efforts brought about quick results: the RAF carried out the highest-profile operation in its history that April, assassinating FRG Attorney General Siegfried Buback.\footnote{Merkl, p. 187} Militants then assassinated Jurgen Ponto, a prominent German businessman, in July and soon thereafter staged a failed attack on the offices of Kurt Rebmann, who replaced Buback as Attorney General.\footnote{Merkl, p. 187-188} The RAF’s activities continued into September, when Hanns Martin Schleyer, a businessman in charge of both the Federal Association of German Industrialists and the Federal Association of German Employers, was captured.\footnote{Merkl, p. 188} The kidnapping was intended to pressure the FRG to release the remaining RAF prisoners.\footnote{Smith and Moncourt, p. 477} Although the government made clear its refusal to accede to the RAF’s demands, the RAF kept Schleyer hostage. The situation accelerated on October 13, when a small Palestinian group intervened on RAF’s behalf and hijacked an airliner traveling from Spain to West Germany. The hijackers diverted the plane to several cities in the Middle East and Africa, eventually landing in Mogadishu.\footnote{Merkl, p. 188} The FRG indicated its refusal to release the RAF prisoners, instead deploying members of GSG-9, its elite counterterrorism force, to Somalia. One hour after Bonn announced that...
GSG-9 had successfully stormed the plane and killed the hijackers, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan Carl Raspe committed suicide in their prison cells. Soon thereafter, RAF militants responded by killing Schleyer.

After the deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe, security forces arrested several of the RAF’s remaining members while others, including militants responsible for the deaths of Buback, Ponto, and Schleyer, were killed in police shootouts.\textsuperscript{311} These developments dramatically reduced the RAF’s capacity to prosecute the armed struggle.\textsuperscript{312} Operations during the latter months of 1977 through mid-1979 were limited to one attack when militants tried but failed to take control of a German Press Agency office, where they intended to force staff to disseminate pro-RAF statements.\textsuperscript{313} Public interest in the group waned after Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe were killed, and the efforts of newly incarcerated militants to attract public attention and sympathy by carrying out hunger strikes failed.\textsuperscript{314} Indeed, it was around this time that far left militant groups separate of the RAF began to emerge and espouse a greater focus on addressing issues of immediate concern to a larger share of the public, such as environmental degradation, nuclear weapons, and women’s rights, while comparative moderates continued to disavow the armed struggle and follow Joschka Fischer and others into the political establishment.\textsuperscript{315} This rendered the RAF, which was still perceived among the far left as inordinately focused on improving the conditions of imprisoned West German militants, increasingly isolated. However, German authorities remained unable to bring RAF leader

\textsuperscript{311} Merkl, p. 189-190  
\textsuperscript{313} Merkl, p. 190  
\textsuperscript{314} Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 94, 105  
\textsuperscript{315} Smith and Moncourt, p. 450
Brigette Monhaupt into custody. While Monhaupt’s recruiting efforts ensured the group’s rank and file would never fall far below 40 members, the RAF’s organizational structure was forced to undergo fundamental changes to ensure its survival.\textsuperscript{316} The RAF grew unprecedentedly decentralized, as its commandos operated in small, isolated groups and purposely limited collaboration to avoid police capture.\textsuperscript{317} The role of the RAF’s most strident supporters also began changing. While supporters provided material or logistical help to militants such as food or temporary housing during the era of Baader and Meinhof, they infrequently if ever assisted in the prosecution of the armed struggle itself. However, this began to shift, as the RAF began to more closely engage with sympathizer groups and encourage them to engage in violent attacks without direct sanction from the movement.\textsuperscript{318}

Monhaupt and her compatriots were able to weather the FRG security forces’ efforts to eliminate the group, and in June 1979 they carried out an operation to assassinate NATO Supreme Allied Commander Alexander Haig. Although the attack narrowly failed, it marked a clear return to the RAF’s ideological roots.\textsuperscript{319} No longer were commandos committed to securing the release of imprisoned comrades; indeed, the communiqué issued after the attack was the first RAF document in years to omit mention of a prison hunger strike.\textsuperscript{320} The Haig operation signaled the beginning of a revitalized RAF armed struggle campaign committed exclusively to waging violence against NATO forces deployed to Europe. The communiqué clearly framed this campaign as a key

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\textsuperscript{316} Moghadam, p. 162  \\
\textsuperscript{317} Merkl, p. 165  \\
\textsuperscript{318} Merkl, p. 166  \\
\textsuperscript{319} Moghadam, p. 168  \\
\end{flushleft}
strategic front in the international armed struggle, which was a concept the RAF first espoused at length in the *Urban Guerilla Concept* in 1971. The RAF now expanded upon its view of the international armed struggle and further detailed the precise role the movement was to play. The RAF lauded the defeats imperialist forces suffered at the hands of RAF allies in Southeast Asia and Africa, adding that these events further increased the strategic importance of the RAF itself. The communiqué asserted that NATO was now working to regain momentum in those areas by restructuring and expanding its logistical base in Western Europe, and that the RAF would therefore carry out the armed struggle to undermine these efforts.321

The RAF’s attempted assassination of Alexander Haig not only complied with the group’s ideology, but also allowed it to improve its reputation among West Germany’s far left, which had been declining since the mid-1970’s. Indeed, disparate activist groups were beginning to concentrate their efforts on organizing opposition to NATO’s “Double-Track” strategy of deploying additional short and medium range missiles in Europe.322 Although many of these activists were soundly against the use of violence, some individuals overlooked this aversion and found themselves attracted the RAF’s armed struggle campaign against NATO’s expansionary efforts.323 The RAF pursued additional means to broaden their support base. While imprisoned RAF militants had heretofore carried out hunger strikes largely to attract public attention to their allegedly inhumane prison conditions, they began to more explicitly leverage them as a recruiting tool and a component of the broader armed struggle. Communiqués announcing hunger

322 Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 172
323 Horchem, p. 65
strikes no longer restricted their goals to improving prisoner conditions, but expanded them to rallying both prisoners and outside activists to support the RAF’s new anti-NATO campaign.324

The RAF’s efforts paid dividends. Hundreds of inmates joined an RAF-led prison hunger strike in 1980, and thousands of demonstrators associated with various causes marched in solidarity with them through West Berlin.325 Violent unrest proliferated after one of the hunger strikers perished, as several government buildings throughout West Germany were attacked and damaged by protestors.326 The RAF sought to ramp up violence on the eve of a visit by Alexander Haig, who was now President Reagan’s Secretary of State, to West Berlin. Two weeks prior to Haig’s September 1980 visit, RAF commandos detonated a car bomb at the U.S. Ramstein Air Force base, injuring twenty. The bomb was purposely detonated early in the morning when the base was largely empty. This occurred so the attack would serve as a signal of the RAF’s continued efforts to conduct the armed struggle, but not cause mass casualties and incite renewed anti-RAF sentiment among the increasingly pacifistic far left.327 Like the May Offensive operations eight years earlier, the purposely circumscribed nature of this attack also reflected the RAF’s ideological mandate to carry out operations to incite unrest among sympathizers and the broader public, rather than maximize casualties. Several small-scale operations by RAF sympathizers did indeed follow, and over fifty thousand demonstrators showed up to protest Haig’s visit.328 Two days after Haig departed West Germany, RAF

325 Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 152-153
326 Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 162
327 Moghadam, p. 164
328 Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 181
commandos attempted but failed to assassinate U.S. General Frederick Kroesen.\textsuperscript{329} Less organized RAF sympathizers again prosecuted a series of complementary attacks, and their aspirations at times even superseded the scale of violence the RAF was seeking to employ. Indeed, one group of militants tried but failed to bomb Dow Chemical’s Düsseldorf headquarters.\textsuperscript{330}

Although the RAF’s anti-NATO campaign met with some success and brought the group reputational benefits among the far left, it found itself still struggling to adjust to changing dynamics among the broader extra-establishment movement in the early 1980’s. During this time, the appeal of a separate militant group, the Revolutionary Cells (RZ), grew to significantly transcend that of the RAF. The RZ was a diffuse, fluid organization whose members came and went as they pleased and frequently lived conventional lives outside of their participation in guerilla operations. Most radicals preferred this arrangement to joining the RAF, which required one to go completely underground and thus dominated every aspect of life. The RAF sought to increase its own appeal in light of these trends while staying true to its ideological convictions. RAF plans were formalized in a document titled, “The Guerilla, the Resistance, and the Anti-Imperialist Front,” released in spring 1982. In this document, the RAF sought to establish itself as an organizing force for a united guerilla front that included the RZ and other diffuse radical elements.\textsuperscript{331} This construct discounted the once preeminent RAF prisoners entirely; instead centering operations around decentralized command-level units, even more informal groups of “illegal militants” to prosecute smaller-scale attacks, and a

\textsuperscript{329} Moghadam, p. 164;


larger nonviolent group of political supporters.\textsuperscript{332} The document also proposed for the first time the convergence of a “West European guerilla front” to build on the momentum of the RAF’s previous campaign and further pressure NATO forces throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{333}

The RAF’s attempt to situate itself as an organizing force for the militant left was not universally well-received, as some argued the move was indicative of an inherent presumptiveness and elitism among the group’s members.\textsuperscript{334} These efforts were further undermined soon after \textit{The Guerilla, the Resistance, and the Anti-Imperialist Front} was released, when German authorities arrested Brigitte Monhaupt and the group’s other leading figure, Christian Klar, on separate operations in November 1982.\textsuperscript{335} These arrests comprised the biggest triumph for the state since Baader and Meinhof were detained and left the RAF without a strong leadership core.\textsuperscript{336} Both Monhaupt and Klar had proven adept at avoiding capture, but security forces were able to apprehend them after discovering a large RAF supply cache outside Frankfurt that included weapons, planning documents, and safehouse locations. Armed with unprecedented information about the group’s activities and infrastructure, security forces accelerated their investigations, discovering several weapons caches and arresting additional members throughout 1983.\textsuperscript{337} Yet the state’s greatest triumph occurred on March 26, 1984, when the entirety of the RAF’s remaining leaders were located and arrested at a Frankfurt safehouse. The RAF was now operationally devastated to an unprecedented extent, as all of its known

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Horchem} Horchem, p. 66
\bibitem{Smith} Smith and Moncourt, (Vol. 2) p. 219
\bibitem{Moghadam} Moghdam, p. 164
\bibitem{Merkel} Merkl, p. 168
\bibitem{Merkel} Merkl, p. 168
\end{thebibliography}
leaders were imprisoned. Although this did not lead to the end of the RAF as an organization, it did mark the point in which the last of the RAF members with direct ties to the initial leadership core of Baader, Meinhof, and Raspe were removed from the battlefield and no longer played a role in conducting the armed struggle.

Discussion

This paper seeks to build off of the conclusions asserted in Chapter Two of this thesis, which found that Hamas, as a strategically minded terrorist organization, viewed its ideology as a series of guiding principles that helped it calibrate policy reflective not only its ideological values, but also its strategic interests and organizational dynamics. Thus, ideology was found to be the preeminent factor shaping Hamas’ decision-making process, with its desires to act in utility-maximizing way and manage intra-group dynamics playing key secondary roles. Hamas thus serves as a model case demonstrating the hypothesis’ suppositions, and clearly reveals that the hypothesis has explanatory utility with regard to “strategic” terrorist organizations, as conceived by Piazza. While the hypothesis’ utility is more mixed with regard to PIJ, which is more of a “universal/abstract” group per Piazza’s analysis, the circumstances where the hypothesis did explain PIJ’s behavior justified further examination of the extent of its applicability to the behavior of “universal/abstract” groups.

This paper therefore hypothesizes that the German Red Army Faction’s (RAF) ideology is the most important factor guiding the group’s operations, and that the RAF conceives its ideology as guidance to help it develop and implement policy beneficial to its strategic interests and its efforts to manage group dynamics rather than a set of strict laws demanding orthodox adherence under all circumstances. It further purports that this
flexible nature in which the RAF interprets its ideology allows for policy to be made, in an ideologically complaint way, on the basis of rational concerns or intra-organizational dynamics. As a “universal/abstract” terrorist organization with broad, vaguely defined goals and a lack of concrete ties to any defined constituency, the RAF constitutes a difficult case for the hypothesis.

The data in the Results section demonstrates that the RAF, on several occasions, conceived its ideology as the main factor informing the nature of its operations and interpreted it in a strategic way that fulfilled its rational interests and goals. The RAF’s strategic interpretation of its ideology not only enabled the group to pursue and implement rational, utility-maximizing policies, but also allowed, under select circumstances, for intra-group dynamics to shape the group’s behavior in a positive way. However, despite these findings, the overwhelming majority of the Results section’s data ultimately disproves the hypothesis. The data clearly reveals that RAF’s ideology was not always the key factor driving its operational decision-making. Indeed, intra-organizational dynamics in the form of the RAF imprisoned leaders’ successful efforts to elevate their parochial concerns over the group’s strategic goals played a prominent role shaping the RAF’s actions as early as 1972, and ultimately contributed to the arrest of its remaining leaders in the field by 1984. Furthermore, an additional factor for which the hypothesis failed to account, namely the progressive renunciation of violence among most of the FRG’s increasingly pacifistic far left throughout the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, also had an impact on the RAF’s operational behavior and helped bring about its eventual demise.
Although the Results section illustrates that strategic interpretations of RAF’s ideology did not always serve as the preeminent factor influencing the group’s decision-making, there were instances where the group’s ideology indeed served this primary role. Among the clearest examples is the group’s behavior from its founding in 1970 to the conclusion of the 1972 May Offensive. Indeed, when crafting one of the RAF’s founding ideological documents, *The Urban Guerilla Concept*, RAF leaders codified Carlos Marighella’s advice to urban guerilla groups to establish a stable logistical base before initiating attacks as an important facet of the group’s ideological disposition. This was an inherently strategic move, enabling the RAF to carry out sustained operations and weather retaliatory FRG counterterrorism operations. The manner in which the May Offensive was prosecuted further showed RAF’s capacity to leverage its ideology in a strategic way and while adeptly managing intra-organizational dynamics. In several May Offensive operations, RAF members took care to minimize casualties. This was consistent with the group’s ideological provisions, which called on militants to carry out symbolic attacks that maximized popular support rather than enemy casualties, and also reflected the group’s strategic interests by circumscribing the scope of subsequent FRG and/or international retaliation. The May Offensive also reflected RAF efforts to manage, intra-organizational dynamics, as RAF militants who carried out an attack in Augsburg, where police has previously killed a former colleague, characterized the operation as both a means of personal revenge for those militants themselves and an effort to pursue the RAF’s broader ideological goals.\(^{338}\)

Though less reflective of organizational dynamics, the RAF also demonstrated a capacity to leverage its ideology in a strategic way later in its history. The group’s attempt to assassinate NATO Supreme Allied Commander Alexander Haig in 1979 both complied with its ideological imperatives and marked the beginning of a newfound strategic effort to bolster support for the RAF among far left activists who were increasingly concentrating their attention on combatting NATO’s expanding military presence in the FRG. This capability was further demonstrated in a related way the following year, when the RAF prosecuted a bombing of the U.S. Ramstein air force base but was careful to minimize casualties. Like the May Offensive operations before it, this effort reflected the group’s ideological dictate to prosecute operations focusing primarily on instigating escalated unrest among the larger population rather than rendering the largest number of possible casualties. The attack’s nature was also indicative of the RAF’s strategically based desire to minimize the violent nature of its attacks to attract the support of prospective sympathizers who were at the time increasingly adverse to the use of violence.

Even though there were demonstrable cases where RAF’s ideology served as the key element impacting the group’s operational behavior, repeated instances where ideology was not the most important factor shaping the group’s operations were both frequent and rendered a demonstrable impact on the RAF’s eventual fate. The Results section indicates moves by the RAF’s imprisoned leaders to orient the group’s focus away from the armed struggle toward improving their prison conditions contributed to the group’s increasing isolation throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s, eventually enabling FRG security forces to detain remaining key members in the battlefield by 1984. The leaders’
exclusive focus on hunger strikes and prison conditions over sustained periods of time did not adhere with the group’s ideological goals, which were focused exclusively on carrying out the armed struggle and attracting public support for that enterprise. Therefore, negative intra-organizational factors, in the form of the leaders’ move to shift the RAF’s focus to fit their own personal needs, superseded the group’s ideology as the preeminent factor shaping the group’s operational decision-making on numerous occasions. This first occurred early in the RAF’s history in 1972, when Andreas Baader, Gundrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, Holger Meins, Jan Carl Raspe, and several others were imprisoned soon after the May Offensive. Their efforts to improve their own prison conditions dominated the RAF’s focus throughout the 1970’s, significantly interrupted only when remaining field commandos seized control of the group for a brief period in 1975. Prisoner efforts to attain special status under the Geneva Convention in 1976 helped cement perceptions among the FRG far left that the RAF was an elitist, detached group, and those dedicated to the armed struggle began joining other groups such as the Second of June Movement, the Revolutionary Cells, or more dispersed autonomen movements.\footnote{Merkl, p. 187} By 1982, the RAF’s leaders better grasped this situation and sought to amend it by releasing \textit{The Guerilla, the Resistance, and the Anti-Imperialist Front}, which sought to more explicitly integrate the group within the FRG far left landscape. Yet by this point, the group’s isolation had already proven its undoing, as soon thereafter the police enjoyed several breakthroughs enabling them to round up the small number of remaining consequential militants.

Although the Results section makes it clearly evident that there were prolonged periods in which malevolent intra-organizational dynamics, rather than strategic
interpretations of the RAF’s ideology, drove the group’s decision-making processes, there was an additional factor at play that shaped the group’s behavior and ultimate fate yet was not envisioned by the hypothesis. Terrorist organizations rarely enjoy popular support among most of the population of the area where they are carrying out operations, and most ordinary citizens within the FRG certainly disapproved of the RAF’s ideology and violent tactics. However, this aversion to the armed struggle began penetrating even the extra-establishment, previously militant far left following the conclusion of the May Offensive. The Black September Action, published just five months after the May Offensive concluded in 1972, sought to address the accusations of many within the far left that guerilla operations unnecessarily threatened the lives of the FRG working class. Hostility toward violence among the far left subsequently grew. It reached a crescendo in 1976, when key militant leaders including eventual German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer publicly disavowed the armed struggle and began leading their constituencies into the political process, rendering the RAF and other violent groups ever more isolated.340 There was little the RAF could do to adjust to this development while adhering to its ideological values, as the movement was at its very foundation dedicated to the armed struggle as the means to achieve its goals. The RAF did seek to respond to those trends in an ideologically compliant way, as it circumscribed the extent of violence it employed when prosecuting the armed struggle throughout the early 1980’s in part to try to appeal those who had disavowed such tactics but shared some of the RAF’s broader views. Yet this trend among the FRG far left, wherein large shares of militants increasingly renounced violence and joined the political process, left the RAF fighting for support from an increasingly small slice of the population throughout the late 1970’s and

340 Smith and Moncourt p. 389-391
into the early 1980’s. Such developments undeniably contributed to its isolation and the eventual capture of its leaders.

**Conclusion**

The hypothesis of this paper purports that the RAF applies its ideology as a framework to help it formulate and carry out policies beneficial to its strategic interests, rather than as a series of sacrosanct laws demanding uniform compliance at all times. It also asserts that while ideology is the most important factor facilitating RAF decision-making, the strategic way in which the group interprets its ideology enables the RAF to carry out policies reflecting rational concerns and/or intra-organizational dynamics, as long as that they adhere with the group’s broader ideological provisions. There are several instances in the RAF’s history where the group’s strategic conception of its ideology indeed served as the key factor guiding its operational behavior. Such examples range from the prosecution of the May Offensive in 1972, all the way to its attempts to respond to changing currents within the German far left by issuing *The Guerilla, the Resistance, and the Anti-Imperialist Front* a decade later. However, the case of the RAF ultimately comprises yet another instance where the hypothesis is disproved. The RAF’s most consequential policy decision, a move by its leaders to focus group efforts on securing their release from prison rather than prosecuting the armed struggle, was guided not by the RAF’s ideology, but rather the personal motivations of the imprisoned leaders themselves. It thus represents a case where malevolent intra-organizational dynamics, rather than strategic conceptions of ideology, were the primary factor shaping the RAF’s behavior throughout protracted periods of its history. This dynamic, coupled with the
growing aversion toward violence among increasingly large shares of the FRG’s far left, ultimately brought about the RAF’s effective demise in 1984.

As with the PIJ, the case of the RAF demonstrates an instance where the operational record of a “universal/abstract” group fails to satisfy the hypothesis’ assertion that strategic interpretations of ideology serve as the most important factor guiding the operational behavior of terrorist organizations. In the case of the PIJ, the inherently restrictive nature of its ideology forced it to violate its ideological provisions on many occasions to maintain its survival. Key provisions of PIJ’s ideology that rendered this effect included the mandate that it dedicate its resources entirely to carrying out the armed struggle. RAF’s ideology was inherently more strategic in this respect, as it asserted that revolutionary activities could not be prosecuted on the basis of “supply and demand.” This allowed RAF to carry out criminal activities, including bank robberies, which did little to promote the movement’s ideological goals but ensured that it remained adequately resourced. PIJ, on the other hand, chronically lacked resources throughout its existence, in large part due to its ideological prohibition against carrying out operations with the sole purpose of increasing its material wealth.

The Results section in both Chapters 2 and 3 can therefore lead one to discern with reasonable confidence that this hypothesis offers limited explanatory utility with regard to the behavior of “universal/abstract groups.” The case of PIJ is perhaps more intuitive or predictable, as it marks a situation where the inherently confining nature of a group’s ideology prevents it from interpreting its ideology in a strategic way. The reason that the operational record of the RAF is at odds with the hypothesis’ suppositions is, as noted above, entirely different. Indeed, the group’s ideology was certain ways much more
strategic, but the group’s leaders chose to shift its operational disposition in a way that reflected their own personal interests rather than the group’s ideological goals. It is therefore not only the restrictive ideologies of “universal/abstract” groups, but also the nature of the kinds of individuals who join them, that can make it difficult for this hypothesis to have much explanatory utility regarding the behavior of such organizations. Future analysis regarding possible differences between the kinds of actors compelled to join “strategic” terrorist organization and those willing to join “universal/abstract” groups would thus serve as compelling supplementary analysis to this thesis.

The following Thesis Conclusion will provide a final assessment of the hypothesis’ utility with respect to both “strategic” and “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations. It will also suggest additional areas of study that could be pursued to garner a clear understanding of the dynamics shaping the behavior of both kinds of groups. Finally, the Conclusion will offer several research and policy recommendations that policymakers could pursue and implement to more effectively combat various kinds of terrorist organizations. The Conclusion emphasizes that a “one size fits all” approach to counterterrorism is not appropriate, and that unique policies must be developed to target the particular disposition of each terrorist group. It also proposes how some of these recommendations may be applicable to fighting ISIS.
Thesis Conclusion

Conclusion Analysis of the Chapters

The preceding three thesis chapters seek to add value to existing literature assessing the value of different factors in determining the behavior of terrorist organizations. The first chapter, which serves as an assessment of this literature, finds that scholars most frequently argue that ideology, predilection toward rational choice, or intra-organizational dynamics render the most influence in shaping terrorist organization behavior. However, it also reveals that existing scholarship is prone to weighing these factors in isolation, or perhaps appraising two against each other. With this persistent deficiency in mind, this paper sought to weigh all three factors in a more comprehensive way. An observation that terrorist organizations with different ideologies appear to embrace distinct operational dispositions leads these chapters to assume that of the three factors mentioned above, ideology is indeed the most important in shaping terrorist organization behavior.

The analysis of existing literature in Chapter One leads this assumption to be further defined while also more explicitly delineating the hypothesis’ scope. Chapter One reveals that scholars espousing the utility of ideology as the key factor influencing terrorist organization behavior assume that such organizations view their respective ideologies in one of two mutually exclusive ways. The first conception of ideology is that of a set of guiding measures circumscribing the scope of allowable action, but still enabling such groups to carry out policies consistent with their strategic goals. The second is entirely different, instead comprehending ideology as a set of immutable laws stringently dictating terrorist organization behavior in way that no other factor can render
any demonstrable influence. This paper embraces and slightly expands upon the first definition. It assumes that while ideology is the most important factor shaping terrorist organization behavior, terrorist organizations indeed view their ideologies as series of guiding principles allowing them to make policy that is not only strategic in nature, but also demonstrative of their need to manage intra-group dynamics. Policies calibrated in this fashion, furthermore, remain consistent with the ideological values of the group in question. The literature review also reveals the existence of two distinct types of terrorist organizations: “strategic” groups that have concrete goals and direct ties to a defined constituency, and “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations that have more abstract goals and lack such constituent ties. It thus follows that the hypothesis can be rigorously tested only if both types of organizations are used as case studies.

Chapter Two therefore applies Hamas, from its founding in 1987 to the beginning of the second intifada in 2000, as a case study analyzing a “strategic” terrorist organization. Hamas’ core characteristics, most importantly its relationship with a large constituency of Palestinians who benefit directly from the social services it provides, render it a strategic terrorist group. While Hamas’ penultimate ideological goal, Israel’s destruction, is indeed far fetched, it is not entirely abstract because it clearly envisions replacing Israel with a well-administered, socially just (in Hamas’ view) Palestinian state where the basic material needs of its Palestinian population are provided for. Analysis of Hamas’ behavior within the delineated time frame found that the group’s ideology was the most important factor determining its operational behavior. It also revealed that Hamas, in a manner consistent with the hypothesis, conceived its ideology in a strategic way affording space for the factors of rational choice and intra-organizational dynamics.
to influence its behavior without superseding the group’s ideological values. Examples where the viability of the hypothesis demonstrated itself include Hamas’ campaign of suicide bombing attacks from April to October 1994. The consistency of these attacks with Hamas’ ideology was quite obvious, as they were calibrated to harm Israel and bring about its eventual demise. Yet they offered strategic utility to Hamas beyond the material damage they caused. Hamas chose to escalate violence at that particular time because it stood to gain popularity from doing so, as larger shares of Palestinians were embracing the use of violence against Israel following an attack by a Jewish extremist against Palestinians in Hebron, killing twenty-nine. The attacks also reflected Hamas’ efforts to manage intra-group dynamics. Indeed, Hamas’ militant wing, the al-Qassam Brigades, consistently embraced the need for violence much quicker than the group’s political leaders. Although their effort to reign in al-Qassam ultimately failed, Hamas’ political leadership authorized the militant wing to carry out these attacks in part to better ensure the group used its finite resources to prosecute the armed struggle at times when the political leadership authorized them to do so and saw their efforts as promoting Hamas’ broader interests.

Chapter Two thus establishes that this hypothesis has explanatory utility regarding the behavior of “strategic” terrorist organizations. It also seeks to discern whether the hypothesis is applicable to “universal/abstract” groups by weighing it against the behavior of another Palestinian terrorist organization, Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Like Hamas, PIJ’s behavior was analyzed from its founding in the 1980’s to the onset of the second intifada roughly twenty years later. While Hamas’ ideology compels the group to provide for the material needs of Palestinians, PIJ’s ideology specifically prohibits the
group from doing so. The resultant lack of constituent ties, paired with an ideological goal that, like Hamas, calls for Israel’s destruction but distinctly refrains from considering the nature of the Islamic state that would follow, renders PIJ a “universal/abstract” group. Chapter Two finds that PIJ’s behavior was, in most cases, inconsistent with the hypothesis’ suppositions. There were some exceptions where PIJ did apply its ideology in a strategic way, ranging from an attack on a yeshiva student in Hebron in 1983 to its partnership with Hamas in a 1995 suicide bombing campaign. However, on balance, it found that PIJ’s ideology was so restrictive that the group was frequently forced to violate its provisions to ensure its survival. One such case followed the exile of PIJ’s leader, Fathi Shiqaqi, and its spiritual guide, Sheikh Abdel Aziz Awda, to Lebanon. Afterward, PIJ was forced to enter into strategic pacts with both the Syrian and Lebanese governments despite the fact that its ideology viewed both as “apostate regimes” with whom cooperation was banned under all circumstances. Therefore, in this case, PIJ’s need to maximize utility to survive, rather than its ideology, served as the primary factor shaping its behavior. There were other, less frequent, cases where intra-organizational dynamics trumped ideology in shaping PIJ’s behavior. Indeed, following Shiqaqi’s exile to Lebanon a leadership vacuum developed within the group, causing some within the organization to leverage growing religiousity in the Occupied Territories and take part in religion-based attacks against fellow Palestinians. Such attacks were in violation of PIJ’s ideology, which spoke out against group efforts to propagate religious tensions with Palestinians that may hold different views.

While Chapter Two thus established the applicability of the hypothesis to “strategic” terrorist organizations like Hamas, it also made clear that it had less
immediate relevance to the behavior of “universal/abstract” groups such as PIJ. Yet the fact that the results with respect to PIJ were mixed justified further analysis regarding the hypothesis’ pertinence to such groups. Chapter Three accordingly tested the hypothesis against another “universal/abstract” group, in this case the German Red Army Faction (RAF), from its founding in the early 1970’s to it demise in 1984. Like PIJ, RAF lacked direct ties to a constituency and possessed vague ideological goals. Additionally, the group’s roots and historical circumstances were completely divorced from those of PIJ, giving the reader confidence that if the hypothesis lacked widespread applicability to both PIJ and RAF, it would also lack such applicability among a large share of diverse “universal/abstract” groups. The results of the analysis carried out in Chapter Three indicated that RAF’s behavior did not comply with the hypothesis’ suppositions, with the prominent exception of the prosecution of its “May Offensive” in 1972. However, while PIJ failed to satisfy the hypothesis largely because its restrictive ideology forced it to maximize utility while violating its ideological provisions, RAF failed for a different reason. Instead, in the case of the RAF, malevolent intra-organizational dynamics, rather the need to realize its strategic goals at the expense of its ideological values, served as the primary factor shaping its operations. This was illustrated by the efforts of the RAF’s initial leadership core, following their imprisonment, to orient the group’s resources exclusively toward improving their conditions of imprisonment and securing their freedom. These imperatives, which the RAF maintained for several years, were completely inconsistent with the group’s ideologically based goals, which were to prosecute the armed struggle against the Federal Republic of Germany and lend
assistance to other groups engaged in similar activities elsewhere in Western Europe and around the world.

The divergent reasons why the operational records of two “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations, PIJ and RAF, failed to adhere with the hypothesis’ suppositions reveal further areas of the study that would complement this analysis. At the onset, it was assumed that the restrictive nature of the ideologies of “universal/abstract” groups would render them more difficult cases for the hypothesis to fulfill, as the hypothesis assumes that organizations perceive their ideologies in a strategic way. While this early assumption did account for the reasons that PIJ did not mark a successful test case, it failed to do so for the RAF. Indeed, it was the behavior of powerful members of RAF’s leadership core, rather than RAF’s ideology, which caused factors other than a strategic conception of group ideology to play the most prominent role molding RAF’s behavior. One may tentatively gather from this that not only does the cofining nature of “universal/abstract” group ideologies undermine the capacity of those ideologies to meaningfully impact the policy options such groups embrace, but also that the tendencies of individuals compelled to join “universal/abstract” groups may contribute here, as well. Therefore, future analysis may seek to determine whether there are distinct differences between the tendencies of individuals who are attracted to join “strategic” groups and those who join “universal/abstract” groups. For example, one may hypothesize that politically radical, yet primarily utility-maximizing persons aspire to lead “strategic” groups, while fanatics seeking to satisfy their own personal goals under an ideological veneer tend to control “universal/abstract” organizations. Such analysis may further seek to establish that, if such distinct differences exist among the characteristics of the leaders
of these groups, whether they render a meaningful impact on the way each type of group operates.

**Policy Recommendations**

The methodology applied in these three thesis chapters offers a blueprint that both U.S. and foreign officials can apply to expand their understanding of ISIS beyond the contextual factors that abetted the group’s emergence. Indeed, if the U.S.-led coalition of countries combatting ISIS in Syria and Iraq hopes to achieve long-term success, they will need to thoroughly comprehend the fundamental strategic disposition of the group and the relative importance of different internal factors in determining the timing and nature of its operations. An understanding of ISIS on this granular level is key for the U.S. and its allies to formulate a counterterrorism approach that moves beyond “one size fits all” and directly targets the sources of ISIS’s strength. Fortunately, the world’s understanding of ISIS is already moving beyond looking at some of the contextual factors that led to its rise to acquiring a better grasp of the group itself. Recent analysis in this regard includes work by the RAND Corporation to analyze over 200 recently declassified documents from ISIS’s predecessor organizations, al-Qaida in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq. In reviewing these documents, RAND analysts have sought to determine how these groups were able to withstand previous U.S. counterterrorism efforts, establish ISIS, and turn ISIS into one of the most formidable terrorist organizations in the Middle East.341

Policymakers should leverage these existing resources, other intelligence that is not available in the public realm, and the methodology used in these thesis chapters to:

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(1) Assess whether ISIS is a “strategic” or “universal/abstract” terrorist organization.

Discerning whether ISIS is a “strategic” terrorist organization such as Hamas or a “universal/abstract” group like PIJ or RAF will provide policymakers with a broad yet important understanding of the group’s inherent disposition. “Strategic” terrorist organizations are defined as those that maintain both concrete goals and direct constituent ties, while “universal/abstract” groups are commonly understood as those that pursue more abstract goals and lack such constituent relationships. With these definitions in mind, it is evident that the results of this finding will have significant implications for the kind of approach the U.S. and its allies should embrace to defeat ISIS. Indeed, policy recommendations 3 through 5 indicate that efforts to defeat terrorist organizations that maintain constituent ties must be fundamentally different from those to defeat groups that either lack such ties or place less importance on them. As explained in more detail in Recommendation 2, it will also offer policymakers an initial foundational understanding that they will require to determine the relationships between the different factors influencing ISIS’s behavior, which will also influence which policies are ultimately pursued to defeat the group.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to ascertain which of the two categories explained above is most consistent with ISIS. However, it should be noted that answering the question posed by this recommendation is not a straightforward task. ISIS gained its reputation as the most radical of the large militant organizations operating in Syria and Iraq when al-Qaeda formally disassociated itself from the group in February 2014. It is commonly understood that al-Qaeda did so in part due to ISIS’s efforts to brutally punish
Syrians thought to be engaging in perceived un-Islamic behavior in areas under its control, which had damaged al-Qaeda’s popularity in the country. While this narrative suggests that ISIS falls more under the category of a “universal/abstract” group due to a perceived lack of interest in maintaining constituent relationships, ISIS also possesses characteristics of strategic terrorist organizations. Indeed, ISIS is currently engaged in establishing and administering state-like institutions in areas under its control. As a recent study on ISIS governance carried out by the Institute of the Study of War demonstrates, ISIS has established the Syrian city of Raqqah, with a population of around 250,000, as its “capital,” and developed a “holistic system of governance that includes religious, educational, judicial, security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects, among others.” These circumstances suggest that ISIS, since its split with al-Qaeda in February 2014, may have developed some inclination to construct positive constituent ties with both Syrians and Iraqis to boost the levels of popular support for the group and its goals.

(2) Acquire an understanding of the relative importance of the factors of ideology, rational choice, and organizational dynamics in shaping the behavior of ISIS.

Recommendation 1, determining whether ISIS is a “strategic” or “universal/abstract” terrorist organization, provides policymakers with an initial idea of the relative importance of the different factors shaping the group’s behavior. For example, the analysis of Hamas in Chapter Two of this thesis made clear that interpretations of group


ideology based on the need to maximize utility are likely to drive the behavior of “strategic” terrorist organizations such as Hamas. It also demonstrated that while ideology is the most prominent factor shaping “strategic” group behavior, both a predilection toward rational choice and intra-organizational dynamics played key subsidiary roles, as well. While these chapters focus largely on determining a consistent role for the ideology factor, they do not prioritize discerning the relative importance of both the rational choice and intra-organizational dynamics factors in a consistent way applicable to different terrorist organizations. Thus, with specific regard to ISIS, if policymakers find that ISIS is a “strategic” group, they must carry out additional research to determine the precise relevance of both of these complementary factors.

Unfortunately, the findings of Chapters 2 and 3 did not yield a similarly consistent relationship between ideology on the one hand and rational choice and organizational dynamics on the other with respect to determining the behavior of “universal/abstract” groups. There were select cases, including the Red Army Faction’s 1972 May Offensive, where strategic views of ideology shaped the actions of “universal/abstract” groups in a manner similar to “strategic” organizations. In addition, there were several other circumstances where intra-organizational dynamics or rational concerns entirely divorced from the ideology of the organization in question played the most important role. Chapters 2 and 3 documented several cases where strategic concerns drove the PIJ’s behavior at the expense of its ideology, and further circumstances where malevolent intra-organizational dynamics played the key role shaping the policies of the RAF. These variant relationships between the factors demonstrate the importance of determining their weighted importance with respect to each specific “universal/abstract” group.
Policy Application Recommendations

After policymakers acquire a precise understanding of the relative importance of the ideology, rational choice, and intra-organizational dynamic factors in shaping ISIS’s behavior, they can apply this knowledge to calibrate a policy to defeat the group by targeting its specific areas of strength. The scope of this paper does not include determining the relationship between these three factors with respect to ISIS. Yet this section provides some general recommendations regarding counterterrorism policies that can be utilized in cases where each of the respective three factors plays an important role in determining the strategic disposition of the group in question. It also offers some suggestions as to how the recommendations could be applied to ISIS.

(3) With respect to groups where strategic interpretations of ideology play the most important role in determining their operations, a combination of financial assistance and governance capacity building efforts, intelligence gathering, and conventional counterterrorism tactics is most appropriate.

Efforts to combat terrorist organizations such as Hamas, whose policies are guided primarily by strategic interpretations of their ideologies, must comprise financial assistance and governance capacity building efforts, intelligence gathering, and counterterrorism tactics. Such efforts, if implemented correctly, can target the two key sources through which such organizations secure capacity to operate: first, their ability to explain their ideology, or even “implement” aspects of it through social programs, in a way that affords them a measure of popular support and legitimacy; second, their capacity to carry out spectacular attacks to convince the public that the goals for which they advocate are achievable.
In Gaza, Hamas was able to leverage its ability to provide social services, which it considered an ideological mandate, in the absence of formal government mechanisms to attract a broader measure of support for the terrorist attacks it prosecuted against Israel. Both its level of popular support and operational capacity relative to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which refrained from providing social services to Palestinians, demonstrates the utility such services offered the group. This history appears to be repeating itself in long-neglected areas of western Iraq where ISIS enjoys the most support, as ISIS has stepped in to provide services there. Like Hamas, it appears that ISIS is applying an interpretation of social justice as a key aspect of its ideology as a means to attract more support and acceptance for the more virulent areas of its ideological objectives.344

International financial assistance programs, which are frequently implemented both through national government assistance agencies such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and international institutions including the World Bank, can be calibrated to enhance the ability of governments of countries where terrorist organizations are active to boost their own capacity to deliver social services. Over time, improved government social services programs are capable of both displacing assistance efforts put into place by groups like ISIS and making citizens in long-neglected areas feel like more of a part of the fabric of the state. While financial assistance is often key, corruption and/or sectarian and political animosities are often equally if not more important than budgetary constraints in preventing the delivery of social services. Therefore, governance assistance, in the form of helping encourage the appointment of provincial authorities acceptable to both local populations and central governing

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authorities, and working with both central and provincial government authorities to curtail corruption and better ensure resources are spent effectively, must accompany financial assistance efforts. It must be noted that such efforts are not a panacea, and especially in the early phases of assistance in areas where terrorist groups are especially strong, corrupt government officials or even the targeted terrorist organizations may siphon off some of the aid. However, attention must remain focused primarily on the medium and long-term objective of eroding terrorist organization capacity to use social services to gain public support, rather than any short-term mistakes. Additionally, it is recognized that proposals for programs of this sort may receive a hostile reaction from some in the U.S. Congress and other crucial stakeholders who view foreign assistance, even if primarily in the realm of governance assistance rather than pure financial aid, as giving away U.S. resources without providing significant strategic benefits back to the U.S. itself. However, the onus falls on the Executive Branch to sell these programs for what they are: a crucial aspect of broader efforts to combat terrorist organizations and bolster the national security of the United States.

The Chapter Two case study of Hamas demonstrates that terrorist organizations whose behavior is guided by strategic interpretations of their ideologies prosecute attacks only when the operations are likely to be tactically successful and provide them with tangible strategic benefits. For example, Hamas’ April-October, 1994 suicide bombing campaign not only wrought more violence against Israel than Israeli authorities expected, but also provided the group with increased support given diminishing Palestinian enthusiasm for the peace process during that time. With this notion in mind, policymakers seeking to combat groups such as Hamas must remain engaged in
consistent intelligence gathering efforts assessing several areas of interest. Some intelligence gathering must be tactical in scope: for example, analyzing the relative operational capabilities of the relevant terrorist group and government security forces. These efforts should also address the strategic realm, and include assessing levels of public support for both the terrorist group in question and the government it is combatting, and analyzing political developments capable of changing the state of play in this regard. In the course of such efforts, intelligence gatherers may uncover information indicating that a specific attack is imminent, and policymakers can then deploy forces to prevent its occurrence. However, it is much more likely that intelligence gatherers will be capable of using the material they gather to determine whether an unspecified attack is especially likely at any given period. This information can be shared with the allied government to better ensure that its own resources are oriented to prevent the occurrence of such an attack.

(4) In cases where rational choice drives terrorist group decision making, an almost exclusive focus on intelligence gathering, counterterrorism efforts, and, with respect to ISIS, efforts to target the group’s finances will prove most effective.

Terrorist organizations whose behavior is driven entirely by a need to maximize utility are less likely to use ideological axioms as a means to attract widespread public support. Chapter Two indicated that one such group, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, crafted policy options largely on the basis of rational choice (intra-organizational dynamics also played a key role) because its ideology was too restrictive to serve as a flexible frame of reference capable of guiding its behavior. Because such groups make no attempt to appeal to broad shares of citizens by advocating for a specific ideology or
demonstrating the supposed benevolent nature of their ideology on the ground through
the use of social welfare programs, U.S. policymakers have little need to wage a war of
ideas or aid disbursement with them. Instead, resources should be focused exclusively in
the intelligence gathering and information sharing areas explained in great detail in the
preceding recommendation. Like groups that strategically interpret their ideologies,
terrorist organizations that operate solely on the basis of maximizing utility are most
likely to prosecute attacks when there are both tactical and strategic benefits to be gained.
Discerning periods where organizations of this sort are mostly like to acquire such
benefits is the best means to preventing them from carrying out attacks. When actionable
intelligence is acquired, it should be exploited to either remove key group leaders from
the battlefield or prevent the occurrence of an imminent attack.

Like Palestinian Islamic Jihad, ISIS allows a desire to maximize utility to help
guide its behavior on the ground. Yet Palestinian Islamic Jihad conceived its strategic
objectives in a very narrow scope, as it sought the continued capacity to wage attacks
against Israel and very little else. ISIS views its own strategic objectives much more
broadly, and believes they include the need to successfully administer the group’s self-
declared caliphate on Syrian and Iraqi territory.345 ISIS officials are also aware that the
group requires substantial resources to carry out this task. Those material needs underlie
ISIS’s efforts to generate large revenues, which it does through several means, including
selling crude oil and petroleum products from Iraqi and Syrian oil fields in areas under its
control. U.S. Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen
estimated on October 23, 2014, that such sales had, as of summer 2014, provided ISIS
with around $1 million/day. However, U.S. airstrikes have targeted ISIS oil

345 Caris and Reynolds, p. 4
infrastructure, and Cohen asserted that U.S. efforts are beginning to impair ISIS’s ability to generate revenue from oil sales. This example demonstrates the importance of efforts to gather intelligence on terrorist organizations, especially those prone to utility maximizing efforts, so that the structural foundations underlying their success can be found, targeted, and eliminated.

(5) When intra-organizational factors are prominent in determining the decision making of a terrorist group, targeted actions, intelligence gathering, and sabotage can be applied.

In cases where terrorist organization behavior is guided principally by intra-group dynamics, the best way to erode the group’s ability to prosecute attacks is to target its organizational infrastructure. Success in this regard is capable of leaving the targeted organization confused and disorganized, with limited ability to pose a sustained threat. However, in cases where success is apparent, policymakers must refrain from embracing the assumption that because the targeted group has been eliminated, there is no longer a significant threat that must be addressed. Indeed, situations where terrorist organizations whose actions are determined largely on the basis of organizational dynamics are dismantled may often, at least in the short-term, make the security climate more precarious. Prominent stakeholders within the defeated group can prove capable of applying their resources and experience to form smaller, less predictable, and more difficult to combat spin-off groups. A situation somewhat similar to this occurred in Chapter Two, when an extreme Hamas splinter group, the New Disciples of Yehiya Ayyash, emerged in 1996 and prosecuted operations without the permission of either the

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Hamas political leadership or the al-Qassam Brigades. Such a risk points to the need for policymakers to remain engaged long after the targeted group is initially defeated.

The precise means of targeting the organizational infrastructure of a terrorist organization depends largely on the specific disposition of the group in question. In cases where a strong group leader is especially influential in shaping group behavior, resources should be targeted at either killing or capturing that leader. The utility of this tactic is demonstrated in Chapter Two with respect to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, as the group’s effectiveness was diminished following the killing of longtime PIJ leader Fathi Shiqaqi.

While Chapter Three indicates that RAF was able to continue prosecuting operations after its original leadership corps was detained in 1972, the remaining membership’s subsequent fixation on freeing their leaders, rather than pursuing their original ideological goals, contributed to their sinking popularity among the West German radical left and helped bring about the RAF’s eventual demise. Concentrating significant resources in this respect may be applicable to ISIS. Existing scholarship on the group indicates that its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, has been instrumental in splitting ISIS away from al-Qaeda and turning it into an independent organization that now arguably exceeds al-Qaeda’s prowess in the Middle East.347

While targeting group leaders is the most appropriate option for policymakers to pursue when combatting terrorist organizations in which such leaders play a preeminent role, fundamentally different policies must be implemented in cases where much larger factions shape group behavior. Relationships between such factions are frequently at least mildly contentious, and in some cases they are outright rivals. Hamas’ suicide bombing

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campaign in early 1996 underlies this point, as the attacks revealed key disagreements among the utility of violence at the specific period of time between the group’s political leadership, the al-Qassam Brigades, and the New Disciples of Yehiya Ayyash. Policymakers would gain in every case from carrying out intelligence gathering efforts to better understand the dynamics among group factions. For example, if policymakers acquire an understanding that al-Qassam has gained currency among the Hamas rank and file at the political leadership’s expense, they may be able to conclude that additional attacks are particularly likely. In certain cases, policymaker interests may be fulfilled through implementing sabotage operations to aggravate tensions among rival factions. This option should be pursued with care, however, as it could accelerate the risk mentioned above: the promulgation of smaller, and in some cases potentially more extreme splinter groups that are even more difficult to combat.

Final Remarks

The Conclusion Analysis above provides scholars with additional areas of research to pursue that could be applied to further enhance the findings of this thesis. Chapters 2 and 3 revealed that while ideology was not the primary factor influencing the behavior of both PIJ and RAF, the dynamics that drove the behavior of each respective “universal/abstract” group were quite different from one another. With regard to PIJ, the inherently restrictive underpinnings of its ideology forced the group to look beyond it when calibrating policy options. However, as far as the RAF was concerned, it was the disposition of powerful members of the group’s leadership core, which ignored the group’s ideology and sought primarily to enhance the members’ personal fortunes, that drove its behavior. With these conclusions in mind, especially as they pertain to the RAF,
one may surmise that “universal/abstract” terrorist organizations frequently attract individuals with sociopathic tendencies who seek any halfway reasonable ideological veneer to achieve their personal, destructive goals, whether they be murder, fomenting chaos, or administering a profitable criminal enterprise. On the other hand, the results of Chapter 2 regarding Hamas could lead one to assert that “strategic” terrorist organizations are more likely attract individuals that, while politically radical, are genuinely interested in pursuing the goals of the terrorist organization itself because they believe such goals, if met, will render net benefits to society. Research testing such hypothetical assertions could provide critical insight into the functioning of both “universal/abstract” and “strategic” terrorist organizations and inform policy on how to combat them.

The subsequent Policy Recommendations offer several steps that U.S. policymakers can follow to gain a better understanding of how ideology, rational choice, and organizational dynamics affect the behavior of ISIS, and how policymakers can then apply these findings to degrade and eventually eliminate the group. A key unifying theme across the recommendations is the crucial role that the U.S. intelligence community must play not only in discerning the internal machinations of ISIS, but also implementing policies to combat the group itself. For example, the intelligence community is best experienced and apportioned to carry out analysis of existing captured ISIS materials and widely available group publications and surmising from there precisely which factors drive the group’s operations. These required steps render it especially encouraging that the U.S. understanding of ISIS is already moving beyond the contextual factors that led to the group’s rise to garnering a better understanding of the group itself. Yet the intelligence community’s utility extends to policy implementation as well, as intelligence
work will be necessary, for instance, in efforts to find, target, and eliminate key ISIS leaders. Given that the U.S. has shown little interest in involving its own military forces in direct combat in the fight against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, the intelligence community’s role should be calibrated to rival in importance and strongly complement that of the limited U.S. military presence on the battlefield.
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Curriculum Vitae

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