INTERNATIONAL CENTER
FOR THE STUDY OF TERRORISM

Report on Roles and Functions in Terrorist Groups as They Relate to the Likelihood of Exit

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About the Report

The authors of this report are Mary Beth Altier, John Horgan, Emma Leonard, and Christian Thoroughgood. This report is part of a wider research project entitled Pathways, Processes, Roles and Factors for Terrorist Disengagement, Re-Engagement and Recidivism. This research is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate and coordinated through the U.K. Home Office. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the Department of Homeland Security or the Home Office.

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Over the past decade, there has been an increasing interest in understanding the reasons why individuals join terrorist organizations (see e.g., Krueger & Maleckova, 2003; Krueger, 2007) as well as the "radicalization" processes that may culminate in involvement in terrorist activity (see e.g., Moghaddam, 2005; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2008). This increase has been matched by the concomitant interest in the reasons why individuals involved in terrorism disengage (see e.g., Horgan, 2009; Bjørgo & Horgan, 2009) and/or de-radicalize (see e.g., Kruglanski et al., in press; Rabasa, Pettyjohn, Ghenz, & Boucek, 2010). Unearthing why and how individuals leave terrorist organizations may offer important insights as to which factors may deter involvement in terrorism in the first place, as well as what sorts of measures can encourage or facilitate disengagement once involvement has begun.

We define *disengagement* as the process of ceasing terrorist activity. It doesn't always involve a change in ideology or beliefs, but does require an end to terrorist behavior. For the purposes of this paper, when we address disengagement, our focus is on individual, voluntary disengagement from terrorism—that is, when individuals choose, on their own accord, to leave a terrorist organization independent of any collective decision to disarm or dissolve the group.

The genesis of this paper lies in the observation that existing studies of terrorist disengagement and terrorism generally pay little attention to the roles that individuals hold within terrorist organizations. Consequently, there is little appreciation for what those roles might indicate about the reasons for the individual's involvement, their experiences in the group, how they are viewed by the leadership and other members, and their level of commitment to the organization and the group's underlying cause. It is plausible, for instance, that individuals in certain roles may incur more sunk costs in the terrorist organization and possess fewer available alternatives outside of the group as a direct consequence of their role. This in turn makes exit less likely. Certain roles in a terrorist organization may require more or less isolation from mainstream society or isolation from other group members. This may be particularly important, for example, for individuals whose involvement in the group is motivated by the social bonds the group provides or for those who desire to maintain ties to individuals outside of the group. It may also influence the extent to which the terrorist is likely to come into contact with individuals who hold moderate views. Some roles may carry with them a certain degree of prestige or necessitate a clearly defined skill

set, while other roles can be held by almost anyone. An individual's role in a terrorist organization, therefore, may have important implications for our understanding of whether or not the individual is likely to disengage from terrorism, why the individual might choose to leave, and what factors are likely to be more or less effective in precipitating and sustaining disengagement.

In this article, we use detailed data gleaned from autobiographies written by terrorists and former terrorists to examine the roles held by individuals in terrorist organizations. We explore what those roles may suggest about individuals' commitment to the organization and the likelihood of disengagement. We consider the relationship between one's role and his or her level of satisfaction in the group, sunk costs, and available alternatives outside of the movement as well as whether individuals in certain roles are more likely to experience certain push/pull factors hypothesized to be associated with disengagement from terrorism.

Our report is divided into three sections. We begin by highlighting what greater attention to the individual terrorist roles can bring to the study of terrorist disengagement, drawing on the theoretical framework put forth in Altier, Horgan, and Thoroughgood (2012b). In particular, we discuss the ways in which role conflict and role strain may produce dissatisfaction with one's involvement in the terrorist group, how one's role may influence the level of sunk costs he or she has incurred as a result of membership in the organization as well as the quality of alternatives outside of the group, and how one's role may relate to the likelihood that he or she experiences certain push or pull factors for disengagement. We then turn to the autobiographical data we have compiled to explore the ways in which one's role(s) within a terrorist organization may explain the likelihood and potential reasons for disengagement. We conclude by summarizing our findings, their limitations, and directions for future research.

I. Terrorist Roles and How They Might Relate to Disengagement

Individuals involved in terrorist organizations,[1] like any conventional organization, may carry out different tasks or serve different functions for the group. Merriam-Webster defines a "role" as "a function or part performed especially in a particular operation or process."[2] In this case, the particular operation or process is the operation of the terrorist organization, including its ability to organize, recruit, fundraise, mobilize support, and carry out direct acts of terrorism like planting a bomb or shooting at a target.

An individual's role within an organization, according to Krantz and Maltz (1997), who have studied traditional work organizations, is comprised of two parts: "role as given" and "role as taken." Although the leadership may assign certain roles or sets of tasks to individuals within the organization ("role as given"), individuals define, interpret, and carry out their roles in their own unique ways ("role as taken") (Krantz & Maltz, 1975:140). A role, according to Krantz and Maltz (1997:137), therefore "is very much defined and shaped by the individual in it and what the individual brings with her or him. While the organization's definition of a role may be identical for two people, the way in which they work and their effectiveness and success may vary" as a result of differences in how they understand and interpret the role and how they carry out the role.

Indeed, Krantz and Maltz (1997) developed a definition of an organizational role based on a survey of scholarly definitions found in the fields of industrial and organizational psychology and sociology. A role, according to Krantz and Maltz (1997:138-139), is comprised of four parts: i) an individual's "specific assigned duty, activity, purpose and/or function" in the pursuit of a common goal, ii) an individual's "part, piece, or share in the overall mission and system of tasks present in the organization," iii) an individual's "unconscious, assigned, and/or assumed function in the . . . organization's overall mission and system of tasks," and iv) "the way in which an individual understands and then works with his or her role as given and taken within the

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[1] For the purpose of this report, we define terrorist activity according to the U.S. Department of Defense as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."
[2] role. 2013. In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved February 19, 2013 from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/role.

organization." Thus, an individual's role within an organization we believe, consistent with Krantz and Maltz (1997), should be conceptualized not just as what the individual is told or assigned to do by the group's leadership, but also how the individual understands, interprets, and carries out his or her tasks within the normative framework and social context of the organization.

To date, little systematic research has examined the various roles that individual terrorists may occupy within a given organization (e.g., recruiter, suicide bomber, bombmaker, political leader). Although past research suggests that there is no typical terrorist profile (e.g., Crenshaw, 1986; Wilkinson, 1977; Horgan, 2008),[3] scholars still tend to examine terrorists as if they were a homogenous entity with similar characteristics. Such approaches, according to Horgan (2008), result in an overly simplistic, reductionist view that ignores the many differences between and within terrorist organizations and consequentially, obscures the development of operationally relevant initiatives aimed at containing terrorist behavior. More importantly for our purposes, such approaches ignore key differences in the individuals who become involved in terrorism and how their experiences once they have entered a group (e.g., what tasks they perform, how involved they are) shape their attitudes and behavior, including their commitment to the organization and the likelihood that they will remain involved. Indeed, Ross (1996) noted that while terrorists bring certain knowledge, skills, and personal beliefs into the organization, they are subsequently exposed to various learning experiences that cause them to adopt different roles, orientations, and behavior. Thus, individuals deeply involved in the movement are likely to have changed since they first joined the movement. Social identity theory reminds us that individuals are shaped by their experiences within society, which in turn help to shape their actions. Drawing on the writings of George Herbert Mead, Stryker and Burke (2000:285) summarized this concept as "society shapes self shapes social behavior," where individuals live in "relatively small and specialized networks of social relationships, through roles that support their participation in such networks." In this case, individuals are involved in a particularly specialized network—a terrorist

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[3] Some have argued that terrorists are a rather homogenous group of individuals who meet a "typical" profile (e.g., Brynjar, 2000; Ferracuti & Bruno, 1981; Hacker, 1976; Hubbard, 1971; Pearce, 1977; Piven, 2002; Victoroff, 2005). For example, a number of scholars have suggested that the prototypical terrorist possesses psychopathic tendencies that predispose him or her toward senseless acts of violence directed at innocent civilian populations (e.g., Cooper, 1978; Hamden, 2002; Tanay, 1987). Other emotions and characteristics that have been associated with terrorists in the literature include: fear, aggression, depression, guilt, anti-authoritarianism, perceived lack of manliness, selfishness, excessive levels of extroversion, alienation, and high needs for risk and excitement (Ross, 1994; 1996).

organization—and are influenced by their experiences within the organization, as well as potentially shape the organization themselves.

Although sparse, the existing work on terrorist roles is promising. In a study of why young people join violent extremist movements, Petter Nesser (2005) presented a preliminary analysis of European "jihadists." Nesser's analysis began by arguing that "jihadist terrorism" is defined by its heterogeneity and then went on to typify European proponents as "a very diversified group of individuals, encompassing multiple nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, ages, professions, social backgrounds and personalities" (2005:31). Despite these differences, Nesser stressed the need to "establish typologies of various people and personalities who have been involved in terrorism and political violence" (2005:32).

Though placing an emphasis on 'motivational patterns,' Nesser's (2005) typology is essentially derived from an empirical analysis of individual behavior within cell structures. He noted, based on his analysis, that:

> Members of the terrorist gangs had clearly defined roles and tasks. There was a cell leader and coordinator (often the oldest and most experienced person), a chief of communication, a chief of finances, sometimes a designated suicide-bomber, etc. However, although the core had a fixed structure, there were fuzzy cell boundaries. The cell would receive support from various "hangarounds" ranging from organized jihadist groups, extremist sympathizers, family, friends, criminals, etc. (2005:34-35).

Considering how best to characterize these small cells, Nesser proposed the existence of "four profiles that recurred across cases" (2005:38). These were: "entrepreneur," "protégé," "misfit," and "drifter." Importantly, Nesser's typology is constructed from a combination of the "characteristics" of individuals' behaviors within cells and "information about their backgrounds" (2005:38). A critical conceptual point worth recognizing is that there is strong merit in actually disaggregating characteristics of behavior when classifying the individuals involved in terrorist organizations. Individual backgrounds may matter as far as what an individual does as part of a terrorist group, but then again, they may not. The reasons behind someone's wish to become involved in a terrorist group or how he or she becomes involved in

the group may not necessarily have a bearing on what role(s) he or she subsequently takes on within the terrorist group.

Nesser himself acknowledged the fluidity of roles, stating that "roles and tasks of cell members could change during the course of preparations for attacks" (2005:29). However, this critical acknowledgement begs the question about what the utility is in attempting to assign a "role" designation to an individual. When we say that someone is an "entrepreneur" does that mean that he or she is primarily an entrepreneur? Does he or she occupy this role in conjunction with several others? Is the issue of role designation an acknowledgement that when an individual is an "entrepreneur" he or she performs this role most of the time? Nesser acknowledged the complexity associated with the micro-dynamics within cells but concluded his analysis by emphasizing his discovery of "ideal-types [applying] across the cases" (2005:47-48).

Overall, Nesser's (2005; 2006) research highlights the need for greater attention to the roles held by individuals in terrorists organizations, the tasks and functions that individuals perform, and how those tasks and functions shape individuals' experiences in the group. Broad distinctions between, for example, "leaders" and "followers" have been long recognized in analyses of terrorist groups that were operational throughout the 1970s and 80s (e.g., Weinberg & Eubank, 2007). However, greater attention to the specific roles and functions held by individuals within a terrorist groups and how those roles and functions may vary across terrorist groups (or cells) is needed. Indeed, several authors (e.g., Perlinger & Pedahzur, 2010; Xu & Chen, 2005) suggested that profiling studies might benefit from social network analysis to identify different roles within a terrorist network—roles that may be associated with different demographic profiles.

Our primary purpose here, contrary to that of Nesser (2005, 2006), is not to identify role-specific profiles or characteristics of terrorists that may or may not predetermine the nature and/or extent of their involvement in terrorism. Instead, our aim is to consider how one's role(s) within a terrorist organization may shape his or her experiences within that organization, level of commitment to the organization, and the incentives to remain within or leave the organization. Consistent with Krantz and Maltz's (1997) four-part definition of a role, we maintain that the nature of specific roles (e.g., bomber, recruiter)—including what those roles entail and how they are assigned—is likely to vary across terrorist organizations and the situational and operational

context in which the terrorist organization finds itself. Certain organizations, for instance, may have clearly defined, specialized roles that are assigned by the group's leadership; in other cases, individuals may hold no clear role, instead performing disparate tasks on an as-needed basis. Further, the role that an individual holds within a terrorist organization is likely to interact with a number of factors specific to the individual to influence his or her commitment to the organization and likelihood of disengagement at any given point in time. For instance, certain types of individuals may be more or less satisfied in certain roles (e.g., bomber, recruiter) based upon their specific knowledge, abilities, and personalities as well as the potentially competing social roles (e.g., father, worker) that they concurrently occupy.

Drawing on Rusbult and colleagues' investment model (Farrell & Rusbult, 1981; Rusbult, 1980, 1983; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983) from social psychology, prior research (see Altier et al. 2012b) suggested that the *probability* that one remains committed to a terrorist organization (and does not disengage) is a function of: i) the extent to which he or she derives satisfaction from membership in the organization, ii) the perceived quality of available alternatives to membership, and iii) the investments or sunk costs he or she has accrued as a result of membership in the organization (see Figure 1). Satisfaction, as noted in Figure 1, is a function of the actual rewards and costs associated with membership vis-à-vis the rewards and costs that he or she expects to derive from membership.

Figure 1: Rusbult's investment model

Commitment = Satisfaction – Alternatives + Investments, where

Satisfaction = (Actual Rewards – Actual Costs) – (Expected Rewards – Expected Costs)

Altier et al. (2012b) further noted that while Rusbult and colleagues' investment model provides a useful framework for understanding the likelihood of terrorist disengagement at any given point in time, Ebaugh's (1988) sociological model of voluntary role exit offers greater insight into the psychological processes involved. Ebaugh's (1988) model, depicted in Figure 2, maintained that the process of leaving a social role, such as ending one's involvement in a terrorist organization, is usually triggered by the emergence of cognitive dissonance and a series of *initial doubts* in which one's commitment and loyalty to the role and related organization are

questioned. Ebaugh (1988) suggested that while some individuals may never proceed past this doubting stage, others may occupy it for many years and still others may proceed through it relatively rapidly. At some point, however, all individuals in this stage begin to emit cues suggesting to themselves and others their dissatisfaction. If one admits that he or she is dissatisfied, the individual will often begin *seeking and weighing alternative* roles. Individuals possessing viable alternatives may enter the *turning point* stage and decide that they want to exit their current role. A turning point reflects an event that mobilizes and focuses awareness that one's prior lines of action have failed, are disrupted, and are no longer satisfying—prompting the individual to pursue something different in life (Ebaugh, 1988). Finally, upon leaving a given role and related organization, individuals go through the *post-exit* phase, whereby "exes" must cope with the challenge of dis-identifying with their previous role, while dealing with those who continue to associate them with their prior identity. Thus, this stage is marked by significant adjustments in interactions, such as learning how to present oneself and one's "ex" status effectively (e.g., handling stereotypes), negotiating and establishing intimate relationships, shifting social networks, and relating to former group members.

Figure 2: Ebaugh's (1988) model of voluntary role exit

Both Rusbult and colleagues' and Ebaugh's models suggest that the role(s) an individual holds while involved in a terrorist organization may explain the likelihood and potential causes of disengagement in several ways. First, individuals may enter a terrorist organization with a clear sense of what type of role(s) they want to take on within the organization (e.g., bomber, martyr, assassin, recruiter, trainer) and the expected rewards that they will derive not only from membership, but from their day-to-day tasks or role(s) as a member. For example, an individual who would like to be a violent operator might not be happy when he or she is ordered to work as a recruiter or fundraiser. The reality of his or her involvement may be very different from his or her expectations about what involvement would entail.

Indeed, the inability to attain the role that one desires within the terrorist organization may increase the probability of what sociologists term *role strain* (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977; Snoek, 1966) or role conflict (Getzels & Guba, 1954; Gullahorn, 1956). Role strain occurs when an individual lacks the required knowledge, skills, or abilities to successfully fulfill his or her assigned role. An individual, for example, who has trouble coping with carrying out acts of violence may experience role strain if assigned to be a bomber or an assassin. *Role conflict*, on the other hand, occurs when an individual occupies multiple roles that place competing or conflicting demands on the individual. An individual who is both a father and a member of a terrorist organization, for instance, may experience role conflict if he is tasked with traveling or remaining in hiding for long periods of time precluding him from seeing his family. Individuals may also experience role conflict as a result of multiple roles within the same organization that produce competing or conflicting demands. Certain roles within a terrorist organization are more likely to produce role conflict and role strain for certain individuals depending on their unique skill set and characteristics and the competing roles that they hold.

Thus, it is highly plausible, although not yet empirically validated, that the role(s) that one holds within a terrorist organization may be closely associated with the rewards or satisfaction that he or she derives from membership and decisions regarding whether or not to exit. Early research in industrial and organizational psychology (e.g., Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, 1970; Keller, 1975) supports these claims and suggests that role conflict and role strain as well as role ambiguity (that is, unclear or undefined expectations about what one's tasks entail) are associated with low job satisfaction and turnover in traditional workplace settings.

Additionally, certain roles within a terrorist organization may be associated with higher investments or sunk costs and fewer alternatives outside the organization, thereby diminishing the likelihood of exit. A terrorist who, for example, works in a very specialized role such as a bombmaker may possess few transferable skills and may have a notorious reputation with law enforcement, and even the community at large. This may hinder the individual's exit, despite the presence of doubts and dissatisfaction. Individuals involved in more peripheral or less criminal roles, on the other hand, may face far fewer barriers to exit.

Finally, it may be that individuals in certain roles may be more or less inclined to experience certain factors hypothesized to be associated with disengagement from terrorism. Altier et al.'s (2012b) review of the literature on terrorist disengagement, desistance from crime, disaffiliation from new religious movements, and commitment and turnover in traditional workplace settings suggests the following list of push/pull factors may increase the likelihood of disengagement from terrorism (Table 1). Push factors are those factors related to one's experiences while engaged in terrorism, which drive him or her away. Pull factors are factors outside of the terrorist group that attract the individual to a more conventional life. The presence of any one or a combination of these push/pull factors may increase the probability that one disengages by altering the satisfaction (i.e., net rewards) one obtains from continued involvement and/or the quality of alternatives available to the individual outside of the organization. Consistent with the investment model whether the individual actually disengages as a result of the presence of one or more of these push/pull factors is likely to be dictated by the individual's own calculations and perceptions as to what he or she has to gain or lose from continued involvement in the terrorist organization, relative to his or her expectations about what involvement entails, the sunk costs incurred, and the quality of available alternatives.

Table 1. Hypothesized push/pull factors for terrorist disengagement

Push Factors	Pull Factors
• Disillusionment with the strategy or actions of the terrorist group or movement • Disillusionment with personnel • Difficulty adapting to the clandestine lifestyle • Inability to cope with the physiological and psychological effects of violence • Loss of faith in the ideology • Burnout	• Positive interactions with those who hold moderate views • Employment/educational demands or opportunities • Desire to marry and establish a family or the demands of having a family • Promise of amnesty • Financial incentives

Looking at Table 1, it seems, at least on the surface, that certain push/pull factors such as disillusionment with the strategy or actions of the terrorist group, loss of faith in the ideology, or

the desire to marry as one ages are equally likely to occur regardless of one's role(s) within a terrorist organization. The presence of other push/pull factors, in contrast, such as the inability to cope with the physiological and/or psychological effects of violence, difficulty adapting to the clandestine lifestyle, or positive interactions with those who hold moderate views, seem like they may be more or less associated with certain roles. It is reasonable to think, for instance, that individuals who carry out violent attacks (e.g., bombers, snipers) or who play an integral part in violent operations (e.g., getaway drivers, lookouts) may be more likely to experience difficulty coping with the physiological or psychological effects of violence given their proximity to violence than those who are solely involved in the political side of the organization or publicity/propaganda. Conversely, individuals involved in the political side of the organization or publicity/propaganda may be able to lead more open, less clandestine lifestyles and, as such, may be less inclined to experience difficulty adapting to the clandestine lifestyle and more inclined to experience frequent and sustained interactions with those who hold moderate views.

As previously noted, whether or not the presence of any one or a combination of these push/pull factors is likely to lead to disengagement, we believe, is a complex function of whether and the extent to which the presence of these push/pull factors alters the level of satisfaction one derives from his or her involvement relative to the quality of alternatives and investments already made in the organization (Figure 1). Individuals, for instance, who believe in the cause initially, but whose involvement is motivated primarily by the social bonds the organization provides, may still choose to remain committed to the organization despite a loss of faith in the group's ideology. Individuals, on the other hand, who experience a loss of faith in the ideology and whose commitment had previously been motivated primarily by their belief in that ideology and the pursuit of those ideological aims, may choose to leave given sufficiently low sunk costs and sufficiently better alternatives to continued membership.

II. Data and Analysis

To explore the possible relationships between one's role(s) within a terrorist organization and terrorist disengagement, we turned to qualitative and quantitative data we collected from 87 English-language autobiographical accounts written by terrorists and former terrorists. These

accounts represent the life histories of 85 unique terrorists[4] and cover individuals engaged in a range of terrorist organizations including those motivated by nationalist, extreme right-wing, extreme left-wing, religious, and single-issue (e.g., environmental, anti-abortion) ideologies.

Our process of data collection and the description of our sample is described in detail in Altier, Horgan, Leonard, and Thoroughgood (2013). In brief, however, we located all English-language autobiographies written by individuals involved or formerly involved in terrorism and then excluded those accounts that provide a very brief snapshot of the terrorist's life, for example, in prison (e.g., Bobby Sands, *One Day in My Life*) rather than a complete history, as well as those "autobiographies" in which the author's intent is to provide an overview of the terrorist organization and/or its ideology rather than an account of his or her life or involvement in terrorism (e.g., Naim Qassem, *The Story from Within*; George Grivas, *General Grivas on Guerilla Warfare*). We further excluded those texts that are not traditional autobiographies in the sense that the majority of the text is clearly written by a co-author or a ghostwriter (e.g., Gerry Bradley & Brian Feeny, *Insider: Gerry Bradley's Life in the IRA*) as well as those in which there are very serious and corroborated doubts about the individual's claimed involvement in terrorism (e.g., Kamal Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*). We also excluded works written by former known terrorists that deny and hence do not discuss their involvement in the terrorist organization (e.g., Gerry Adams, *Before the Dawn*). Finally, there were three autobiographies that met our inclusion criteria, but that we were unable to obtain copies of, despite our best efforts.[5]

Once we identified and obtained copies of the 87 autobiographies that met our inclusion criteria, we devised a questionnaire intended to gather relevant text (i.e., quotations) from the autobiographies for transcription. This questionnaire is comprised of 60 questions and is divided into nine sections that follow the "arc" of the individuals' involvement in the terrorist organization and obtain relevant background information. Each autobiography was read and a questionnaire was completed by at least two, and, in most instances, three coders. In the questionnaire, we asked our coders to pull from the autobiographies and transcribe key text that

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[4] Two individuals in our sample, Michael "Bommi" Baumann and Martin McGartland, wrote two separate autobiographical accounts.
[5] These books were: Abu Daoud, *Palestine: A History of the Resistance Movement by the Sole Survivor*; Fusako Shigenobu, *My Love, My Revolution*; and Shoko Asahara, *Declaring Myself the Christ*.

describes the roles held by the individual, how satisfied he or she was in each role, the reasons for changes between roles, and the reasons for his or her disengagement.

In addition to the questionnaire (intended to gather key text for qualitative analysis), we also devised a codebook consisting of 165 variables, on which we collected data for quantitative analysis. Since the purpose of our study is to investigate the causes of disengagement and the factors associated with the risk of re-engagement, the codebook and resulting dataset are arranged by engagement event rather than by autobiography or individual terrorist. Thus, an individual terrorist may experience multiple engagement (and disengagement and reengagement) events over his or her life course and hold different roles during each of these periods of involvement. For the purpose of quantitative analysis, we coded up to five roles held by the individual during a particular engagement event and the role held at the time of disengagement.

As each book was coded multiple times, the questionnaires and coding sheets were subjected to a reconciliation process. For the questionnaires, this was a relatively straightforward process of creating a "master" or combined questionnaire for each autobiography using all of the relevant quotations from each of the original questionnaires. To rectify discrepancies in the coding sheets, we followed a two-stage process. First, we checked to see if the answer was easily identifiable from the questionnaires. For instance, when one coder cited abuse and another one did not, it was often just the case that one of the coders missed the relevant quotation. Thus, if we had a quotation clearly indicating abuse, we felt comfortable rectifying the coding decision ourselves. In cases in which the reasons for discrepancies in coding were still unclear to us from the questionnaires, we held meetings with the relevant coders to come to an evidence-based consensus as to how the variable should be coded.

Many times, the individuals whose autobiographies we consulted did not have clearly defined roles (e.g., bombmaker, recruiter) within the terrorist organization to which they belonged. Some, for instance, would carry out disparate tasks as assigned by another individual and be simultaneously involved in multiple "roles." For example, Omar Cabezas described his experience with the Sandinista Nationalist Liberation Front in the following manner:

Finding houses for compañeros in the underground, or for meetings, or storing things, or for mail drops; coming up with cars, car repair shops; getting information about who Somoza's informants were, spying on houses of girl friends of the Guard. So I started to work, doing everything they asked me to do and everything I thought needed to be done (1982:13).

Geula Cohen, a former member of the Stern Gang or Lehi, a violent extremist Zionist organization similarly recalled, "During the day I worked with Adam in Operations, carrying out observation assignments, smuggling arms from one place to another, delivering messages to various points outside of the city, all the routine little jobs" (1966:115). Cecilia Bobrovskaya, a former member of the revolutionary cells in Russia, recalled that her lack of a clearly defined set of tasks was closely related to the infancy of the organization and its lack of structure:

The local organization was a well-knit nucleus of revolutionary workers, although it had not yet assumed definite organizational shape and did not even have a definite name. We carried on propaganda in workers circles, executed all the technical duties of printing leaflets, hiding and distributing literature, obtaining headquarters for secret meetings. We organized illegal gatherings at which reports and lectures on political and economic themes were made. We arranged concerts, plays and other lucrative undertakings from which we obtained the funds to run our organization as well as to support strikers or comrades who had been arrested (1934:30).

In other instances, however, the individuals whose accounts we read had clearly defined and specialized roles and often an associated title within a highly structured organization. In the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), for example, Sean O'Callaghan noted he was "Operating Commander of the IRA Southern Command, and a member of the GHQ staff and of the Sinn Fein National Executive" (1998:198). Describing an earlier role held within the PIRA, O'Callaghan explained that his "job was to clean them [guns] and sort ammunition into the correct caliber to suit the guns before the bulk of them was moved to Northern Ireland a few days later" (1998:28)—a fairly specialized task. Recounting his role as an explosives officer, former Provisional IRA member, Shane O'Doherty, provided a description, which gives the impression that he had a very clear sense about what being an explosives officer would and would not entail:

The Brigade Staff was short of an explosives officer at this time, following the arrest and imprisonment of the previous incumbent. It was not the kind of position for which there was a lot of competition, and I was duly elected to it. I was barely nineteen years old and was the youngest member of the Brigade Staff, but a veteran of operations. I was now responsible for any and every explosive device made and used in the Derry Brigade area. I should have a say in the training and

qualification of Battalion and Company explosives' officers, and in the general safety precautions in use by the Brigade not only for its own volunteers, but also for the population at large. I could also instigate particular attacks by coming up with ideas, or I could add my support to the ideas of others. In fact, I could write my own job description. While I was responsible overall for explosives, other members of the staff could direct that certain things should happen and I would have to go along with it. I was not in sole control (2011:121).

The clear delineation of roles, however, was not confined to the IRA. In the Philippines, Luis Turac described how there was a clear hierarchy of roles within the People's Army to Fight the Japanese, "We elected our own military committee, of which I was elected chairman. This was the Party's committee that controlled the general headquarters of Huk. I was made commander in chief of the Huk, with Castro Alejandrino as second in command" (1967:22). Moreover, even within highly structured organizations such as the Provisional IRA, there seemed to be an obscuring of roles when the organization was under pressure. Maria McGuire (now Gatland), a former Provisional IRA member, noted in her account that "under the pressure of events the division between people's roles in Kevin Street [IRA headquarters] was frequently blurred" (1973:135).

Given these distinctions and the fact that organizational, operational, and contextual differences largely determined the specific roles or tasks assigned to individuals or the titles given to the individuals who carried out those roles or tasks, we classified the specific roles held by the individuals in our sample into 15 general categories in an effort to simplify our analysis. Our role categories emerged organically from the specific roles we identified in the 87 autobiographies that we consulted. Given the fact that our autobiographical accounts span a range of terrorist organizations, often motivated by very different ideologies and operating in very different circumstances, we needed to construct a set of categories that would be relevant across a range of terrorist organizations. However, we did not want our role categories to be so general (e.g., the four categories [warriors, dominant forces, spies, and sympathizers] used by Griset & Mahon (2003)) that we lost important nuances between different roles. Our 15 role categories and their inclusion criteria are listed in Table 2. Our categories differ from those put forth in Nesser (2006:11-12) because his study focuses primarily on "jihadi" groups. Moreover, Nesser's (2006) distinctions between entrepreneurs, protégés, misfits, and drifters better distinguishes between

"types" of individuals involved in terrorism, rather than the actual tasks they perform for the terrorist organization, although the two may, at times, be related.

Table 2: General role categories

Role Category	Inclusion Criteria
Executive Leader	Oversee and run the entire terrorist organization; whether they give out orders to lower-level operatives will depend on the structure of the organization;[6] during an organization's early years, the executive leadership is often, but not exclusively, made up of the founders of the organization.
Low-Level Leader	Within a hierarchical organization, includes regional commanders, group (brigade, platoon, etc.) commanders, and individuals in charge of support infrastructure (finance, transport, propaganda, etc.) within the group; within horizontally structured organizations, lower-level leaders are cell leaders.
Violent Operator	Directly involved in the use of violence (e.g., bomber, sniper, foot soldier).
Bomb Maker	Construct bombs.
Operational Planner	Plan the logistical details of violent operations.
Trainer	Train new recruits and existing members for new roles; often includes (but is not exclusive to) training in weapons proficiency and intelligence gathering.
Intelligence Officer	Gather intelligence for the organization: for example, trailing a human target, obtaining floor plans of a building the organization is planning to target, or obtaining information on the movement of the security forces in the area of operation.
Financier	Procure money for the organization; includes everything from conducting fairly open fundraising for the cause to carrying out bank robberies.
Recruiter	Work to bring new members into the organization; includes pro-actively identifying and persuading new members to join and manning known recruitment posts to assess and process individuals volunteering to join the organization.
Security Officer	Provide security for key members, normally either the executive or lower-level leadership, of the organization.
Materials Acquisition/Storage Coordinator	Obtain and/or store materials (often, but not exclusively, weapons or components for weapons).
Transporter/Courier	Transport people, goods, or information for the organization.
Publicity Officer	Disseminate the ideology or platform/programme of the organization to the wider public.
Political Officer	Work for the political wing of the organization; includes participation in negotiations with the government, standing for and being elected to political office, and campaigning.
General Member (not otherwise specified)	Other members without clearly defined roles; also includes those who hold administrative or general support positions.

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[6] In terrorist organizations with horizontal structures, individual cells may have a lot of freedom to plan and carry out their own attacks.

Initial role selection, role progression, and role satisfaction

Of the 85 terrorists whose autobiographies we consulted, 15% began their involvement as general members in the organization, not holding a specific operational role (Table 3). Somewhat surprisingly, however, the next most frequent initial role held by the terrorists represented in our data was violent operator, which characterized 13% or 11 of the 85 individuals in our sample. Also surprising is the frequency with which the individuals represented in our sample began their initial involvement in terrorism in a high-ranking leadership role. Nine percent or eight of the 85 individuals began as a member of the terrorist organization's executive leadership. However, nearly all of these individuals helped establish the organizations that they then led. Individuals were also likely to be involved in disseminating propaganda (9%) and the political side of the terrorist movement (8%).[7]

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[7] These statistics and those that follow are based on our unique sample of autobiographies written by terrorists and former terrorists and should not be viewed as generalizable to the population of terrorists at large. There may be key differences between those individuals involved or formerly involved in terrorism who choose to recount their experiences in an autobiography and those who choose to remain silent (Altier, Horgan, and Thoroughgood, 2012a), and these differences could include or relate to differences in the roles that they held while involved. Moreover, the data that we have collected may provide an incomplete picture of the roles held by individuals in terrorist organizations and their progression through certain roles as individuals may not have discussed certain roles that they held or the key aspects of those roles in their autobiographical accounts. The omission may be deliberate, for instance, to protect the security of a still-active terrorist organization or certain individuals within that organization, or it may be inadvertent because, for instance, one or one's editor found the discussion of the role unimportant or uninteresting. Further, it is often unclear in certain autobiographical accounts the exact or even rough time frame in which individuals held a particular role. Despite these shortcomings, we believe that the information contained in these autobiographical accounts, particularly the qualitative text, offers a valuable lens into the terrorist mindset and the inner workings of terrorist organizations, including the roles that individuals hold and how they may relate to their experiences while involved, that should not be discounted (Altier et al., 2012a). Due to the fact that terrorism is, by its very nature, a clandestine activity, random sampling and surveying of the terrorist population and other traditional methodological techniques often prove impossible. As such, these autobiographical accounts provide a rich source of information on a large sample of individuals involved in terrorism that may lend greater insight into the roles that individuals hold within terrorist organizations and how these roles might relate to terrorist disengagement, especially when triangulated with other sources such as in-person interviews.

Table 3: General role held at first engagement event (n=85)

Role Held	Total Number/Percentage
General Member	13/ 15.3%
Violent Operator	11/ 12.9%
Executive Leader	8/ 9.4%
Publicity Officer	8/ 9.4%
Political Officer	7/ 8.2%
Low-Level Leader	6/ 7.1%
Intelligence Officer	5/ 5.9%
Recruiter	5/ 5.9%
Trainer	5/ 5.9%
Transporter/Courier	5/ 5.9%
Financier	4/ 4.7%
Security Officer	4/ 4.7%
Materials Acquisitions/Storage Coordinator	2/ 2.4%
Operational Planner	1/ 1.2%
Not in Text	1/ 1.2%
Bomb Maker	0/ 0.0%
Total	85/ 100.0%

Having considered what kinds of roles individuals hold when they initially enter a terrorist organization, we also are interested in asking what is the process by which an individual comes to hold a certain role in a terrorist organization? How much autonomy do individuals have in deciding the initial and future role(s) that they will play in the organization, and how might this relate to their overall level of satisfaction within the group? A systematic review of our qualitative data suggests that roles within terrorist organizations are largely assigned or

appointed.[8] Individuals across a range of terrorist organizations reported being told what their duties or specific role would be. Leila Khaled, for instance, a former member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, recollected that she "was assigned to go to Schular camp near Zarqa, to give public lectures," was later "ordered to go and give another public lecture at Jabel Al-Taj school," and then, "Dr. Habash ordered us to prepare petrol bombs to use against Hussein's soldiers" (1975:173-175). Temba Moyo, a former member of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), similarly mentioned how he was given his role, "Later that day, I visited the ZAPU office and was told that I had been appointed Regional Revenue Officer—if I wanted the job" (1974:66). A member of the Italian Red Brigades, who goes by the alias Giorgio, commented, "But the 'work' itself was grueling. I had been assigned, and it had not been my choice, to the 'manufacturing sector' (2003:94)."

There is, however, some indication in the data that we have collected that once individuals hold a high-ranking leadership position in the terrorist organization, they have more discretion over their tasks and what their role(s) will entail. For example, the language that Abu Iyad, a former member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and Fatah, used in describing his duties after being appointed to the organization's leadership is slightly different, suggesting that he had more of a role in deciding his tasks, "We took advantage of the intervening few days to launch a fund-raising drive through the 'popular committees' set up by our representatives in the early sixties . . .We created a counterespionage service . . . (1981:54-56)." However, even when in a leadership role, Iyad was still assigned to certain duties by his superiors. On noting the leadership's decision to create an underground organization in Jordan, for instance, Iyad noted that he was "designated as the head of the organization" (1981:95).

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[8] For a complete review of how the qualitative data for this project were collected, please see Altier et al. (2013). For the purposes of this analysis, we collected key text from the autobiographies on three questions: 1) *What positions or roles did the individual hold within the terrorist organization or its affiliates?* 2) *Was the individual satisfied (happy) with his/her position(s) or role(s) within the organization and the day-to-day tasks that each entailed?* and 3) *Did the individual change positions or roles within the organization? If so, please include information as to when and why these changes occurred.* In order to ease comparison, this document was organized by types of group (right-wing, religious, nationalist, etc.) and then by group. The individual members were then organized alphabetically.

If roles are commonly assigned and there is a progression through certain roles of increasing responsibility or prestige within terrorist organizations or within certain terrorist organizations, then the role that an individual holds may be an indication of how the group's leaders and possibly other members view the individual. Indeed, in discussing the roles to which they were appointed, many of the individuals whose autobiographical accounts we read suggested their role was a reflection of how the leadership viewed them and their performance within the organization. Mohamed Mathu, a former member of the Mau Mau, for instance, wrote, "Wambugu asked me if I wanted to be Secretary for the Muhito Location Committee. He had recommended me for the job because of the good work I was doing for the Organization and I could begin immediately. I was pleased to hear this and gladly accepted" (1974:19). J. Kiboi Muriithi, another former member of the Mau Mau, similarly explained, "It was then that I won my first promotion. In recognition of my boldness the Major decided that I was to lead back to Gachuiro" (1971:19). Omar Cabezas, a former member of the Sandinista Liberation Front, mentioned in his account, "Since they assigned me to Waslala alone, it was the first show of confidence in me on the part of the compañeros. Waslala was one of the principal zones, the site of the main headquarters of the Guard's counterinsurgency" (1982:96-97). By contrast, Patrizio Peci, a former member of the Red Brigades, noted that his role indicated his low status within the organization, "I was assigned to the logistics brigade, which is the lowest echelon, but I knew that for one who was willing, it was possible to advance quickly" (1985:33).

The fact that an individual in a terrorist organization may have very little say in the role that he or she holds, at least initially, may have important implications for his or her level of satisfaction in the group and likelihood of exit, despite, for instance, a strong commitment to the group's ideology. Abdul Zalam Saeef, a former member of the Taliban, for instance, mentioned dissatisfaction in his initial roles, "I came to Afghanistan to take part in jihad, but found myself carrying out mundane tasks for other people" (2010:22). Shane Paul O'Doherty similarly noted being bored with his initial role in the Provisional IRA:

> But oh, the boredom of being a new IRA volunteer in 1970! It was excruciating … Because I had joined with two lads from the largely Protestant Waterside area across the river Foyle, I was firstly attached to a "section" there where the entire emphasis was on defense. There were the endless "parades" in our Section Leader's house, where we did little but learn to respond to march commands given in Irish and where we stood at

attention, turned on the spot and stood at ease … Eventually I was told I was to be transferred (2011:48-49).

Interestingly, O'Doherty continually expressed his desire to work in explosives within the Provisional IRA and eventually independently carried out a successful bombing that was unsanctioned by the IRA. He noted that the success of this event caused the organization to:

> Take me seriously when I again asked to specialize in explosives, and they promised to arrange for me to meet and work with the best man they had in the field. I had been catapulted into a minor prominence a year or two before I might otherwise have earned it, and it gave rise to another opportunity almost immediately (2011:53-54).

A former member of the African National Congress (ANC), Ben Turok, expressed dissatisfaction in his early role as a politician, not due to boredom, but due to the poor mismatch between his skills and personality (i.e., role strain) and his inability to carry out the role fully due to competing demands (i.e., role conflict):

> All this casework held some interest and gave satisfaction, but the chamber itself brought nothing but torture. Although reasonably experienced as a public speaker as a result of the Congress meetings, I had little gift for the debating style required in the chamber. Furthermore, I had an intense dislike of the formality required and, indeed, I refused to use the word 'honourable' in referring to members of the House … My job was not to persuade the House, but rather to reach the press, which had been permanently installed above the Speaker's chair, and so I directed my speeches to them. But it led to sleepless nights in anticipation and I am not sure that I succeeded very well. For one thing, being absorbed in the Treason Trial and remote from Cape Town, it was difficult to do the necessary research on the local issues dealt with in the council. Also, I had no time to familiarize myself with the complex parliamentary procedure … I had some satisfaction at the end of it all when I made my final speech in 1960, after five years of serving in the council, to find that *Die Burger* wrote it up at length, saying that I was a man who would make a mark in the future (2003:70-73).

Additionally, over time, individuals may experience conflict between the multiple roles that they hold both within and outside of the organization, which can lead to dissatisfaction and possibly exit. Sean MacStiofain, a former member of the Provisional IRA, explained in his autobiographical account how a conflict between his terrorist role and his familial obligations led him to leave the movement for a period of time:

> In August 1961 it was necessary for me to obtain a few months leave from the IRA. My family and I hadn't recovered financially from the effects of my almost six years of imprisonment, and we were seriously handicapped by the high rent

we were paying for a furnished house, the only accommodation available when we moved to Cork … I realised I would have to make a big effort to put my personal affairs straight once and for all. Then I would be in a position to resume my service with the movement without unduly neglecting my family responsibilities (1975:90-91).

Others, however, reported being satisfied in their initial roles. Raymond Gilmour, a former member of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) and a police informant explained how he was well-suited for a non-violent role, "As a junior member my INLA jobs were mostly menial duties, picking up guns and ammunition for the real hard men who were going to do the actual shooting. This suited me very well, however, for I'd not wish to point a gun at anyone" (1999: 85). Omar Nasiri, a former member of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA, Algeria), commented on his gunrunning, "I knew what I was doing, and it didn't bother me. For me this was business. I was making good money, and the work was exciting. Of course, I knew where all these weapons were going" (2006:36).

Further, it is possible that a recruit might be initially satisfied, even excited, in his or her assigned role and then become dissatisfied as the day-to-day reality of involvement fails to live up to his or her expectations about what involvement in that particular role would entail. Describing his initial excitement to his assignment as a sniper in the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Tass Saada, for instance, wrote:

> More than in weaponry, however, I needed training on the mental aspects of sniping. They taught me how to sit or lie absolutely still for hours on end. In fact, some of the exercises went on for three or four days, around the clock ... That was my introduction to the Simonov, which has been specifically designed for assassinations from a distance. It had a silencer to reduce the noise of the shot and to limit the muzzle flash. I became eager to master this weapon and learn what it took to be a sniper (2008:34).

Soon, however, Saada grew disillusioned in his role as a sniper. He became increasingly bored and even began questioning his use of violence. He explained: "Looking through the telescopic sight, I watched village people come and go. The hours dragged on. Why am I doing this? Why should I erase this life? I asked" (2008:35).

Roles and Disengagement

These accounts, when considered through the lens of our theoretical models, suggest that

how easily individuals can choose and change their roles in a terrorist organization may have important implications for our understanding of terrorist disengagement. This is especially true as it pertains to the likelihood that individuals will experience role-related dissatisfaction, which is arguably more likely to occur if they are assigned to a role that they are not well suited for and have few opportunities to move into a different, more satisfying role. Individuals who are experiencing role-related dissatisfaction as a result of role strain or role conflict and who can mitigate that dissatisfaction by taking on a new role that better suits their skill sets and personalities or their competing roles, as, for instance, a father or worker, may be able to remedy growing role-related dissatisfaction and preempt a possible disengagement. Individuals, however, who are forced to remain in a role despite growing dissatisfaction may decide to disengage given sufficiently good alternatives outside of the organization and sufficiently low sunk costs.

Two examples of individuals who recounted role-related dissatisfaction in their autobiographies are illustrative. The first is Ahmed Kathrada, a former member of the ANC and the ANC's militant wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). Kathrada explained his decision to leave the MK and assume a more political role in the terrorist movement in the following manner:

> The facts are just the opposite. Not only was I among the MK's earliest recruits, I also served on the regional command that identified potential targets even before the official launch of the armed wing on 16 December 1961. Furthermore, I was a member of a unit that carried out modest acts of sabotage with the dual purpose of assessing the targets and testing the efficacy of our equipment. At no time did I object in principle to the decision to move to an armed struggle, and I have never harboured the slightest regret about MK's formation. I did, however, terminate membership of the regional command during the first half of 1962, after discussing certain reservations with some of my senior comrades. Not all men are born to be soldiers, and I realized at a fairly early stage that my aptitude lay in the political rather than the military field. My view was in no way at odds with the policy of either the ANC or the South African Indian Congress. Indeed, at the joint meeting where they agreed to form MK, it was explicitly spelt out that this should not be at the expense of our political work. But there were two incidents that strengthened my reservations about being an active member of MK (2005: 141-142).

Kathrada's account indicates that he did not have a fundamental disagreement with the use of violence by the MK, but rather that a violent role was not suited to his personality or abilities—a factor that could potentially produce role strain and role-related dissatisfaction with his

involvement in the terrorist movement. Moreover, Kathrada expressed his desire to change roles to the leadership and the leadership subsequently allowed him to change roles. This role change, in turn, mitigated the role-related dissatisfaction Kathrada was experiencing at the time, thereby reducing the potential for disengagement (although we can never know for certain whether the level of dissatisfaction he was experiencing would have been sufficient to cause him to leave the ANC if he had to maintain his role in the MK).

The second case is that of Aukai Collins, an American who decided to join Al Qaeda to participate in the "jihad" and grew increasingly disillusioned as a result of the menial, behind the scenes roles that he was assigned in the organization. Collins recounts how he expressed his growing disillusionment with his assigned tasks to the group's leadership, who did not take measures to mitigate his role-related dissatisfaction. As a result, Collins decided to leave the group:

> I talked with Umar about the situation over the next few days. We'd benefitted from the camp, but I wanted to call it quits if I had to sit around and wait instead of making jihad somewhere … I wanted to make jihad on the front lines ... One day everything came to a boil. Umar and I sat down with the commanders and had a very candid discussion. I told them that I didn't care for the way they were treating me and that I hadn't come all the way from America to sit and watch other mujahideen train and fight in Tajikistan. I tried to get a straight answer out of them about when they would send me to fight in Tajikistan … They didn't conceal their anger either and told me to hit the road if I didn't like the way things were going … getting past the NWFP tribal police [border checkpoint guards] with Harakat-ul Jihad's blessings had been dangerous and difficult. If they washed their hands of me and I left now—friendless, penniless, and foreign— getting out of Afghanistan alive would be next to impossible. I should have apologized to the commanders and continued to stick it out in camp, but I was young and hotheaded and told them good-bye (2002:36-37).

The degree of autonomy that one has in deciding or altering his or her role in a terrorist organization is, of course, likely to depend heavily on the norms of the individual organization, the degree of prestige the individual holds within the organization, and the stated reasons and rationale for the role change. It is unclear whether organizational norms and/or differences in how these individuals were perceived within their respective groups influenced the leadership's willingness to facilitate their movement to a more desirable role, thereby minimizing role strain and role-related dissatisfaction. What is clear, however, from these and other accounts is that the likelihood of disengagement may be influenced by: i) whether terrorist organizations allow for

the expression of role-related dissatisfaction and ii) the extent to which they seek to minimize role strain and role conflict by placing individuals in roles suited to their abilities and complementary to competing roles that they might hold.

Indeed, in 23% of the 49 cases of individual, voluntary disengagement from terrorism in our sample, the individual cited disillusionment with his or her day-to-day tasks as playing a large role in explaining his or her desire to exit. In an additional 20% of cases, disillusionment with one's day-to-day tasks played a small role. Although we can never be certain, it seems highly plausible that at least some of these individuals may have remained committed to the group if they could have held a different role within the organization.

It is important to reiterate that individuals may experience role conflict or role strain and remain in the terrorist organization because of the rewards or satisfaction they derive from other aspects of their membership or because they have invested heavily in the organization or possess few alternatives outside of the group. Cecilia Bobrovskaya, a former member of the revolutionary cells in Russia, for example, discussed how she was experiencing a conflict between her role as a terrorist and her role as a midwife. Due to her increasing involvement in the terrorist organization, she had little time for employment outside the group and, as such, could often not afford food. Yet, she greatly enjoyed her work in the organization, which was enough to offset the effects of hunger. Bobrovskaya explained, "During those times of intense hunger I would be in utter despair. I would rather die than give up Party work and daily intercourse with the comrades; yet if I looked for employment it would mean that I would have to give up my Party work and become occupied with something that I neither knew nor liked. I hated midwifery" (2010:30-31).

Just as satisfaction in other areas can mitigate the effects of role conflict and role strain on one's decision to exit, so too can satisfaction in one's role offset the effects of growing dissatisfaction in other areas on one's decision to leave. Eamon Collins, a former member of the Provisional IRA, for example, described how the pride he obtained from his role in the IRA helped counteract the doubts that he was experiencing about the organization's ideology, thereby deterring his exit, at least for period of time. Collins wrote:

My promotion to the security unit had given me an initial glow of satisfaction. I tried to allow the swelling of my ego to overshadow the horror of what I was involved in. My 'promotion' became a crutch to support myself in the collapse of my belief in the armed struggle. But so advanced was the process of mental deterioration that I could no longer quite believe my own desperate attempt at self-deception. I knew I was staring at my own defeat. Yet my vanity gave me the strength to continue acting out for a little while longer a role that was no longer mine (1997:233).

Roles, sunk costs, and the quality of available alternatives

Just as one's role may influence his or her level of satisfaction in the movement and, if Rusbult's investment model is correct, level of commitment to the organization, it is also possible that certain roles may be associated with higher investments (or sunk costs) in the organization and limited alternatives outside of the group and thus, the likelihood of exit. Although not commonly discussed in the autobiographical accounts that we read, T.J. Leyden, a former Neo-Nazi skinhead, noted that he considered his role and what part it would play in his ability to leave the movement, "Since Skins don't take kindly to people who just get in their way, I couldn't imagine how they would feel against anyone in power who broke the oath and left the movement. I remember thinking, 'Don't bother trying to get out or you'll get seriously messed up'" (2008:104). For T.J., his high-ranking role meant that any alternative to involvement would entail the threat of continual persecution and reprisal by the group, thereby seriously limiting the quality of lifestyles outside of the organization available to him.

Based on an initial round of interviews we have conducted with former terrorists, there is also tentative evidence to support a relationship between one's role within a terrorist organization, sunk costs incurred, and the quality of alternatives outside of the organization. T.J. Leyden's consideration of his role in leaving, for instance, is corroborated in interviews we conducted with two other former Neo-Nazis. These individuals mentioned that it was much easier for those "less involved" in the group or on the periphery to leave without facing retribution by the group.[9] Another individual we interviewed, who formerly operated as a bomber in a terrorist organization, noted that his role shaped his ability to leave the group in two ways. First, because he had served in a direct operational role, the possible alternatives to membership were limited. The potential existence of forensic evidence linking him to the attacks he had carried out, he

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[9] Interviews conducted on 10/2/12 and 11/16/12.

concluded, meant that it would be very difficult for him to start a conventional lifestyle (e.g., find a job, operate in the open) that would not result in his imprisonment. Those members of the terrorist organization who had not carried out operations, he explained, even commanders who had ordered operations, had a much easier time leaving because they had more alternatives outside of the group—they could pursue a conventional life without constantly fearing prosecution and conviction. He elaborated:

> It was possible for very, very prominent people to work their way out, you know, but you see it was easier if they were more involved in the command structure and hadn't been in the physical jobs front … like they hadn't been in the actual operations. They might have ordered the operations where they were more morally and legally responsible than the young person they sent out to do the job, but for somebody like me who was the front-line [terrorist], who made, planted or carried the [explosive] … For me the options to get out without necessarily going over to the enemy, you were kind of constrained by that.[10]

Second, this individual explained that the deep investments he had made in the organization made it more difficult to leave because they signaled to the leadership his commitment to the group and the cause and his capacity to continue in his terrorist role. He mentioned:

> You see I wouldn't have been in the category of somebody who needed to leave. Here they'd be looking at somebody who was quite active, fully gritty, and determined, and they definitely would have been ... it would've been quite difficult to pop your head above the part and say I have a fundamental disagreement with the aims and philosophy and ideology of the organization ... There were no rules or rubrics for how people were going to be facilitated in that area [i.e., leaving the terrorist organization because they no longer agreed with its underlying ideology].[11]

Interviews are proving a useful tool for accessing these more nuanced relationships because we can engage in a series of detailed and targeted questions to explore the relationships at hand. Many individuals who write their autobiographical accounts tend to be primarily concerned with telling an interesting story or conveying a message in a structured way. The interview context allows for participants to reflect on their experiences and explore their meanings in a more detailed manner.

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[10] Interview conducted on 9/11/12.

[11] Ibid.

Roles and the likely presence of push/pull factors

Table 4 lists the roles that the individuals in our sample held at the time of their individual, voluntary disengagement from terrorism. Although individuals seemed to occupy a range of roles at the time of their departure, it is impossible to draw any other inferences from these statistics given the potential selection issues with using autobiographical accounts as well as the fact that we have little knowledge of what proportion of individuals engaged in terrorism occupy each of these role categories. Thus, we can say very little concerning whether individuals who occupy certain roles in a terrorist organization are more likely to disengage.

Table 4: Role held at time of individual, voluntary disengagement (n=49)

Role Held	Total Number/Percentage
General Member	17/ 34.7%
Violent Operator	6/ 12.2%
Executive Leader	5/ 10.2%
Publicity Officer	1/ 2.0%
Political Officer	0/ 0.0%
Low-Level Leader	2/ 4.1%
Intelligence Officer	2/ 4.1%
Recruiter	3/ 6.1%
Trainer	2/ 4.1%
Transporter/Courier	3/ 6.1%
Financier	2/ 4.1%
Security Officer	0/ 0.0%
Materials Acquisition/Storage Coordinator	5/ 10.2%
Operational Planner	0/ 0.0%
Bomb Maker	0/ 0.0%
Not Reporting	1/ 2.0%
Total	49/ 100.0%

Still, it may be the case that individuals in certain roles are more likely to experience the presence of certain push/pull factors hypothesized to be associated with disengagement. Our autobiographical accounts, for example, suggest that those in violent roles or who play a key part in violent operations (e.g., getaway drivers) may be more likely to experience difficulty coping (psychologically or physiologically) with attacks and burnout. Thirty-three percent (2 out of 6) of individuals in our sample who voluntarily disengaged on their own accord and who acted as violent operators at the time of their disengagement experienced physiological distress (e.g., vomiting, difficulty sleeping) as a result of their role in attacks. The same was true for 20 percent (1 out of 5) of leaders and 20% of those in materials acquisition (1 out of 5). Just 6 percent (1 out of 17) of those in a general member role experienced physiological distress, and no one working in recruitment, finance, training, transport, intelligence, propaganda, or as a low-level leader reported physiological distress as a result of their role in attacks. With regard to experiencing psychological distress as a result of their role in attacks, the rate was highest among leaders at 40% (2 out of 5), followed by individuals involved as violent operators (33%, 2 out of 6), and in transport (33%, 1 out of 3). No individuals involved in finance, intelligence, propaganda, recruitment, training, or as a low-level leader at the time of their individual, voluntary disengagement reported psychological distress as a result of their role in attacks. Eighteen percent (3 out of 17) of general members reported such distress. Finally, individuals involved in an executive leadership role (60%, 3 out of 5), training (50%, 1 out of 2), or as a violent operator (50%, 3 out of 6) were more likely to report experiencing severe burnout during their engagement. Not one individual in our sample involved in finance, propaganda, intelligence, recruitment, transport, or as a low-level leader reported experiencing severe burnout. The rate of severe burnout among those who were general members at the time of their disengagement was 12% or 2 out of 17.

The above figures are based on a small and potentially biased non-random sample of individuals, and the results above may not necessarily reflect trends in the larger population of terrorists. However, an analysis of the qualitative data we have collected confirms the general finding that the more proximate individuals are to violence, the more likely they are to have difficulty coping with attacks. Tass Saada, a former member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, described the toll that his key role in certain attacks took:

Back in camp, I realized with surprise how mentally exhausted I was. Killing someone is neither easy nor insignificant. You think right away about what you've done. Especially if you planned the act ahead of time. It's different being in hot battle: there, you kill on instinct to avoid getting killed yourself in the next two seconds. But when you've laid an ambush and deliberately set a trap to destroy another human being, it takes its toll (2008:36).

Martin McGartland, who merely drove a car as part of a Provisional IRA operation, similarly recollected how his key role in the attack weighed on him, "I stood there listening to this sickening tale of cold-blooded murder, my mind racing, my body shaking, a terrible empty feeling in the pit of my stomach for, in that PIRA operation, I had been the driver of the getaway car" (1999:104).

By contrast, Eamon Collins, another former PIRA member, had little difficulty coping with the *effects* of carrying out attacks. Referring to his role, he mentioned, "Yet I was satisfied: satisfied that I had acted as an IRA man, as a volunteer, and I was prepared to move on to the next operation, the next hi [sic], the next kill – for that was what it was all about" (1997: 28). Instead, Collins seemed to experience burnout as a result of the careful planning that such attacks required. He explained:

It was always like this: I would try to get on with the normal things of life but I would spend my time continually thinking about violent operations. Going for a drink, playing with the kids, visiting the relatives, preparing Sunday lunch, going for a drive in the country, reading the newspapers – I liked to do all these normal things which ordinary people did, but the enjoyment of such normality was impossible. I could pretend, but I could never be relaxed or absorbed by normal activities, because thoughts of the IRA were always at the front of my mind, nagging me, putting me on edge, torturing me with images of what might go wrong. No sooner had one operation passed, then I would move on to the next one and the next one. Usually, I would have several on the go at the same time …" (1997:157).

Collins further suggested that his role not only caused burnout, but that it also socially isolated him from other individuals:

I had come to ditch almost everything and everybody not connected in some way to the IRA. It had become my whole life and I was beginning to ask myself what sort of life I had. I went through the motions of enjoying myself, but how could I live happily when I spent most of my time in the company of people whose business was death? And I was one of them. Always looking for people to kill, finding people to do the killing, constantly exposing myself to danger, more and

more danger. There was no respite. Yet I lived life with a weird intensity. I felt myself to be part of a large family whose members had powerful emotional links to each other. The idea of turning my back on the IRA had become as repugnant to me as turning my back on my own children … I had become addicted to the struggle: operations became my fix. But I often asked myself: when will my final fix arrive? The one that will kill me, put me in prison, or break me? (1997:157-158)

In addition to those in violent roles being more likely to experience difficulty coping with attacks and role-related burnout, our autobiographical accounts also indicate that those individuals forced to live underground due to their role in the organization may be more likely to experience difficulty adapting to the clandestine lifestyle, role-related burnout, and difficulty balancing their terrorist and familial roles. Jane Alpert, a former member of the Weather Underground, recalled:

The longing to be done with my underground life grew in me steadily … I went back to Pittsfield that night in a state of numb despair. My eyes burned but would not shed tears. My throat was tight, but the scream wouldn't come. I didn't know how much I had wanted to put this life of aliases and furnished rooms and meeting my friends and family in motels behind me until now ... I wanted a real life, in my own name, with my own history and with some sort of work more meaningful than keeping school files in order. And I wanted sexual intimacy again, and, yes even marriage and children—if that wasn't too much stability to hope for (1981:351-355).

Mark Rudd, another former member of the Weather Underground, similarly noted:

I ascribed my problems to my own failings: I wasn't brave enough or committed enough to the revolution, so I couldn't adjust to life as a fugitive ... Much of the talk played up the heroism of being a Weatherman, which I felt was a self-distortion of reality. Life underground was mostly insanely boring, the low-grade daily anxiety more like a dull ache than what one sees in a TV adventure movie" (2009:231, 274-275).

Ben Turok, a former member of the ANC and the ANC's militant wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), on the other hand, discussed the pressure that being underground would put on his family, particularly his wife, Mary. Turok explained:

However, I felt that we ought to have kept some elements of the underground in preparation for the clashes to come. It seemed that some took the suggestion seriously and Ivan Schermbrucker told Mary that it had been decided that I should stay underground. She wept bitterly, saying that she couldn't stand it. It seems that this changed people's minds and I was allowed to go home (2003:119-120).

Importantly, Turok averted experiencing the competing demands of being underground and being with his family by being allowed to come out of hiding. However, his account indicates that terrorists whose role(s) require them to remain underground may confront additional challenges in balancing their familial and organizational obligations.

These and related examples indicate that individuals in certain roles within a terrorist movement may be more likely to experience certain push/pull factors for disengagement. Other factors (e.g., loss of faith in the ideology, disillusionment with the strategy or actions of the terrorist group) seem to be less specific to one's role. Certainly, more empirical evidence is required to support these claims, and we can continue to test such claims through, for instance, detailed interviewing. Scholars and counter-terrorism practitioners alike, however, should be aware of the fact that a person's role in a terrorist group may heavily influence (if not determine) the likelihood of that person experiencing a push or a pull toward disengagement. The question of whether there are systematic differences by role in how individuals respond to the presence of certain push/pull factors hypothesized to be associated with disengagement brings us back to the question of whether individuals in certain roles incur more sunk costs or possess fewer alternatives outside of the group. If they do, as our early data suggest, then the presence of push/pull factors is likely to have a diminished effect on the likelihood of exit for these individuals as the barriers to leaving become systematically higher.

III. Conclusion

Our consideration of the roles that individuals hold within terrorist organizations suggests that the role that one holds may influence his or her likelihood of disengagement in three ways. First, certain roles are more likely to produce role conflict and role strain, and thus, dissatisfaction regarding one's involvement in the terrorist organization, for certain individuals. Whether a certain role is likely to result in conflict or strain and produce dissatisfaction is contingent upon the competing roles held by the individual and his or her unique attributes (e.g., knowledge, skills, personality). Second, certain roles in a terrorist organization are likely to require more investments in the group and to be associated with fewer alternatives outside of the group, which increases the barriers to exit, making disengagement less likely. Finally, individuals in certain

roles in a terrorist group may be more likely to experience certain push/pull factors hypothesized to be associated with disengagement. While the experience of these push/pull factors may increase the likelihood of disengagement, generally speaking, it is important to note that their presence is not sufficient to cause disengagement, which is likely to be a complex function of the satisfaction that individuals derive from other aspects of their involvement (e.g., following the ideology, social bonds), the sunk costs they have incurred, and the quality of alternatives outside of the group.

Future research should focus on collecting additional and better data to explore and test the claims outlined here more fully. However, the preliminary evidence we have presented from the autobiographical accounts we consulted suggests that greater attention to the roles that individuals occupy within a terrorist organization can lend important insights into the likelihood that they will disengage, the potential barriers to disengagement, and the potential interventions that may prompt their exit.

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