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Groupthink and Terrorist Radicalization

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Why do groups adopt terrorism? Major theories of terrorist radicalization assume it to be a rational process whereby groups select terrorism as the policy most likely to advance their goals. Not all terrorism is rational, however, and these theories cannot explain cases when groups pursue terrorism despite it being self-defeating. We distinguish between rational and irrational terrorism, and explain the latter using social psychology's groupthink mechanism. Although terrorists are widely assumed to be vulnerable to groupthink, empirical work on the phenomenon has focused overwhelmingly on decision-making by national executives. We firmly establish the link between groupthink and terrorist radicalization by tracing groupthink's operation through the development of the Weather Underground, an American terrorist group that emerged in the late 1960s and conducted six years of bombings against the U.S. government. All of the antecedent conditions, symptoms, and decision-making defects predicted by groupthink are evident in the Weather Underground, providing valuable evidence of the dangers of irrational radicalization and offering lessons for its prevention.

Keywords groupthink, irrational radicalization, organizational logic, SDS, strategic logic, terrorist radicalization, Weatherman, Weather Underground

Why do groups adopt terrorism? While presenting President Obama's Counterterrorism Strategy, White House Advisor John Brennan noted, "For decades, terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda have preached that the only way to effect change is through violence."[1] Despite mounting evidence that terrorism rarely succeeds, the conventional wisdom sees groups adopting it because they expect it to help achieve their goals. Both the strategic logic and the more recent organizational logic assume terrorist radicalization to be a rational process. Although rational decision-making may be reflected in the development of some terrorist groups, it cannot explain cases of irrational radicalization—when groups engage in terrorism despite overwhelming evidence that it impedes rather than advances their goals. We harness the groupthink mechanism from social psychology to explain why a group might undergo irrational radicalization. We then firmly establish the often-speculated link between groupthink

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and terrorism by tracing the operation of groupthink through the development of the Weather Underground, an American terrorist group that emerged at the end of the 1960s and conducted six years of bombings in numerous locations across the country including the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon.

What follows is divided into eight sections. The first section defines terrorist radicalization as the process by which groups develop increasingly absolutist ideologies and violent practices. The second section discusses the prevailing debate concerning radicalization as driven by either a strategic or organizational logic. Both of these prominent theories assume radicalization to be a rational process, and we question whether it is always so. The third section presents a theory of irrational radicalization built on social psychology's groupthink mechanism. The fourth section introduces the Weather Underground and identifies its radicalization as irrational. In order to determine groupthink's role in that group's radicalization, the fifth, sixth, and seventh sections observe the antecedents, symptoms, and defective decision-making results of groupthink in the development of the Weather Underground. Finally, the eighth section concludes with implications for counterterrorism policies and suggestions for future research.

Terrorist Radicalization

Terrorism is politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by non-state actors.[2] Terrorists commit violent acts as tools of coercion, hoping to force a desired political change by threatening further violence. Recent research has established that terrorists are not different from other humans in a fundamental or biological way; as Louise Richardson writes, "psychological studies of terrorists are virtually unanimous" that terrorists' "primary shared characteristic is their normalcy."[3] Rather, terrorists are people who have chosen to use violence to address their political grievances. The causes of terrorism are thus twofold, combining a grievance that motivates political opposition with a radicalization process through which violence becomes the preferred response.[4]

Any political grievance may potentially motivate terrorism, which has stemmed from phenomena as diverse as national separatism, clashing identities, modernization, humiliation, violent experiences, and social injustices.[5] Fortunately, although most people share a variety of such complaints, very few employ terrorism in response. Why do only certain groups out of the many with similar grievances turn to terrorism? This question has spurred growing interest in the transition from law-abiding citizen to terrorist—the radicalization process.[6]

Radicalization is "a long-lasting process during which organizational recourses are created for groups more prone to adopt violent repertoires and fundamentalist ideologies."[7] Through this transformative process, individuals and the groups they constitute become more likely to use increasingly violent means in pursuit of their political goals. Individual radicalization—whereby a person decides to launch an independent attack or join a preexisting terrorist group—takes place within the mind of the individual in response to personal incentives.[8] Group radicalization—whereby a previously peaceful opposition group decides to engage in terrorism—takes place within the social context of the group in response to both external pressures and internal interactions among group members. In this way, "terrorist organizations are not just collections of separate individuals; they are functioning units that exert strong pressures on their members and hold out powerful rewards."[9] Though both the radicalization of the

original group and its recruitment of new members are important factors in the emergence of terrorist behavior, they take place at different levels of decision-making and hence reflect different dynamics. This article examines the former, explaining why a previously peaceful group may collectively begin to engage in terrorism.

Rational and Irrational Radicalization

Despite mounting evidence that terrorism rarely succeeds, the conventional wisdom regarding terrorist radicalization views it as a rational process.[10] Rational radicalization occurs when groups adopt terrorism because they consider it the policy most likely to advance their goals.[11] The central recent debate over the causes of terrorism has concerned whether political or organizational goals are prioritized in this rational process.

According to the strategic logic, groups identify a political grievance and select policies they expect to best redress it. As Martha Crenshaw writes, "efficacy is the primary standard by which terrorism is compared with other methods of achieving political goals."[12] Two rational processes underlie this comparison: logical deduction and learning. First, groups with limited means may deduce that terrorism is the best coercive tool available. Governments often coerce each other with economic sanctions or limited displays of military force, using the prospect of future damage to compel behavioral changes.[13] Terrorism similarly "generates coercive leverage both from the immediate panic associated with each attack and from the risk of civilian punishment in the future."[14] Groups may therefore adopt terrorism when they perceive an opportunity to coercively acquire greater concessions than would likely be attainable through peaceful means.[15]

Second, groups may turn to terrorism because they learn of its effectiveness from their own experiences and those of others.[16] One analysis finds that terrorism has proved effective at scuttling peace negotiations by increasing fear and mistrust between moderate groups.[17] Another sees suicide terrorist campaigns often achieving progress if not total success and observes Hamas leaders learning from experience that suicide terrorism was an effective strategy.[18] Although recent scholarship has persuasively demonstrated that violence against noncombatants is rarely effective at coercing governmental concessions, if groups have learned that it works, they may think radicalization a rational strategy.

The primary challenger to the strategic logic argues that groups prioritize organizational goals rather than political goals. From this perspective, the group's stated mission is less important than organizational imperatives like recruitment and fundraising, and its behavior is driven by competition with rival opposition groups rather than by competition with the government they oppose. Radicalization is a rational strategy because firmly signaling resolve through a terrorist campaign differentiates one group from its rivals and attracts more public support to itself.[19] Moreover, if the group provokes a disproportionate response by the government, the public may perceive it as embodying the vanguard of the future against an oppressive regime.[20] Terrorism may thus be seen as a path to increased material resources and local influence—organizational goals—regardless of its ability to achieve broader political goals.[21]

Although both the strategic and organizational logics view terrorist radicalization as a rational process, much terrorism is irrational. If rational thinking guides terrorist behavior, that behavior should cease if and when it becomes evident that the strategy is not helping the group achieve its goals. This should be especially true if the group

faces mounting evidence that its terrorist activities have been self-defeating. Irrational radicalization occurs when groups undertake and continue terrorist campaigns despite evidence of their futility, justifying ineffective behavior by adjusting their rhetoric to fit the undesired results. Rationalizing the continuation of failed or counterproductive strategies is not rational decision making.

Noting that terrorist radicalization is often irrational is not to say that it occurs randomly, however. At the level of the individual, scholars have examined how external shocks can trigger pathologies like alienation and anomie, breaking down previously held beliefs and increasing susceptibility to radicalization.[22] At the level of the group, certain social psychological factors influence the propensity for irrational radicalization, causing members to interpret clear failures as successes and to rebuke any impulses among their peers to reevaluate their failing strategy. One compelling explanation of irrational radicalization is social psychology's groupthink mechanism.

Groupthink

Groupthink was introduced in 1972 by psychologist Irving Janis, who described it as "the mode of thinking that persons engage in when *concurrence-seeking* becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action."[23] By suppressing independent critical thinking in favor of a premature search for consensus, groupthink increases the likelihood of decision-making errors and counterproductive behavior.

Groupthink does not affect all groups equally. Rather, it is fueled by five antecedent conditions—characteristics of the group that facilitate groupthink. These conditions are: a) high levels of stress due to external threats, b) the insulation of the group from outside perspectives, c) homogeneity of members' social background and ideology, d) no tradition of impartial leadership, and e) a lack of codified decision-making procedures. According to Janis, these characteristics make a group prone to concurrence-seeking tendencies that produce a set of observable symptoms: a) stereotyped views of the adversary, b) conviction of the inherent morality of the group, c) illusions of invulnerability, d) illusions of unanimity regarding policy choices, e) collective rationalizations, and f) censorship including direct pressure on dissenters and self-imposed reluctance to assert counterarguments. These symptoms, in turn, produce noticeable defects in the group's decision-making, causing members to a) perform an incomplete survey of the group's objectives and the relationship between those objectives and chosen policies, b) discount the effectiveness of alternative policies and refuse to

Table 1. The groupthink mechanism

Antecedent conditions	Groupthink symptoms	Defective decision making
• External threat • Group insulation • Group homogeneity • Partial leadership • Lack of decision-making procedures	• Stereotyped adversary • Inherent morality • Illusory invulnerability • Illusory unanimity • Collective rationalizations • Censorship	• Incomplete survey of objectives • Discounting alternatives • Selective information bias • Failure to examine risks and make contingency plans

reevaluate them should the chosen policy fail, c) selectively filter new information and focus attention on that which supports their pre-established perceptions, and d) fail to adequately examine the risks of their chosen policy and to make contingency plans should it prove unsuccessful.[24]

Groupthink may be confined to a single decision if the policymakers involved recognize their mistakes and work to avoid their recurrence in the future (rational behavior). If they disregard negative feedback and fail to recognize their mistakes, however, groupthink may fuel a continued pattern of bad decisions (irrational behavior).[25] In one widely referenced example, the Kennedy administration undertook the Bay of Pigs invasion believing that it would best advance U.S. foreign policy goals, "was humbled" by the failure and learned from its mistakes, and did not repeat those mistakes in the Cuban Missile Crisis.[26] In contrast, the Weather Underground failed to learn from its initial mistakes and continued down the path of terrorism despite consistent evidence it was counterproductive. Although irrationality is not necessary for groupthink to exist, groupthink can help us understand why groups engage in irrational behavior.

When observing cases of groupthink, Janis focused on decision-making by national executives, analyzing foreign-policy fiascoes like the Bay of Pigs invasion and the escalation of the Korean War. More recent empirical studies of groupthink have largely maintained his focus on national executives, reexamining Janis' cases and including others such as Watergate, Iran-Contra, and the Iraq War.[27] Similarly rigorous case studies have not yet traced the operation of groupthink within terrorist groups, despite the fact that few groups operate in a higher-stress environment more insulated from the outside than an underground terrorist network. Though scholars have recognized that terrorists are likely susceptible to groupthink, this recognition has typically relied on theoretical deduction and limited anecdotal support rather than more fully developed empirical studies.[28]

The lack of empirical work on groupthink among terrorists may be attributed to the peculiar demands of testing such social-psychological theories, which requires a level of access to the thought processes of group members not generally offered by reclusive terrorists. The Weather Underground provides an opportunity to overcome this difficulty because its former members have since reintegrated into society.[29] Their openness and candidness about their past actions has produced a secondary record employing hundreds of interviews that serve as direct testimonials to the thought processes of the group members. Since the histories containing these testimonials have no direct interest in groupthink, they are impartial to our research question and can be treated as relatively objective and reliable evidence for exploring the potential operation of groupthink in the Weather Underground.[30] Moreover, the former members have notably not tried to escape responsibility for their actions, but instead recognize that they employed a very flawed strategy in pursuing their goals. This acceptance of responsibility suggests a lesser degree of the biases always present in retrospective testimonials (as individuals consciously or unconsciously whitewash their own history), further increasing our confidence in the evidence.[31]

Case Study: The Weather Underground

The Weather Underground emerged in 1969 from Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), one of the iconic youth activist organizations of the New Left. With up to 100,000 members at its peak spread across hundreds of American universities, SDS criticized U.S. foreign policy, racial discrimination, and economic inequality, advocating

nonviolent civil actions as a means of effecting change. A deepening dispute within SDS came to a head during its June 1969 convention, which saw the leaders of the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) faction split from the opposing Progressive Labor (PL) faction to form a new group, which they called Weatherman.

Weatherman declared its primary goal to be "the creation of a mass revolutionary movement" to overthrow the U.S. government, which it considered the main source of atrocities worldwide.[32] Rational pursuit of both strategic and organizational goals should have dictated cooperation with the numerous peer organizations of the New Left to increase active public support. Instead, Weatherman vilified and alienated both the majority of leftist organizations (which were willing to compromise with the government to achieve reforms) and the public at large (which failed to immediately rise in revolution). Those groups returned the favor: much of the New Left was "almost viciously anti-Weatherman," representing a "total rejection of Weatherman's revolutionary form."[33]

Weatherman planned a National Action for the following October, anticipating mobilizing over ten thousand youths to retake Chicago from the police. Despite extensive recruitment efforts, that event—dubbed the Days of Rage—was attended by few (other than the few hundred Weathermen themselves, who vandalized several city blocks and wrestled with police before dispersing).[34] The public response was a mixture of "bewilderment and disgust," with the *Chicago Tribune* dubbing the event a "carnival of mindless terror organized by far-out elements of Students for a Democratic Society."[35] Similarly, the New York *Guardian*, a widely read leftist publication, noted that "the most significant aspect of the surrealistic contretemps created by the Weatherman microfaction of SDS last week was that the rest of the movement had the revolutionary sense to stay away."[36]

Despite manifest disapproval of its call to violent uprising, Weatherman became a terrorist organization. Its leaders organized a War Council in December 1969, planning to launch a violent campaign against the United States from regional underground collectives. The ensuing winter saw purges of the various collectives that expelled individuals of questionable integrity and dedication, and by the following spring total membership stood well below one hundred.[37] On March 6, 1970, five Weathermen were assembling bombs filled with dynamite and nails bound for a military dance at Fort Dix when an accidental explosion killed three of them and leveled their Greenwich Village townhouse, drawing attention to the group and accelerating its move underground. These deaths prompted the remaining Weathermen to forswear human casualties in their upcoming bombing campaign by issuing warnings in advance, but not to reconsider their terrorist strategy.[38] The group declared war on the U.S. government two months later, changed its name that December to the Weather Underground, and over the following six years bombed a variety of police stations, courthouses, and government offices including the U.S. Capitol and the Pentagon.[39]

The Weathermen believed that "a small group of very politically advanced, ideologically committed militant people can carry out revolutionary actions that will serve as an inspiration for other people," yet they paid little attention to the actual inspiration (or lack thereof) they were achieving.[40] As their terrorist campaign wore on, group members were regularly arrested and became increasingly disillusioned, and by the end of the decade their most prominent leaders had turned themselves in.[41]As Bernardine Dohrn reflected, the group "elevated tactics over politics, over a broader strategic view."[42] Further evidence of the Weathermen's irrationality peppers the following case study. Why did they adopt terrorism despite its consistent failure to show any signs of sparking the mass revolution they idolized?

Antecedent Conditions of Groupthink in the Weather Underground

The history of the Weather Underground provides strong empirical support for the notion that terrorist organizations are susceptible to groupthink and a compelling example of groupthink producing irrational radicalization. Its early development displayed all of the antecedent conditions discussed above. The group formed in a high-stress domestic environment defined by social tensions, and its terrorist campaign heightened the threat of reprisal against its members. Its insulation began with its alienation from SDS and deepened with the move underground. Its members came from homogeneous social backgrounds and were united under a radical Marxist ideology. Its leaders dominated group policies as well as day-to-day activities in the collectives, and they did not follow codified decision-making procedures. These characteristics rendered the Weather Underground susceptible to groupthink.

External Threat

When a group operates in a threatening environment, heightened stress increases the urgency of consensus because the consequences of dissenters betraying the group are severe. The Weather Underground developed in a society defined by political violence: millions of youths were being conscripted into the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert Kennedy were assassinated in 1968, and domestic racial strife was growing increasingly violent as in the murder of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in 1969.[43] Cathy Wilkerson expressed the urgency these events provoked: "We were terrified … we had to mold [a] fighting force that would be effective or everybody would be killed."[44] As opposition movements grew, they drew attention from the CIA and FBI, further elevating the perceived threat.[45] Even leaders of the nonviolent SDS were routinely stopped by police. As Scott Braley recalled, "If it was at night, we would have to get out of the car, and they would search us, search the car, then tell us what terrible people we were and the awful things they were going to do to us."[46]

Both the FBI and the Senate Committee of Internal Security investigated Weatherman after the Days of Rage, and its emerging terrorist campaign quickly made it a primary target of U.S. intelligence agencies. After the realization that the Greenwich Village explosion had been the result of bomb-making in preparation for a terrorist attack, the FBI launched "one of the most intensive manhunts in FBI history" aimed at leading Weathermen, six of whom appeared on its Ten-Most-Wanted list.[47] In Braley's words, "Every FBI agent for a million miles was on every person," and they all "had to be grabbed off the streets and put somewhere."[48] Although their use of fake identification while underground allowed the Weathermen to move remarkably free of police attention, they lived in a constant state of fear. Russell Neufeld and Robert Roth reported feeling like they were "in a war zone," and David Gilbert recalled, "We went from being young kids with a moral vision, to realizing we were up against the heaviest power structure in the world … it was scary."[49] During his time underground, Bill Ayers regularly awoke thinking, "I wonder how many times I'll be nervous today."[50]

Group Insulation

A group's insulation from outside influences minimizes its exposure to alternative perspectives, new ideas, and information that may cast doubt on assumed truths, making the group more likely to neglect alternative policy options and to misjudge the effectiveness of its chosen policies. Weatherman's insulation began with the gradual

isolation-by-choice of a cadre of like-minded individuals within the SDS leadership in the late 1960s. This radical faction adopted Marxist ideology and militancy, concentrating its influence within the organization and criticizing more moderate SDS members in order to discredit their attempts to collaborate with politicians.[51] The increasing preoccupation with Marxist ideology alienated many SDS veterans and drove away newcomers. Dohrn later recalled that SDS had been "famous for being anti-leadership and decentralized and grassroots and anarchistic," but by 1969 "the ideological debates … reduced everybody to nitwits" and left SDS "talking in slogans."[52] As one reporter described the atmosphere of the SDS National Convention in June 1969, "SDS isn't the open, free-form group it once was. … Increasingly it is bedeviled by the incomprehensible, Marxist sectarianism which wrecked the Old Left, as people calling themselves Maoists and Leninists tussle over abstruse, revolutionary metaphysics in a social atmosphere that is depressingly Stalinoid and paranoid."[53] Its deepening militancy led nonviolent leftist organizations to cut their connections with the group.[54] Even the Black Panthers, regarded by the Weathermen as a key liberation movement and vanguard of the revolution, denounced them as adventurist and ended their alliance.[55]

Having deliberately marginalized those with competing perspectives and alienated large numbers of even sympathetic SDS members through Marxist ideology, Weatherman completed its insulation by moving underground in 1970. Its members committed to the revolution by cutting themselves off from their families, friends, and partners; even changing their names in order to be unreachable by the police.[56] As Gilbert put it, "When you're underground, you can't go around saying, 'I'm your local representative from the Weather Underground. Let's discuss politics.' And you can't be in Left centers where certain issues are discussed. So that was a limitation."[57] In addition to isolating the group from society, the move underground sharpened the separation among the various local collectives and between them and the Weather Bureau, the small cabinet of leaders who wielded near-absolute power over their operations.

Homogeneity of Social Background and Ideology

If group members come from similar social backgrounds and subscribe to a shared ideology, they are more likely to accept unified generalizations and stereotypes, making the group more susceptible to biased information and prone to discounting alternative ideas. Most Weathermen fit such a common mold: they were young, white, former students from affluent families who had been active members of SDS, subscribed to a violent Marxist ideology, and understood their shared protest experiences as the first step in a revolutionary process. As the group moved underground, its homogeneity deepened as members with questionable perspectives were cast out during the purges. Those who remained were further conditioned into ideological conformity with the group's leaders through intense criticism-self-criticism sessions.

This process and the extreme level of identification between members and the group left members highly dependent on it. The value they placed on membership was apparent in the compulsive attachment of many who were temporarily away, such as following short-term incarcerations. Naomi Jaffe later recalled, "I was going to do whatever I had to do to be able to be part of it."[58] Susan Stern showed similar dedication when the group concluded that she was not ready for the revolutionary lifestyle that Weatherman required from its members and expelled her in August 1969. Stern endured horrible emotional trauma and depression at this rejection, but instead of

leaving the group, the only thing she wanted was to be part of it again: "I wanted to be in that Weatherman collective more than I had ever wanted anything in my life. It meant everything to me. … Anything other than Weatherman was insignificant."[59]

Lack of Impartial Leadership

Leadership that magnifies personalities through over-the-top rhetoric can spur emotional loyalty while discouraging members from noting inconsistencies or offering dissenting opinions. Already within SDS, several future Weathermen were known for their commanding leadership styles. As Stern recounted of John Jacobs, "He (J.J.) was so loud and persistent that no one could interrupt him. His talk was so rhetorical that I could hardly understand him. He refused to let anyone else talk until he finished, and his tone was at once so commanding, and contentious that everybody in the room was more or less intimidated into silence."[60] A small cadre of such leaders committed themselves to launching a terrorist campaign. Instead of carefully discussing the decision with the SDS membership prior to the split, they issued rhetorical speeches aimed at generating emotional responses in their sympathizers. Stern recalled Dohrn: "Her speech was so passionate, her explanation of the history and development of SDS so logical and complete, that it left no doubt in our minds that what she said was correct. We voted swiftly, and there was almost complete unanimity in deciding to expel PL."[61]

The practice of promotional leadership remained a defining characteristic of the Weather Underground. At the War Council, Mark Rudd opened with an evocative analogy to Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*: "I'm monomaniacal like Capitan Ahab. He was possessed by one thought: destroying the great white whale. We should be like Capitan Ahab and possess one thought—destruction of the mother country."[62] Instead of encouraging open discussion, leading Weathermen routinely sought to influence group members to obey their preferred policies, expelling those who failed to subscribe. The influence of the central leadership only increased with the move underground, as local collectives subjected themselves completely to the will of visiting members of the Weather Bureau. "Entranced by the Leninist notion of 'democratic centralism,' Weatherman exalted their leaders, granting them immense power to control … those below them. In some collectives, nearly all personal decisions in the collectives, as basic as where one went at any given time, were subject to the approval of the leadership."[63]

Lack of Decision-Making Procedures

A lack of established procedures enables the decision-making process to be dominated by strong personalities rather than sound ideas. Weatherman held little regard for codified procedures, co-opting authority within SDS and ultimately disintegrating the organization. On the opening night of the convention, leading Weathermen called a private meeting for five hundred of their supporters and outlined their reasons for breaking away, rallying their followers and warning them not to be left behind when they did so. The group then marched out of their private meeting and out of the convention center, leaving behind a stunned PL crowd. "The long-feared split had occurred without any full debate by the whole organization, without any vote taken. It was a fait accompli, a coup of sorts, presented by the RYM faction."[64]

Similarly, Weatherman initially invited other radical youth movements to its War Council with the idea of rebuilding an anti-imperialist coalition, but rejected any critiques or outside suggestions about the future direction of the proposed coalition. Rather than

consider alternatives or compromises in order to increase their support, leading Weathermen decided to abandon the previous plan to mobilize youths for street fights in favor of an underground terrorist campaign.[65] Such impulsive decision-making endured after the move underground, with policy debates often boiling down to little more than shouting matches between dynamic personalities. As Dohrn later described, group decisions were made "by staying up for 72 straight hours and seeing who was still on their feet."[66]

The antecedent conditions of groupthink—external threat, group insulation, homogeneous social backgrounds and ideologies, a lack of impartial leadership, and a lack of decision-making procedures—saturated the development of the Weather Underground. These conditions increase the probability "that independent critical thinking will be replaced with groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against out-groups."[67] Such was the case for the Weather Underground, which confirms the predictions of groupthink theory by displaying its symptoms as well.

Symptoms of Groupthink in the Weather Underground

The thoughts and actions of members of the Weather Underground during its radicalization display all of the symptoms of groupthink. The Weathermen perceived their adversaries in terms of extreme stereotypes that saturated their public and private discourse. They held deep convictions regarding the inherent morality of their revolutionary cause, and they exhibited excessive optimism derived from illusions of invulnerability. Their leaders fostered illusions of unanimity regarding established policies and collective rationalizations, and their discourse was subject to harsh censorship including both direct pressure on dissenters and self-censorship by members. Based on these symptoms, it is evident that groupthink played a major role in the radicalization of the Weather Underground.

Stereotyped View of the Adversary

Widespread acceptance among group members of extreme stereotypes regarding their adversaries led them to disregard information casting doubt on established biases and to dismiss policy alternatives involving compromise. Through their radical Marxist worldview, the Weathermen demonized the U.S. government and its capitalist system as the roots of oppression both at home and abroad. As the group developed, its stereotypes of the enemy hardened, and it labeled all government agents as imperialists and racists. Its members considered police the most corrupt, and referred to them using dehumanizing language. Rudd recalled, "It certainly didn't help that we antagonized the cops by calling them 'pigs' and 'motherfuckers.' Unfortunately we believed that as agents of the enemy (the ruling class), they had become the enemy."[68]

This condemnation focused primarily on government officials, military, and police, but also extended to docile, non-revolutionary citizens. Over time, the group's dichotomy of "us" versus "them" became increasingly absolute, and it treated as enemies even former friends in other opposition groups who preached compromise and reform rather than supporting violence. "One set of conclusions was that the rest of the country was hopelessly bought up and horrible, and that we were virtually acting alone," Ayers reflected.[69] Stern used similar language when explaining her position to her ex-husband in 1969, "If people won't join us, then they are against us. It's as simple as that. That includes the working class, and kids, if necessary … I don't see any way

out of it. If nobody wants to do anything, then they might as well all die."[70] In one of many such instances, the General Electric strike of November 1969 was greeted with pledges of solidarity from most groups in the New Left; the Weathermen labeled the workers "pigs."[71] These stereotypes prevailed despite demonizing those whose support was crucial to both the organizational growth of the Weather Underground and its ultimate goal of mass revolution.

Belief in the Inherent Morality of the Group

Dehumanizing stereotypes of the adversary are often intertwined with another symptom of groupthink, belief in the inherent morality of the group, which similarly encourages disregard for contrary information and an outright dismissal of compromise. Convinced of their moral high ground, the Weathermen neglected the ethics of their thoughts and actions. In Rudd's words, "At that point we were thinking that there were no innocent Americans, at least not among the white ones. They all played some part in the atrocities of Vietnam. … All guilty, all Americans were legitimate targets of attacks. … I acquiesced to this terrible demented logic. … I cherished my hate as a badge of moral superiority."[72] In August 1969, Ayers declared that Weatherman would "fight the people" if it would assist the international revolution.[73] The group's strategy to "Bring the War Home" and the moral consequences of its armed policy were strongly criticized by many anti-war activist groups of that time, but almost univocally supported by the members of the Weather Underground. Gilbert later recounted, "We mystified violence. We psyched ourselves up. We had great contempt for people who weren't willing to do the same things that we were willing to do."[74]

Now, many former members regret their passive obedience to and blind approval of group policies. "I was not in the leadership," recalled Laura Whitehorn. "I was not making decisions, but I still feel responsible, because I did not say at any point, wait a second. … We'd better know what we are talking about before we start actually taking actions. And I regret that to this day."[75] Another former Weatherman, Brian Flanagan, reflected that moral superiority can make people do "some dreadful things."[76] The fact that former members criticize the morality of their actions, even while maintaining that opposing government policies was just, supports the notion that their belief in the inherent morality of the group was situational and a symptom of groupthink.

Illusion of Invulnerability

An illusion of invulnerability produces excessive optimism about the effectiveness of chosen policies and leads the group to discount associated risks, neglect contingency plans, and undervalue alternative policy options. Such optimism was prevalent among the Weathermen leading up to the Days of Rage despite a complete lack of evidence that their recruitment efforts were succeeding. "Day after day we went back to the same schools. Day after day we got nowhere. Our spirit undaunted, we figured it was only a matter of time before the kids would see the light and come around," Stern later recounted.[77] Despite their evident recruitment failures, the group predicted that over 10,000 would journey to Chicago for the event. The New York collective anticipated bringing one thousand recruits. They managed no more than thirty, and were mocked for their low turnout by police as they were departing.

Their optimism endured this manifest failure through identification with other revolutionary struggles worldwide. Although American youths were not showing support, the

group identified with the Viet Cong and others struggling against imperialism. Shin'ya Ono recalled, "The abstract phrase 'international solidarity' began to have a real meaning. We began to feel the Vietnamese in ourselves."[78] The Weathermen reimagined themselves as revolutionary exemplars rather than leaders of an actual revolution. If they could demonstrate that average Americans possessed the ability to fight back against their corrupt government, so the thinking went, they would open the door for others to eventually carry on the revolution. Stern reflected on the excessive optimism pervading the group: "I don't know why. May be it was mass hypnosis. … Maybe I actually believed that I was part of the real revolutionary vanguard. I don't really think so, but I have no other answer."[79]

Illusion of Unanimity

The illusion of unanimity can lead to self-censorship as group members expect alternative suggestions or contrary information to spark negative reprisals against the dissenter. Weatherman viewed absolute loyalty to the group as crucial to its survival, and its leaders actively worked to destroy the individuality of members and rebuild their identities as part of the group. In Stern's words, "Everything I did, I did as a Weatherman. The way I dressed, the manner in which I talked, what I said, my friends, whom I slept with, my eating, my sleeping, my reading, my feeling about my past, all were open to the closest scrutiny. There was no part of me left, unexposed and unchanged by Weatherman."[80] To reinforce this metamorphosis, Weatherman institutionalized criticism-self-criticism sessions during which one member was the target of extended verbal assaults regarding his or her selfishness and racism. "In tone and substance, the sessions were part political trial, part hazing, part shock therapy, part exorcism, and, in a word used by more than one former member, part 'brainwashing.'"[81] Nais Raulet described these sessions, which could last up to a dozen hours without a break, as a "vicious tool to disgrace people into accepting collective discipline."[82] The sessions were often extremely emotional for the target, and instilled an enduring habit of self-criticism among members.[83] The Weather Bureau also used these sessions "to decrease the power of locally strong individuals who might interfere with the overall plans of the national leadership," empowering in their place local members perceived as most willing to obey central commands.[84] Members challenged each other to be more and more radical, which meant to obey without question the politics that the group was producing during its radicalization.[85]

The most extreme form of this destruction of individuality came with the group's decision to oppose monogamy. Its leaders argued that monogamy was a product of the system they were trying to destroy, and that open sexual relationships expressed the unconditional love and intimacy necessary for peace and unity.[86] This external propaganda evolved into a strict internal rule, and group members were expected to engage in sexual relations with all other members of either sex, often against their wishes.[87] "In many cases we purposely split up monogamous couples and assigned the partners to different cities, in keeping with the anti-monogamy line," recalled Rudd.[88] The practice of universal sexual relationships in the collective was later criticized by many members, but at the time, the illusion of unanimous support for it enforced its practice.

Collective Rationalizations

Through collective rationalizations, groups reconcile their own inherent morality with conflicting external information, leaving them prone to maintaining counterproductive

policies. Such information hit the Weathermen hard in the failed Days of Rage and the wave of criticism from both the left and the right concerning the group's call to violence. Ayers later evaluated that so-called National Action as "a really harsh collision with reality. At that point … there was a sense that we were pretty isolated and pretty marginal. … So we felt pretty grim and pretty determined at the same time."[89] Instead of objectively reevaluating its strategy, however, the group turned to a collective rationalization.

The Weathermen decided that they were right and the rest of the country was corrupt, a conviction that deepened as the group went underground. As Rudd summarized this self-fulfilling sentiment, "The failure of the National Action proved that we could rely only on ourselves. The more people left because they were fed up and unable to continue under the brutal collective and hierarchical system, the more our resolve was strengthened. The fact that no or few SDS chapters supported us proved the truth of our line that students were middle class and couldn't be trusted—with the exception only of ourselves (and even we were suspect). The rest of the movement hated us, which only confirmed the rightness of our path."[90] Such rationalizations were hardened through criticism-self-criticism sessions, reinforcing the group's confidence even as its membership dwindled and it was condemned by the outside world.

Censorship

Discourse among those suffering from groupthink becomes dominated by censorship, both self-imposed and mutually enforced through direct pressure on dissenters, which in turn prevents the full consideration of alternative courses of action. While mobilizing early support, Rudd received sensible criticism from old friends outside the group that its violent rhetoric was isolating it from the movement and was counterproductive for the goal of mass mobilization. Upon sharing these arguments and his own doubts regarding the strategy with other group members, Rudd found himself the object of harsh rebuke and mockery from others including Terry Robbins. Their condemnation quickly overwhelmed and reversed his opinions: "Not only was I easily silenced by Terry's 'argument,' but I even turned around and used the same ridicule and bullying on others both inside and outside Weatherman."[91]

Similarly, after the Days of Rage, Stern privately shared feelings about the event with another Weatherman, who told her, "It was so few of us. I couldn't believe it … I was so afraid, and I kept on thinking how crazy it was. I am not sure anymore that we're right. There must be some reason why nobody came." When the rest of the collective later joined them, however, the earlier doubts were extinguished. "Alone we were insecure and unsure. Together we grew strong and sure of success."[92] When self-censorship was not enough, self-criticism sessions extinguished dissent. When even those pressures failed to prevent members from questioning the correctness of the group, its leaders readily expelled them. Former SDS President Carl Oglesby was one such expelled member, one of his main "sins" being his attempt to communicate the group's values and goals to imperialists and liberals and to find a middle ground with them.[93] Without such extensive censorship, one must imagine that a group of intelligent young activists dedicated to liberating their people from imperialism would have found it confusing to change their slogan from "fight for people" to "fight people if it's necessary for the revolution."[94]

As was the case with its antecedent conditions, the symptoms of groupthink—stereotyped views of the adversary, belief in the inherent morality of the group, illusions

of invulnerability, illusions of unanimity, collective rationalizations, and censorship—pervaded the thoughts and actions of the Weather Underground. According to groupthink theory, these symptoms cause groups to engage in various forms of "defective decision-making," which too were observable in the Weather Underground.[95]

Defective Decision-Making in the Weather Underground

The terrorist campaign waged by the Weather Underground against the United States alienated the population it was meant to inspire and resulted from defective decision-making. Group members performed an incomplete survey of their objectives and the ability of their chosen policies to achieve those objectives. They discounted the desirability of alternative policies and refused to reevaluate their strategy despite consistent evidence of its counterproductivity. They focused on biased and selective information, failed to adequately examine associated risks, and neglected contingency plans in case of failure. These decision-making errors led the group to spend its several years of existence dedicated to futile destruction.

Incomplete Survey of Objectives

Conducting an incomplete survey of its objectives decreases the likelihood that a group's chosen policies will effectively promote its goals. In the case of the Weather Underground, the political goal of mass revolution and the organizational goals of recruitment and fundraising were both directly contradicted by the immediate objective of violence against the state. According to Jim Mellen, "We figured ourselves a small leadership group of a mass movement which could have a critical role in the development of the history of imperialism."[96] Leaders like Rudd and Robbins expected to achieve that role by being "a movement that fights, not just talks about fighting. The aggressiveness, seriousness, and toughness … will attract vast numbers of working-class youth."[97] The actual result was the opposite: the violence preached and practiced by the Weather Underground sparked revulsion among those they sought to inspire.

The Weathermen also displayed a lack of consideration for organizational basics like maintaining sufficient funding and expanding a base of support. The group initially requisitioned the personal wealth of its members for group use, but severe cash shortages in the autumn of 1969 led to "several pleas for money" from the Weather Bureau, to the various collectives.[98] "To sustain themselves and fund their political activities, the members stole food from grocery stores and begged or borrowed money from friends and family. … Even so, the Weathermen were nearly broke and lived in Spartan dwellings on a diet of noodles and other simple foods."[99] They also thoroughly failed in their recruitment efforts. "White working class youths were more alienated than organized by Weather's spectacles, and even some of those interested in the group were turned off by its early hijinks."[100] Their antagonizing of the working class drew widespread criticism from peer organizations like the Black Panthers, who expected only repression to result from a confrontation forced before the revolutionary movements held enough support.[101] As Michael Novick recounts, the Weather Underground employed a "fairly clear strategy of 'rule or ruin'; that if the (white) Left didn't get with the program, it was an obstacle to revolution and needed to be dismantled."[102] Overall, its "puerile focus on revolutionary purity undermined its aims and contributed to its failure to organize large numbers of people."[103]

Discounting Alternatives

Groupthink also leads members to discount the merits of alternative policy options, biasing their views towards one prevailing policy and leaving them disinclined to objectively reevaluate their options should that policy fail. Whereas other leftist groups sought to combat systems they found oppressive by "organizing around bread-and-butter issues," the Weathermen insisted that any reforms short of revolution "became their opposite when they remained in the hands of the ruling class."[104] The failure of the Days of Rage should have prompted them to reevaluate their choices, but the absolutism of the group's leaders drove away critics and suppressed dissent among those who remained.[105] Jeff Jones described his reaction to that event, "There was a position to the right of me which was, 'It was a failure. We shouldn't have done it.' And there was a position to the left of me, which was, 'It was a failure. We have to escalate.'"[106] Similarly, Ayers held that "if you believed something, the proof of that belief was to act on it. … We were militants. That's what we were. We were militants before we were thinkers."[107]

Nowhere was the refusal to reevaluate alternatives more readily apparent than at the War Council. Having advertised the meeting as an attempt to rebuild SDS as a broad-based revolutionary movement, the Weathermen entered already convinced that violence must be escalated and ignored the larger concerns of the counter-culture youth who attended. "For those not in Weather, disagreeing with what the Weather Bureau said proved virtually impossible. … If a dissenter wasn't shouted down, his/her argument would be lost in a flood of 'rhetoric that never addressed itself to the point.'"[108] The primary outcome of the War Council—the decision to go underground—was announced to members after a closed-door meeting of group leaders rather than accepted after open debate about alternative options. "All in all, despite the preceding rhetoric, the War Council achieved only a consolidation of the Weatherman hierarchy and analysis, and a decision to go underground—the logical conclusion of the organization's distrust of its own potential base of support."[109]

Selective Information

Ignoring the full range of relevant information and relying only on selective inputs biases group decision-making and increases the risk of self-defeating policies. In the case of the Weather Underground, the negative reaction to its early recruitment efforts should have discredited its strategy of mass revolution via terrorism. As Lyndon Comstock reminisced, the group initially included its phone number on promotional leaflets, "but we got so many death threats that we eventually had to unplug the phone."[110] In another instance, Weathermen ran around a Detroit beach waving Viet Cong flags until the working-class kids they were aiming to recruit "took offense at the flags and promptly got into fistfights with the Weathermen."[111] Instead of recognizing that their own radicalization had involved "years of political education, membership in left-wing organizations, interaction with black activists, participation in demonstrations, and skirmishes with police," the Weathermen unrealistically expected other youths to overcome all the countervailing influences in their lives and become instant revolutionaries.[112] As one member reflected, "These kids weren't going to do it. I mean they lived in the neighborhood, they wanted to stay out of trouble and they wanted to make a living. … [We were] telling them to throw away any chance they got and fight, and fight even though they were going to lose. … [M]aybe you'll get killed, but the movement will grow … that's a helluva thing to go and tell a kid, I mean a kid who grows up on the street—he's gonna say you're crazy."[113]

Reactions to the Days of Rage deepened the flood of negative information. Other leftist groups condemned the event, with Black Panther leader Fred Hampton calling it "insanity."[114] Even family members forsook the participants: Flanagan's own mother reacted to the news that police had beaten the rioters by saying, "I don't blame the Chicago police. They should have knocked the heads off every one of them."[115] The group ignored such responses, dishonestly declaring, "We did what we set out to do."[116] Braley recalled that the event "came, it went, it didn't affect what I thought about things because at that point I felt the development of clandestine work … was the primary thing to do, and whether there were 50 of us or 100 or 40,000 of us wasn't the question."[117] The Weathermen blamed the low turnout on "the sectarian and dogmatic spirit that permeated every aspect of our work" and the "humorless franticness which we mistook for seriousness."[118] As two recounted, "Our failure to attract thousands of kids turned into an important victory. … [The action] fixed in us a very deep part of our politics: being a revolutionary means fighting as hard as we can with whatever strength we've got."[119] Those sentiments endured even after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam had tempered most opposition groups, leaving the Weather Underground "pretty much alone in its continued insistence on the need for armed struggle in the United States."[120]

Failure to Examine Risks and Make Contingency Plans

The final set of decision-making flaws spawned by groupthink is a failure to adequately examine the risks of a chosen policy and to make contingency plans, which increases the likelihood that the group will fail to achieve its objectives and will be unable to salvage even modest gains. Although the members of the Weather Underground frequently thought and talked about the possibility of their own injuries, incarcerations, or deaths in their struggle for revolution, they glorified such sacrifices and did not fully appreciate the risks they were taking. The Weathermen grew accustomed to bumps, bruises, and being bailed out of jail by wealthy relatives during their initial clashes with authorities, and they were stunned when the Greenwich Village bomb-making accident turned three of their friends into the first victims of their terrorist campaign. That their loss sparked a limited but significant moral crisis for the group underscores how inadequate its appreciation of the risks associated with terrorism had been.

This early failure was compounded by rationalizing away the need for contingency plans. Contingencies were rendered irrelevant by the ironclad conviction that exemplary violence would spark a revolution, since the Weathermen interpreted "success" as the act of violence itself rather than any concessions or recruits gained. The group pursued "a moral imperative of resistance and solidarity … whose integrity *did not depend on its political success or failure*."[121] As a result, their miniscule membership numbers and military inexperience did not prevent the Weathermen from anticipating victory in their struggle against the most powerful state in the world.[122] As Rudd remarked in September 1969, "It doesn't make any difference what you or I say or what I want to see. The only significant thing that bears on this question of revolution is that it has already started. The Vietnamese have made the revolution against the U.S. … [Y]ou and I don't have a choice."[123]

Conclusion

Observing the occurrence of groupthink does not absolve group members of responsibility for their actions. On the contrary, it emphatically condemns their decision-making, since they chose to subscribe to irrational logics dictating counterproductive

policies. Former members of the Weather Underground, after more than 40 years, maintain that the worldwide atrocities of the 1960s and 1970s morally demanded opposition. However, they also admit that severe mistakes were made and that their decision-making at that time was highly problematic. "Under the pressure of those times and still expressing our very competitive culture, we made many serious and interrelated errors," wrote Gilbert, "These errors, these wrong politics were … a setback in the broader struggle against imperialism."[124]

Rather than use their prestigious position at the top of SDS to build a nationwide movement that might constrain U.S. excesses, the group's leaders alienated the rest of the youth movement by launching an underground terrorist campaign against the United States. Rudd later reflected, "We should have tried to use SDS to build as broad and powerful a movement to end the war as possible. Yet my friends and I chose to scuttle America's largest radical organization—with chapters on hundreds of campuses, a powerful national identity, and enormous growth potential—for a fantasy of revolutionary urban-guerrilla warfare."[125] The radicalization of the Weather Underground was irrational, its terrorist campaign counterproductive. In Ono's words, "Weatherman demands the willing suspension of disbelief."[126] Groupthink provides a compelling explanation for the development of that group, which remarkably displayed all of the antecedents, symptoms, and deficiencies associated with that phenomenon.

Groupthink's role in the emergence of the Weather Underground from a nonviolent social movement suggests that recommendations for how to prevent both the occurrence of groupthink and terrorist radicalization should be offered not only to governments, but to social activist groups as well. Both types of organizations are potentially susceptible to groupthink, and both have an interest in preventing terrorism. External factors such as the government's responsiveness to public grievances and its openness to dialogue may reduce the risk of isolation and radicalization for susceptible groups. A responsive and conversant government simultaneously provides a forum for opposition groups and reduces the likelihood that they will evolve to threaten national security. Of course, this precaution is most effective before the group's ideology and demands become absolute and its strategy of action shifts from peaceful opposition to violence.

In order to avoid the decision-making mistakes caused by groupthink, activists should maintain active connections with a changing reality, sustain collaboration with other social movements and governments, and thoroughly consider best practices in working to accomplish their primary goals. Their leaders should consciously seek to be open-minded and impartial in order to avoid an extreme, sectarian course of development. Instead of using their influence to mold members' ideas and attitudes, leaders should encourage members to offer alternative ideas and diverse potential plans of action, and to promote critical discussion of issues and strategies.[127] Finally, even in the earliest stage of a group's formation, it is important to establish procedural rules to guide decision-making. These procedures should detail leadership functions, methods that will prevent the group from becoming isolated, and specific steps to govern the group's decision-making process.

This article has enhanced scholarship on the causes of terrorism in several major ways. It began by distinguishing between rational and irrational radicalization. Noting that the conventional wisdom focused exclusively on the former, it harnessed groupthink as an explanation of irrational radicalization. The groupthink mechanism is complementary to the strategic and organizational logics, capable of explaining cases that those logics cannot, and it conceptualizes processes that may take root even in groups

that initially radicalize for rational reasons. The article went on to firmly establish the link between groupthink and radicalization through the first major empirical study tracing the operation of groupthink among terrorists. Although scholars have observed significant differences between the terrorist groups of the 1960s–1970s and those of the twenty-first century, these "new" terrorist groups are no less susceptible to groupthink than the "old" and the findings discussed above are eminently applicable today.[128]

Through these contributions, we have laid the groundwork for several productive opportunities for further research. We have raised important questions regarding the assumption of rationality within terrorist groups, opening the door for closer examination of the interaction of rational and irrational processes in terrorist radicalization. We have also extended research on groupthink to an important new area, paving the way for investigations of its role in other cases of terrorist radicalization, as well as studies analyzing how groupthink interacts with different types of political grievances and external conditions. Though the mechanism itself may be expected to operate wherever its antecedent conditions obtain, further study may reveal additional methods worth developing for countering its emergence in opposition groups and further reducing the occurrence of terrorism.

Irrational radicalization is a tragic process. It is simultaneously counterproductive to the group's goals and threatening to national security, and so avoiding it is in the interest of both opposition groups and governments. Preventing rational radicalization is difficult, since it requires persuading a group to adopt a policy other than the one it considers best for advancing its goals. Preventing irrational radicalization, on the other hand, should be easy, since it requires persuading a group to forgo a self-defeating policy. Unfortunately, falling into the trap of groupthink is also easy.

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Notes

1. John Brennan at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, June 29, 2011.

2. This definition reflects U.S. State Department and prevailing (though not universal) scholarly usage. See Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 777–794; Alex Schmid, "Terrorism: The Definitional Problem," *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law* 36, nos. 2/3 (2004): 375–419. States also use coercive violence against noncombatants, but their unique position in world politics warrants separate consideration.

3. Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat* (New York: Random House, 2006), 14.

4. Many factors at all levels of analysis may impact both the severity of grievances and the propensity of individuals and groups to undergo radicalization. Our claim is not that groupthink explains all cases of terrorism or that its dynamics are more important than these other factors, but simply that it is a useful tool for further developing our understanding of terrorism that is too often referenced but too rarely seriously examined.

5. Max Abrahms, "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited," *Comparative Political Studies* 45 (March 2012): 366–393; Deniz Aksoy, David B. Carter, and Joseph Wright,

"Terrorism in Dictatorships," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 3 (July 2012), 810–826; Tore Bjørgo, ed., *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Rhonda Callaway and Julie Harrelson-Stephens, "Toward a Theory of Terrorism: Human Security as a Determinant of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29, no. 7 (2006): 773–796; Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13 (1981): 379–399; James J. F. Forest, *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training, and Root Causes* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006); Thomas Homer-Dixon, "Why Root Causes Are Important," *Toronto Globe and Mail,* September 26, 2001; Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Louise Richardson, ed., *The Roots of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003); James D. Wolfensohn, "Fight Terrorism by Ending Poverty," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 42–44. For critiques of poverty and weak states as causes of terrorism, see James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 159–177; Edward Newman, "Weak States, State Failure, and Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 4 (Oct. 2007): 463–488.

6. John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (June 2003): 473–507; Ehud Sprinzak, "The Psychopolitical Formation of Extreme Left Terrorism in a Democracy: The Case of the Weathermen," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 65–85; Maxwell Taylor, *The Terrorist* (London, Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988).

7. Donna Della Porta, "Terror Against the State," in Kate Nash and Alan Scott, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 215–216; cf. Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, "Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (July 2008): 415–433; Mark Sedgwick, "The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (September 2010): 479–494.

8. Forest, *The Making of a Terrorist* (see note 5 above); Quintan Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

9. Clark R. McCauley and Mary E. Segal, "Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups," in Clyde Hendrick, ed., *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1987), 232.

10. The most prominent "successes" are cases of anti-colonial terrorism in the mid-twentieth century; see David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," in Audrey Kurth Cronin and James M. Ludes, eds., *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 46–73; Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Does Not Work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 42–78; Abrahms, "The Political Effectiveness of Terrorism Revisited" (see note 5 above); Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009); Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa'ida* (Arlington, VA: RAND, 2008); William Rose, Rysia Murphy, and Max Abrahms, "Correspondence: Does Terrorism Ever Work? The 2004 Madrid Train Bombings," *International Security* 32, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 185–192; Maria J. Stephan and Erica Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict," *International Security* 33, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 7–44. For a contrary finding, see Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 49–80.

11. Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism" (see note 5 above); Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 7–24; Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism" (see note 10 above); Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005); Ehud Sprinzak, "Rational Fanatics," *Foreign Policy* 120 (September–October 2000), 66–73.

12. Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism" (see note 11 above), 8.

13. Robert Art, "To What Ends Military Power," *International Security* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980): 3–35; Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996); Robert A. Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (Fall 1997), 90–136; Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966).

14. Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 3 (August 2003): 344–346.

15. In this light, Al Qaeda has been called a "rational political actor." See Michael Doran, "The Pragmatic Fanaticism of al Qaeda: An Anatomy of Extremism in Middle Eastern Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 117, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 182.

16. James J. F. Forest, ed., *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006); Manus I. Midlarsky, Martha Crenshaw, and Fumihiko Yoshida, "Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism," *International Studies Quarterly* 24 (1980): 262–298.

17. Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter, "Sabotaging the Peace: The Politics of Extremist Violence," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (April 2002): 263–296.

18. Pape, *Dying to Win* (see note 11 above), 61–76; cf. Shaul Mishal and Avraliam Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

19. Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 78–105; Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (see note 11 above), 4–97.

20. Bloom, *Dying to Kill* (see note 11 above), 91–94; David A. Lake, "Rational Extremism: Understanding Terrorism in the Twenty-first Century," *Dialogue-IO* 1 (January 2002): 15–29; Richardson, *What Terrorists Want* (see note 3 above), 71–103.

21. Organizational factors have also been applied to individual radicalization, focusing on the material and emotional rewards individuals gain from joining terrorist groups. See Martha Crenshaw, "An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism," *Orbis* 29, no. 3 (Fall 1985): 465–489; McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making" (see note 6 above).

22. R. Hrair Dekmejian, *Islam in Revolution: Fundamentalism in the Arab World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995); William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959); Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising* (see note 8 above).

23. Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-Policy Decisions and Fiascos* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 43.

24. Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 174–177, 244. Janis considered group cohesiveness to be foremost among antecedent conditions, but subsequent research has shown little connection between group cohesiveness and groupthink symptoms; Matie L. Flowers, "A Laboratory Test of Some Implications of Janis's Groupthink Hypothesis," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 35, no. 12 (December 1977): 888–896; E. M. Fodor and T. Smith, "The Power Motive as an Influence on Group Decision Making," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 42 (1982): 178–185; Clark McCauley, "The Nature of Social Influence in Groupthink: Compliance and Internalization," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 57, no. 2 (August 1989): 250–260; Philip E. Tetlock, Randall S. Peterson, Charles McGuire, Shi-jie Chang, and Peter Feld, "Assessing Political Group Dynamics: A Test of the Groupthink Model," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 63, no. 3 (September 1992): 403–425; Robert S. Baron, "So Right It's Wrong: Groupthink and the Ubiquitous Nature of Polarized Group Decision Making," *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 37 (2005): 219–253. We combine some closely related symptoms and effects that Janis isolated for a more streamlined presentation of the theory.

25. For examples conceptualizing groupthink as patterns of behavior rather than single decisions, see Glen Whyte, "Recasting Janis's Groupthink Model: The Key Role of Collective Efficacy in Decision Fiascoes," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, nos. 2/3 (Feb./March 1998): 185–209; Clark McCauley, "Group Dynamics in Janis's Theory of

Groupthink: Backward and Forward," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, nos. 2/3 (Feb./March 1998): 142–162.

26. Whyte, "Recasting Janis's Groupthink Model" (see note 25 above), 200.

27. Dina Badie, "Groupthink, Iraq, and the War on Terror: Explaining US Policy Shift toward Iraq," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 6 (2010): 277–296; James K. Esser, "Alive and Well after 25 Years: A Review of Groupthink Research," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, nos. 2/3 (Feb./March 1998): 116–141; Paul 't Hart, *Groupthink in Government: A Study of Small Groups and Policy Failure* (Lisse, Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger, 1990); Bertram H. Raven, "The Nixon Group," *Journal of Social Issues* 30, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 297–320; Marlene E. Turner and Anthony R. Pratkanis, "Twenty-Five Years of Groupthink Theory and Research: Lessons from the Evaluation of a Theory," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 73, nos. 2/3 (Feb./March 1998): 105–115.

28. Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (see note 6 above), 126–127; Jerrold M. Post, "Prospects for Nuclear Terrorism: Psychological Motivations and Constraints," *Conflict Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Summer 1987): 47–58; Jerrold M. Post, "Terrorist Psycho-logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychology Forces," in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25–40.

29. Ehud Sprinzak has examined the radicalization of the Weather Underground through the lens of a "psychopolitical crisis of legitimacy," but gave groupthink only one passing mention. See Sprinzak, "The Psychopolitical Formation of Extreme Left Terrorism in a Democracy" (see note 6 above), 69, 77.

30. Since there is no reason to expect independent interviews motivated by a study of groupthink to produce more reliable evidence than that already existing in the secondary literature, we forgo redundant interview collection in favor of utilizing that existing literature.

31. Retrospective interview evidence may not provide the relative objectivity of contemporary records, but even those are often biased by the perspective of the recorder. See Marc Trachtenberg, *The Craft of International History: A Guide to Method* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 146–162. The available evidence provides a unique opportunity to explore an interesting research question, and though conclusions must be treated as no more definitive than the evidence on which they are based, such opportunities should not be rejected simply out of desire for more perfect evidence.

32. Ron Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (New York: Verso, 1997), 33.

33. Andrew Kopkind, "Going Down in Chicago," in Harold Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts, 1970), 288–289.

34. Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 57, 79–82; Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 54.

35. "Another Outrage by the Hoodlum Left," *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1969, 22.

36. *Guardian*, October 18, 1969, 4.

37. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 172, 182.

38. Without the limited reflection this accident sparked, Naomi Jaffe recalled that Weatherman "could have and would have" focused on killing police; see ibid., 184.

39. The original name was inspired by the lyric "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows," from the Bob Dylan song "Subterranean Homesick Blues." The group changed it to the Weather Underground after its feminist members objected that Weather*man* was sexist; see ibid., 183.

40. Ibid., 57.

41. Some hesitate to label the Weather Underground a terrorist group in light of its efforts to avoid killing civilians or the political implications of the term (e.g., ibid., 314, n. 3). Since the group used violence against noncombatant targets (property if not usually people) intended to coerce others to produce political change, it clearly fits the standard definition employed here.

42. Dan Berger, *Outlaws of America: The Weather Underground and the Politics of Solidarity* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006), 101.
43. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 73.
44. Ibid., 156.
45. Carl Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm* (New York, NY: Scribner, 2008), 166–168.
46. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 106–107.
47. *The Weather Underground: Report of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, Ninety-fourth Congress, First Session* (Washington, DC: US Government Print Office, 1975), 28. The rigid discipline of Weather collectives after their purges frustrated FBI efforts to infiltrate the organization. Only one FBI informant, Larry Grathwohl, was able to infiltrate a Weather collective and arrange the arrest of two Weather members before being discovered.
48. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 179.
49. Ibid., 154, 156.
50. Emile DeAntonio (dir.), *Underground* (film) (First Run Features, 1976).
51. Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm* (see note 45 above), 174–178.
52. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 48.
53. Nicholas von Hoffman, "Uptight Radicals—SDS in a Bind," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 21, 1969, 5.
54. For example, in 1969, Bernardine Dohrn declared, "There is no way to be committed to non-violence in the middle of the most violent society that history has ever created. I am not committed to non-violence in any way." See Sam Green and Bill Siegel (dirs.), *The Weather Underground* (film) (The Free History Project, 2002).
55. Susan Stern, *With the Weathermen: The Personal Journal of a Revolutionary Woman* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 67.
56. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 105.
57. Ibid., 153.
58. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground* (see note 54 above).
59. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 87–88.
60. Ibid., 21.
61. Ibid., 70–71.
62. Ibid., 63; Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 85.
63. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 58.
64. Mark Rudd, *Underground: My Life with SDS and the Weathermen* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 152–153.
65. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 29–30.
66. Ibid., 182.
67. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (see note 23 above), 13.
68. Rudd, *Underground* (see note 64 above), 88.
69. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground* (see note 54 above).
70. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 91.
71. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 75.
72. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground* (see note 54 above).
73. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 54.
74. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 102.
75. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground* (see note 54 above).
76. Ibid.
77. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 107.
78. Shin'ya Ono, "A Weatherman: You Do Need a Weatherman to Know Which Way the Wind Blows," in Harold Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (Berkeley, CA: Ramparts, 1970), 241.
79. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 134.
80. Ibid., 102.

81. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 59.
82. Ibid.
83. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 96.
84. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 45–46.
85. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 106.
86. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 57–60; Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 104–105.
87. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 114.
88. Rudd, *Underground* (see note 64 above), 183.
89. Green and Siegel, *The Weather Underground* (see note 54 above).
90. Rudd, *Underground* (see note 64 above), 184.
91. Ibid., 156–157.
92. Stern, *With the Weathermen* (see note 55 above), 149–150.
93. Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm* (see note 45 above), 245–257.
94. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 54.
95. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (see note 23 above), 175.
96. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 52.
97. "Bring the War Home," *New Left Notes*, July 23, 1969.
98. Ibid., 45.
99. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 57.
100. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 99.
101. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 68–71; Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 101.
102. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 102.
103. Ibid., 37.
104. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 152.
105. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 109.
106. Joan Morrison and Robert K. Morrison, *From Camelot to Kent State: The Sixties Experience in the Words of Those Who Lived It* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 314.
107. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 87.
108. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 86.
109. Ibid., 88.
110. Berger, *Outlaws of America* (see note 42 above), 104.
111. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 62.
112. Ibid., 78; cf. David Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 12.
113. Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS: Ten Years toward a Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1973), 582–583.
114. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 84.
115. "Another Outrage by the Hoodlum Left" (see note 35 above), 28.
116. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 108.
117. Ibid., 110.
118. Ono, "A Weatherman" (see note 78 above), 261.
119. Dotson Rader, ed., *Defiance #2: A Radical Review* (New York: Paperback Library, 1971), 15.
120. Jacobs, *The Way the Wind Blew* (see note 32 above), 149.
121. Varon, *Bringing the War Home* (see note 34 above), 10.
122. Ibid., 57.
123. Ibid., 56.
124. David Gilbert, *No Surrender: Writings from an Anti-Imperialist Political Prisoner* (Montreal: Abraham Guillen Press, 2004), 256–257.

125. Rudd, *Underground* (see note 64 above), 190–191.

126. Ono, "A Weatherman" (see note 78 above), 284.

127. In many ways, the balance of perspectives and active participation required to best sustain a private organization mirror those needed to sustain political society as a whole. See Richard Maass, "Political Society and Cicero's Ideal State," *Historical Methods* 45, no. 2 (May 2012): 79–92.

128. On the distinction between "old" and "new" terrorist groups, see Wiktorowicz, *Radical Islam Rising* (see note 8 above), 16; David Tucker, "What is New about the New Terrorism and How Dangerous is it?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 1–14; Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism" (see note 10 above).