Conceptions of Terror(ism) and the “Other” During the Early Years of the Red Army Faction

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CONCEPTIONS OF TERROR(ISM) AND THE “OTHER”
DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE RED ARMY FACTION

by

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B.A. University of Montana, 2007
B.S. University of Montana, 2007

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This thesis entitled:
Conceptions of Terror(ism) and the “Other” During the Early Years of the Red Army Faction
written by Alice Katherine Gates
has been approved for the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Although terrorism has existed for centuries, it continues to be extremely difficult to establish a comprehensive, cohesive definition – it is a monumental task that scholars, governments, and international organizations have yet to achieve. Integral to this concept is the variable and highly subjective distinction made by various parties between “good” and “evil,” “right” and “wrong,” “us” and “them.” This thesis examines these concepts as they relate to the actions and manifestos of the Red Army Faction (*die Rote Armee Fraktion*) in 1970s Germany, and seeks to understand how its members became regarded as terrorists. While their writings called for an organized, armed resistance, and promoted a rational, systematic uprising, their actions directly contradicted this, and caused excessive, unnecessary death and destruction. Whatever their initial intentions, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Horst Mahler created an alliance that rapidly evolved from a group of disillusioned radicals into a terrorist organization.
This work is dedicated to my mother, whose endless support and impeccable grammar skills proved invaluable to my success; to my father, for his words of encouragement throughout this process; and to Sam, my favorite sibling and finest friend.
I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my faculty mentor and thesis advisor, Dr. Helmut Müller-Sievers, and to my thesis committee members, Dr. Patrick Greaney and Dr. Beverly Weber. Their support, guidance, and good humor were essential to the composition of this work. Additionally, their graduate seminars provided me with an interesting and challenging learning environment in which to further my education. I would also like to acknowledge the faculty of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures for the opportunity to be a part of the German Studies graduate program.
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I. Introduction

“You cannot separate the just from the unjust and the good from the wicked; For they stand together before the face of the sun even as the black thread and the white are woven together. And when the black thread breaks, the weaver shall look into the whole cloth, and he shall examine the loom also.”

- Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*

On June 2, 1968, the Shah of Persia, Reza Pahlavi, and his wife arrived for a visit in Berlin, Germany. Their itinerary included greeting supporters at the airport, a trip to Schöneberg City Hall, and watching an evening opera performance. In preparation, the German government implemented numerous safety precautions and preventative measures, including roadblocks and the placement of barricades and extra policemen near the Shah’s scheduled stops. Upon their arrival at City Hall, the Shah and his wife encountered several demonstrators who shouted at them from behind the blockades and tossed paint-filled bags in their general direction. The royal visitors were unharmed, yet the Iranian secret service exploited the situation, approaching the protesters and swinging their wooden clubs down upon them forcefully. No fatalities or life-threatening injuries were sustained, but during the attack, the German police stood silently and passively observed as civilians were beaten and bloodied (Aust 49-50).

Word spread about what had transpired that afternoon, and in the evening, a large group of angry protesters stationed themselves in front of the opera house. Once again, they were extremely vocal in their disapproval, and used tomatoes, paint, and flour to back up their words; however, the Shah and his wife remained unharmed and quickly entered the opera house. Shortly thereafter, two unexpected events occurred in quick succession: A group of ambulances arrived on scene and parked nearby, and German police officers suddenly advanced on the protesters,
attacking them without provocation or warning. In the chaos and bloodshed that followed, many civilians – male and female, young and old – were severely beaten or otherwise injured, but the greatest casualty was the fatal shooting of an unarmed student protester named Benno Ohnesorg. The man responsible for the shooting, Detective Sergeant Karl-Heinz Kurras, was not wearing a uniform and shot Ohnesorg at close range in the head (Aust 51-52). Witnesses “were profoundly shocked. Many later identified that moment as a moment of internal radicalization, a moment when violence suddenly became real and possible” (Colvin 109). Detective Kurras later claimed he panicked and accidentally fired his gun, and was eventually acquitted of all charges (Klimke 170). Nonetheless, the damage had been done – twice in one day, government-affiliated officials had subjected German civilians to unbelievable and terrifying actions.

According to Nick Thomas, in 1960s Germany, the Springer group “represented the largest single publishing house for newspapers and magazines in Germany, easily dwarfing its nearest rivals in sales, financial might, resources and above all in the size and variety of its readership, whether in terms of age, social background, geographical location or even personal interests” (166). In terms of its political and social stances, the “Springer empire was informed by a particularly uncompromising brand of anti-Communism” and maintained an “underlying anti-protester ethos [which was] shared with large sections of public opinion” (167). Due to its widespread presence in the market, large portions of the German population were exposed to, and undoubtedly persuaded by, the beliefs and perspectives presented by this media giant.

One particular reader’s construal of the Springer group’s statements surpassed the extreme. On April 11, 1968, Josef Bachmann, a house painter in his mid-twenties who maintained a “pathological hatred of communists,” traveled from Munich to Berlin in search of
Rudi Dutschke, a well-known student protester (Thomas 168). Dutschke was “the main theorist and most easily recognizable public face of the anti-authoritarian revolt, he was consistently in the thick of provocative events… and he regularly made comments that dared to criticize the Bundesrepublik, [which], to Springer, sounded dangerously like communism” (Thomas 167). Bachmann eventually encountered him on the street near the headquarters of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, a student activist group of which Dutschke was a known member. Bachmann called out Dutschke’s name to confirm his identity before taking out his pistol and firing three times. Each bullet hit its mark, striking Dutschke in the head, neck, and chest. Although Bachmann fled immediately, he stopped to hide close by and was eventually apprehended by police after resisting arrest and firing at them (Thomas 168-69). Dutschke was taken to the hospital for surgery and survived the shooting; however, his death twelve years later was directly related to the injuries he sustained during the attack (Colvin 10).

Prior to this, the Springer group had been particularly outspoken regarding its opposition to leftist protests in many of its publications, including the Deutsche National-Zeitung and the Bild-Zeitung. In the days after the shooting, it became public knowledge that Bachmann “was a Bild reader, adding weight to the strongly held belief among protesters that the Springer group’s campaign against Dutschke was responsible” (Thomas 169). Furthermore, Bachmann believed he was acting on behalf of those who shared his belief that Dutschke was a Communist and a danger to society. An article published in Der Spiegel after the shooting quotes Bachmann as saying: “Sehr viele sind meiner Meinung. Oder richtiger: Ich bin ihrer Meinung. Das ist besser” (Mauz 76). By positioning himself as an individual within a larger collective, Bachmann convinced himself that his actions were for the greater good, and therefore justifiable. To what extent did the messages of the Springer group contribute to beliefs that Dutschke and “die
linksradikale Revolution” must be stopped? (Aust 63) How much power and influence did press magnates like Springer exert over their audiences, and to what degree, if any, could they be held responsible for attacks like the one against Rudi Dutschke?

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In May 1972, Red Army Faction (RAF) members Gudrun Ensslin, Andreas Baader, Holger Meins, Jan-Carl Raspe, and Gerhard Müller met in Frankfurt to discuss possible methods of protest against recent American actions in Vietnam (Aust 231). They would later describe their actions as retaliation against “President Nixon’s decision the previous month to launch a renewed bombing campaign against Hanoi and Haiphong” (Thomas 209). The group decided to bomb the United States Army base located in Frankfurt, and promptly set to work assembling pipe bombs and strategically planning their placement. On the evening of May 11, 1972, three bombs exploded in rapid succession in the mess hall of the Army base, causing massive chaos, confusion, and terror, and injuring thirteen people. The gravest consequence of the attack, however, was the death of Lieutenant Colonel Paul A. Bloomquist, who died when a large splinter of glass lodged in his throat (Aust 232). In the days after the bombing, a public statement was issued, signed by the Red Army Faction:

Für die Ausrottungsstrategen von Vietnam sollen Westdeutschland und Westberlin kein sicheres Hinterland mehr sein. Sie müssen wissen, daß ihre Verbrechen am vietnamesischen Volk ihnen neue erbitterte Feinde geschaffen haben, daß es für sie keinen Platz mehr geben wird in der Welt, an dem sie vor den Angriffen revolutionärer Guerilla-Einheiten sicher sein können. (Hoffmann 145)
Without explicitly stating it, the RAF made their opposition to the United States quite clear. In this statement, the group publicly took responsibility for the bombing and plainly stated their beliefs and intentions: They were actively working to facilitate social and political change in Germany, and would do whatever was necessary, including acts of violence, in order to succeed.

The three events described above occurred during a contentious and tumultuous time in history. The United States remained deeply entrenched in the Vietnam War. In 1968, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., caused worldwide shock and disbelief. On the other side of the globe, European citizens were still recovering from the aftermath and immense consequences of Hitler’s regime and World War II. This process was extremely difficult, especially in Germany, where the division of the country into East and West sectors, and the subsequent external influences accompanying this division – namely, America in the West, and the Soviet Union in the East – further intensified the already complex political and social atmospheres.

It was in this environment that the Red Army Faction, also often referred to as the Baader-Meinhof Gang, was established. Over the course of its existence, the group would be classified as many things, including petty criminals, radical activists, and dangerous terrorists. While it is plausible to contend that, at one point or another, the group embodied each of these traits, it should be noted the nature of such descriptions is highly subjective, and often depends greatly upon the source and context from which those very descriptions originate. Closer analysis of each of the scenarios described above facilitates a better understanding of this.

The first account illustrates the calculated use of terror and brutality by state-affiliated officials. The sudden arrival of ambulances at the evening protest reveals calculation and
premeditation on behalf of the policemen, as if they were expecting a substantial number of injuries. What is most terrifying about the events of June 2, 1968, however, is the intensity with which the police attacked the protesters. These state-sponsored individuals were responsible for the safety and security of all German citizens, regardless of political and social affiliation. Instead, they chose to exploit their positions of power and created an atmosphere of distress, hatred, and terror.

The second account demonstrates how certain publications, especially those of the Springer Corporation, purposely exacerbated the already elevated tensions that existed among the opposing political and social parties within Germany. Through bold declarations and calls for action against student protesters and other opponents, the Springer group encouraged readers and supporters to aggressively retaliate against those they deemed dissident citizens. While the corporation was not directly responsible for Dutschke’s shooting, its slanderous campaign against him certainly contributed to readers’ negative perceptions of him, and might have increased some audience members’ paranoia toward, and fear of, those they did not agree with or understand.

Finally, the third account provides a clear example of why the RAF came to be regarded as a terrorist organization. The bombing at the Army base injured and killed innocent Americans, creating an atmosphere of fear both within Germany and on an international level. It also revealed the extreme measures the group was willing to employ in order to promote their belief in the need for revolution. For the members of the RAF, the use of violence and creation of an atmosphere of terror were necessary components in the overall process of achieving their goals.

These three events differ greatly from one another, especially with regard to the identity and number of perpetrators and the circumstances in which they occurred. While a number of
unique factors contributed to each outcome, they were fundamentally similar in that they all exhibited elements of terrorism and created an atmosphere of fear. Together, they demonstrate how terrorism can originate from a variety of sources and conditions while raising some important questions: What are some defining characteristics of terrorism as they relate to these events? How do contemporary conceptions of terrorism affect our perception of events that occurred over four decades ago? And perhaps most importantly, did the RAF begin its campaign for revolution in Germany with the intention of becoming a terror-inspiring organization? The following sections attempt to address these questions and examine early RAF manifestoes in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the complex and variable nature of terrorism, and the roles of those involved.

II. The Complexities of Defining Terrorism

“Terrorism, like viruses, is everywhere. There is a global perfusion of terrorism, which accompanies any system of domination as though it were its shadow, ready to activate itself anywhere, like a double agent.”

- Jean Baudrillard, The Spirit of Terrorism

Terrorism has existed in many forms for centuries, yet despite its lasting presence, it continues to be extremely difficult to establish a comprehensive and cohesive definition. The purpose of this section is not to discover or develop an absolute and universal concept of terrorism; this is a monumental, and thus far impossible, task that scholars, governments, and even international organizations like the United Nations have yet to achieve. Instead, this section demonstrates the difficulty of defining terrorism, and then attempts to establish some
characteristics common to the term within the context of modern society and as it pertains to the early years of the RAF. It is important to note that we inevitably perceive historical events through a contemporary lens; in other words, our perceptions of past events are biased by our access to knowledge of the subsequent outcomes and consequences of these historical events. Because of this, our understanding of the past is often highly subjective and altered by our awareness of additional information. What follows is an overview of some recent developments regarding terrorism in the last decade, and an example of how a broad, ambiguous definition allows for the comparison of two very different events.

Violent, terror-inducing actions have been a familiar reality in many cultures and regions of the world for decades. Most recently, however, it was the attacks on September 11th, 2001, that facilitated the prominent and seemingly permanent positioning of the term “terrorism” within international vernacular. In the past decade, more so than ever, it has become a popular, all-encompassing term, used frequently and liberally by governments, the media, and individuals throughout the world to classify and describe a number of actions that vary quite significantly from one another. It is a subjective and highly debatable term without a precise, universal definition; one could spend hours searching government documents, online sources, and scholastic works in attempt to locate the most concise and appropriate interpretation in order to characterize distinctly unrelated events, often for lack of a better or more descriptive term.

To provide an example of such ambiguity, the following statement on terrorism can be found under the “Terrorist Hazards” section on the United States Government’s Federal Emergency Management Agency website: “Throughout human history, there have been many threats to the security of nations. These threats have brought about large-scale losses of life, the
destruction of property, widespread illness and injury, the displacement of large numbers of people, and devastating economic loss.” This explanation effectively describes terrorism in its broadest sense; however, it also leaves much room for interpretation – with enough creativity, one could extend these guidelines to include almost any number of events, including natural disasters like tornadoes and earthquakes. Despite the absence of a universal definition, acts of terrorism share several common factors: 1) They are inherently violent and destructive; 2) they are intentionally performed to inspire immense and prolonged fear; and 3) their purpose is quite literally to threaten and frighten governments or citizens into listening to and complying with the perpetrators’ demands.

If these characteristics were comprehensive enough to define terrorism in its entirety, a number of actions could be classified accordingly. For example, both the attacks on September 11, 2001, and the actions of the founding members of the RAF could be classified as terrorism. It is certainly worth noting the similarities that exist between them. Both sets of actions were extremely aggressive, blatantly violent, and resulted in multiple civilian casualties. They each involved detailed planning and calculation over extended periods of time, and culminated in immense devastation. In each instance, the perpetrators maintained a distinct anti-American stance. This view is entirely apparent in the very nature of the attacks on the United States, through the deliberate and complete destruction (and attempted destruction, in the case of the Pentagon) of massive landmarks and the murder of thousands of civilians. As for the RAF, they clearly declared their intended targets through public announcements like the following, which appeared in a West Berlin publication, Agit 883, in May 1970: “Unser Feind und der Feind Südamerikas, der Feind des japanischen und vietnamesischen Volkes, der Feind aller Schwarzen
in USA, der Feind der Arbeiter von Berlin – der Feind ist der amerikanische Imperialismus” (2). It is probable that those responsible for the attacks on September 11th held similar beliefs.

The identification of similarities between these two scenarios is not intended to demonstrate equivalence in terms of casualties or destruction, or any other number of factors attributable to them. Rather, highlighting their likenesses simultaneously emphasizes their many differences, and raises the question: How functional and effective is it to utilize one term to describe such an incredibly wide range of actions and events? As Walter Laqueur points out, “the term ‘terrorism’… has been used in so many different senses as to become almost meaningless, covering almost any, and not necessarily political, act of violence” (6). It often becomes problematic when assumed meaning of certain words or phrases establishes roots in popular discourse, especially with an important term like ‘terrorism’; its overuse can diminish the significance of the term and the authenticity of its meaning. This is precisely why it is so difficult, if not impossible, to create a universal definition of terrorism. The remainder of this section discusses two scholastic definitions of terrorism, which together, provide a framework in which to conduct a closer examination of an early RAF manifesto.

The first definition is derived from Albert Bandura’s essay, “Mechanisms of moral disengagement,” published in 1990 in an anthology titled Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind. In his essay, Bandura states: “Public intimidation is a key element that distinguishes terrorist violence from other forms of violence… In contrast to customary violence in which victims are personally targeted, in terrorism the victims are incidental to the terrorists’ intended objectives and are used simply as a way to provoke social conditions designed to further their broader aims” (162-63). Indeed, most literary discussions on
terrorism include references to the concepts of public intimidation and the targeting of innocent civilians.

After highlighting these important and distinguishing characteristics, Bandura discusses four key features that “give power to a few incidents to incite widespread public fear” and incite terror in a society: 1) The element of unpredictability – the public exists in a continually apprehensive and powerless state due to their lack of knowledge about when or where terrorists will strike; 2) the magnitude of the consequences – not knowing what the outcome will be or how severely it will affect the future further paralyzes the public with fear; 3) the absolute vulnerability of the community’s infrastructure, including “functional communications, transportation and power systems, and safe water and food supplies,” on which the public relies heavily for survival and livelihood; and 4) the profound sense of uncontrollability, due to some combination of the previously mentioned features (167-68).

This definition provides a psychological perspective on terrorism, and helps explain how terror manifests itself within the individual and society. It illuminates potential avenues that terrorists can utilize to manipulate the masses and achieve their goals. As Bandura notes, “it requires conducive social conditions rather than monstrous people to produce heinous deeds. Given appropriate social conditions, decent, ordinary people can be led to do extraordinarily cruel things” (182). Most often, alliances like the RAF do not intend to include physical violence and civilian casualties as a part of their agendas; however, escalating frustration, anger, and irrationality due to a perceived lack of advancement causes members of such groups to transform from protestors and revolutionaries into terrorists.
The second definition of terrorism originates from Boaz Ganor’s 2002 article titled “Defining Terrorism: Is One Man’s Terrorist Another Man’s Freedom Fighter?” The title immediately places emphasis on the element of subjectivity often associated with the concept of terrorism, and the popular notion that a comprehensive, universal definition is unattainable. This, however, is diametrically opposed to the article’s main argument. Ganor states that such subjectivity “contributes nothing to the understanding of an already difficult issue. Nor does the attempt to divide terrorism into categories such as ‘bad and worse terrorism,’ ‘internal terrorism and international terrorism,’ or ‘tolerable terrorism and intolerable terrorism’… purely subjective categories will not help us determine who … the real terrorists [are]” (287-88). In addition, he believes “an objective definition of terrorism is not only possible; it is also indispensible to any serious attempt to combat terrorism” (288). In effect, Ganor advocates the need for a simplified definition carefully created through mutual understanding and cooperation.

Accordingly, his article provides a straightforward and succinct definition of terrorism. He describes it as “the intentional use of, or threat to use, violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims” (294). He emphasizes the importance of three elements: 1) The deliberate use of violence, or threat to do so; 2) the presence of a political goal or goals; and 3) the targeting of civilians. He also distinguishes “terrorism” from “freedom fighting” by noting the “clear distinction between the perpetrators’ aims and their mode of operation… an organization is defined as ‘terrorist’ because of its mode of operation and its target of attack, whereas calling something a ‘struggle for liberation’ has to do with the aim that the organization seeks to attain” (298).

Using these definitions of terrorism from Bandura and Ganor, the following section focuses on some of the early actions of the RAF in order to understand how its members came to
be regarded as terrorists. It substantiates the idea that “the victims or objects of [a] terrorist attack have little intrinsic value to the terrorist group but represent a larger human audience whose reaction the terrorists seek” (Crenshaw 379). Finally, it provides an analysis of an initial RAF manifesto, published in 1971, which specifically examines how the members of the RAF portrayed their goals and beliefs, and looks at the techniques employed by the group to promote these goals and recruit supporters.

III. The Early Years of the Red Army Faction: The Baader-Meinhof Gang

“Contrary to legend, terrorists are not rigid but quite flexible—not in their ideology or aims, of course, but in their methods, modus operandi, target selection, treatment of hostages. Like everybody else, they respond to perceived successes and failures, and to enemy actions and intentions… West German terrorists, like other terrorists and like everyone else, do not operate in a vacuum; they coexist actively with various societies in the world, in a highly reciprocal relationship.”

- Konrad Kellen, “Ideology and rebellion: Terrorism in West Germany”

Many works about the RAF attribute its official establishment to Andreas Baader, Horst Mahler, and Ulrike Meinhof; this essay also includes Gudrun Ensslin because she was a key contributor to the planning and implementation of the majority of their early actions. The group publicly became known as the Red Army Faction in 1971, when they began referring to themselves as such in their statements and manifestos. Although leadership and membership changed often, the RAF remained operational until 1993 (Herf 9). Over the course of three decades, its actions resulted in 34 non-member deaths, the majority of which were American soldiers and German police officers and public officials (Herf 8).
This section focuses on the intentions and actions of the four founding members and their supporters, beginning with their first collaborations in February 1970, and ending with their arrests in June 1972. Wolfgang Kraushaar observed, “in the first two years of its existence, [the RAF] did little more than perform logistics through stealing weapons, bank robberies and recruiting personnel” (Horstkotte). While this is partially true, the group’s activities during 1970 demonstrate its increasing tendency toward violence. In April, Mahler arranged a series of meetings for the purpose of acquiring weapons; in May, a group that included Ensslin and Meinhof helped Baader escape from prison, and a civilian was shot in the process; and in June, the group traveled to a Palestinian Liberation Organization camp in Jordan for four months of weapons training (Burleigh 236-38). Then, in February 1971, a shoot-out in Frankfurt between policemen and RAF members Manfred Grashof and Astrid Proll led Federal Interior Minister to declare the RAF “public enemy number one” (Thomas 205). A number of other shoot-outs occurred between the RAF and the police in 1971; it was through these altercations that RAF members Petra Schelm and Thomas Weisbecker were killed. These were the only RAF-member deaths incurred during this two-year period.

Of the 34 non-member fatalities, seven were the result of actions by the group during the time period from 1970-1972. The first death occurred in October 1971, when a police officer was shot while trying to arrest RAF members in Hamburg; another policeman was killed during an RAF bank robbery in Kauserslautern in 1971, and a third died of injuries sustained in a shoot-out with RAF members in March 1972 (Herf 12). Shortly thereafter, the group transitioned from firearms to explosives. Between May 11 and May 28, 1972, bombings took place at the U.S. Army Base in Frankfurt, at police headquarters in Augsburg, at a Federal Judge’s house in Karlsruhe, at the Springer Corporation building in Hamburg, and at a U.S. Army Base in
Heidelberg (Burleigh 242-43). Together these bombings caused four fatalities, all of which were U.S. soldiers, and seriously injured at least forty others (Herf 12).

This chronology demonstrates how the RAF’s activities during its first years as an organized gang of radicals amounted to more than merely “stealing weapons” and “recruiting personnel,” as described by Kraushaar. They performed many acts of violence and, regardless of their original intentions, they were responsible for murdering seven people and seriously injuring many more. The following sections examine these events in relation to the previously outlined definitions of terrorism from Bandura and Ganor, in order to facilitate a better understanding of early RAF members as developing terrorists.

The two definitions previously discussed in this essay are both applicable to the actions of the RAF. To briefly reiterate, Bandura cites public intimidation, indiscriminate choice of target, and unwavering focus on achieving an objective as distinguishing traits of terrorism. Additionally, he identifies four fear-inducing factors inherent to terrorism: Unpredictability, weight of consequences, vulnerability of infrastructure, and lack of control. Each of these elements existed at some point in the acts executed by the RAF under the leadership of Baader, Ensslin, Meinhof, and Mahler. Police chases and shoot-outs were erratic and volatile, and unpredictable bombings of public buildings increased fear of future attacks on other parts of the infrastructure. Ultimately, these events proved neither the government nor civilians were able to exert any control over the actions of the RAF. The group’s overall tendency toward violent and unpredictable actions created an atmosphere of intimidation, helplessness, and fear throughout West Germany.
Using Bandura’s descriptions, one could conclude that the RAF was indeed a terrorist organization. This is especially plausible considering the deaths and injuries caused by the group. Instead of targeting individuals for specific reasons, they chose larger and more general venues, such as police headquarters, the Springer Corporation building, and U.S. Army bases. In his essay, Bandura states “third-party violence directed at innocent people is a much more horrific undertaking than political violence in which particular political figures are targeted” (163). The members of the RAF appeared untroubled by, and almost indifferent toward, the deaths they caused, and appeared more concerned with making a statement and inspiring political and social change through fear.

Ganor provides a different perspective on terrorism. He states that an objective, universal definition is possible, and cites three key characteristics of terrorism: The use, or intention to use violence, the targeting of civilians, and the presence of a political objective. Again, each of these qualities is applicable to the members of the RAF. Their actions were deliberately violent and they targeted the workplaces and dwellings of known civilians, causing death and/or serious injury to innocent bystanders who happened to be present at the time the RAF chose to attack. For example, in 1972, the group placed a bomb in Federal Judge Wolfgang Buddenberg’s vehicle outside his home in Karlsruhe, which detonated when his wife attempted to start the engine; she sustained serious injuries and forty other vehicles were destroyed (Thomas 209).

Together, the bombings of 1972 provide evidence from which the group’s political objectives can be inferred. They bombed the U.S. Army bases to protest American imperialism and the Vietnam War; they bombed the Springer building in attempt to deter the corporation’s continued anti-RAF, anti-Communist campaign; and they placed bombs at police headquarters
and the Judge’s house to express their defiance of state power and control. Their actions, however, were certainly ineffective at motivating political change; instead, they created terror and uncertainty for civilians, and convinced officials of the group’s imminent threat to society.

This raises an important question: Did Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Horst Mahler intend to create a violent terrorist organization? Thomas contends this was not their initial strategy: “Baader and Ensslin do not seem to have conceived of a long-term plan for creating a co-ordinated terrorist organization until much later. Instead they seem to have been motivated by a desire to find out what was possible in pushing the boundaries of tolerance” (203). However, between February 1970 and June 1972, the combination of intensifying anger, frustration, irrationality, and extremism, along with the deaths of fellow members Petra Schelm and Thomas Weisbecker, led the group toward more frequent and intensified acts of violence.

The following section analyzes a manifesto circulated by the group in April 1971, the approximate midpoint of the two-year time period central to this discussion. The RAF had not yet begun its bombing spree, but had engaged in a number of shoot-outs and bank robberies. The manifesto demonstrates the RAF believed its goals, and the actions associated with achieving those goals, were entirely appropriate and justifiable. Furthermore, it shows the RAF believed it had a chance to gain a substantial following.

Das Konzept Stadtguerilla (The Urban Guerilla Concept), comprised of six chapters, is the first official manifesto signed by the RAF. It begins with the following quote from Chinese Marxist theorist Mao Tse Tung: “Zwischen uns und dem Feind einen klaren Trennungsstrich ziehen!” From the start, the group establishes itself as apart from the enemy. In the first chapter, the RAF describes its efforts as an “anti-imperialist struggle” (der antiimperialistische Kampf),
and a resistance (*der Widerstand*). The purpose of the chapter is to highlight and criticize various press portrayals of the RAF, and to identify particular sources, including the Springer group. Specifically, it accuses the press of lies and exaggeration in order to gain readership and earn a profit: “Daß fast alles, was die Zeitungen über uns schreiben – und wie sie es schreiben: alles – gelogen ist, ist klar… alles ist nur Dreck.” Overall, the tone is one of dismissal and defiance as the group attempts to discredit the media corporations with which it disagrees (Hoffmann 27-28).

In the second chapter, the RAF shifts its criticism toward politics, specifically and derisively targeting Germany’s relationship with the United States: “Ihre Ostpolitik erschließt dem Kapitalismus neue Märkte, besorgt den deutschen Beitrag zum Ausgleich und Bündnis zwischen US-Imperialismus und Sowjetunion, den die USA brauchen, um freie Hand für ihre Aggressionskriege in der Dritten Welt zu haben.” The group accuses the West German government of catering to the United States by allowing it to use Germany to further its political agenda. However, the group claims the relationship is mutually beneficial: “Die Bundesrepublik [profitiert] von der Ausbeutung der Dritten Welt, ohne die Verantwortung für diese Kriege zu haben, ohne sich deswegen mit einer Opposition im Innern streiten zu müssen.” There is little reference to the RAF in this chapter; instead, its purpose is to highlight existing problems within Germany’s political sphere (Hoffmann 32-33).

The third and fourth chapters emphasize the RAF’s belief in the importance of the student movement (*die Studentenbewegung*) and express disappointment about its dissolution. The group acknowledges it originated from the student movement and discusses its merits:

“Ideologiekritisch hat die Studentenbewegung nahezu alle Bereiche staatlicher Repression als Ausdruck imperialistischer Ausbeutung erfaßt: In der Springerkampagne, in den Demonstrationen gegen die amerikanische Aggression
in Vietnam... Was ihr das Selbstbewußtsein gab, waren nicht entfaltete Klassenkämpfe hier, sondern das Bewußtsein, Teil einer internationalen Bewegung zu sein, es mit demselben Klassenfeind hier zu tun zu haben, wie der Vietcong dort. (Hoffmann 34-35)

Again, the group draws attention to the issues of American imperialism, as well as to the Vietnam War, and encourages unity among supporters and potential members: “...ohne den konkreten antiimperialistischen Kampf es keinen Vereinheitlichungsprozeß gibt, daß das Bündnis nur in gemeinsamen Kämpfen hergestellt wird oder nicht, in denen der bewußte Teil der Arbeiter und Intellektuellen nicht Regie zu fahren, sondern voranzugehen hat” (Hoffmann 37).

The chapter concludes by reiterating that the group’s success depends on organized armed resistance (der bewaffnete Widerstand), unity, and action.

The fifth chapter promotes the concept of the urban guerilla (Stadtguerilla) as described in the Manual of The Urban Guerrilla, written by Carlos Marighella in 1969. Marighella, a famous Brazilian revolutionary, was internationally known for committing various robberies and kidnappings in his country; he “pioneered political kidnapping when he abducted the US ambassador to Brazil [in 1969], releasing him only after fifteen of his own comrades were freed by way of exchange” (Burleigh 193). The Manual describes the ideal urban guerilla:

[He] employs weapons in unconventional warfare in his struggle against the military dictatorship. He is a political revolutionary. An ardent patriot. A freedom fighter. A friend of the masses and a lover of freedom... The urban guerrilla, however, is no outlaw. The outlaw benefits personally from his act, robbing equally the exploited and the exploiter. He numbers among his victims the common men and women. In contrast, the urban guerrilla seeks a political goal,
targeting only the government, wealthy capitalists, and foreign imperialists, particularly North Americans. (Hoffmann 46)

In this pivotal chapter of *Das Konzept Stadtguerilla*, the RAF advocates acting as the urban guerilla would, stating “Stadtguerilla ist eine Waffe im Klassenkampf.” It encourages supporters and sympathizers to assist by providing the movement with weapons, cars, papers, and money, creating and organizing an underground movement, and actively rejecting the authority of the German state (Hoffmann 41-42).

The final chapter delivers a motivational call for action: “Macht kaputt, was Euch kaputt macht” (Hoffmann 44). It cites capitalism as the destructive force against which action needs to be taken, and ends with an elaborate description of the group’s mission: “Die Rote Armee Fraktion stellt die Verbindung her zwischen legalem und illegalem Kampf, zwischen nationalem und internationalem Kampf, zwischen politischem und bewaffnetem Kampf, zwischen der strategischen und der taktischen Bestimmung der internationalen kommunistischen Bewegung” (48). One scholar appropriately describes this manifesto as “an attempt… to justify RAF actions and ideologically rationalize its chosen course” (Passmore 51).

Although the manifesto is neatly divided into six chapters, the content within each chapter is sometimes disorganized and unstructured, often jumping haphazardly from one idea to another. As Passmore points out, “internal coherence was not the goal, rather it was the ability to pull in followers that mattered” (Passmore 56). Indeed, the purpose of this statement is to publicize the group’s ideology and inspire people to join their cause. As with any propaganda tool, this exposition portrays its authors more positively while simultaneously emphasizing the negative qualities and corrupt actions of their opponents. Any references to the actions of the
RAF are vague and fleeting – they are discussed only as needed to reinforce an argument or otherwise support the group’s claims.

One important component that has not yet been discussed in detail is the RAF’s portrayal of its perceived enemies. Ultimately, the RAF “aimed to save West Germans from themselves and thereby save German democracy” (Hanshew 117). In this particular manifesto, the RAF repeatedly refers to the three major opponents from whom they must save West Germany: the state, the conservative press corporations, and the influence of the United States. The group is especially preoccupied with the imminent threat posed by America and its international agenda. In light of this, the following section examines the concept of the “Other” as it pertains to terrorism and provides a detailed analysis of the relationships between the RAF and its adversaries.

IV. Representations of the “Other”

“…In the face of all of the nativized pressures to imagine terror as the absolute other, the enemy, the ultimate incarnation of a model of “them and us,” theory has argued and is arguing for a dialectical understanding of violence and a recognition that there can be no convincing absolute distinction between us and them.”

- David Simpson, 9/11: The Culture of Commemoration

Comprehension of the concept of terrorism warrants a closer examination of the variable and highly subjective concept of the “Other.” To gain some understanding of this idea, we must first acknowledge a basic premise that motivates most acts of terrorism: The existence of opposing ideas and beliefs. In any disagreement, regardless of scope or scale, there is an inevitable distinction made between “good” and “evil,” “right” and “wrong,” “us” and “them.”
This has led to the creation of countless popular, and often politicized, clichés, including the ideas that “good conquers evil” and “if you are not with us, you are against us.” Each of these opposing pairs is fundamentally comprised of a positive term and a negative term. It is the actual, subjective designation of these terms that creates complications and raises some important questions: What are the determining factors that make someone or something “good” or “evil,” “right” or “wrong”? How are the criteria for such classifications chosen? Who is the person assigning these labels, and why are they qualified to do so? These questions reveal the complexities and confusion associated with conceptions of the “Other” and how it considerably complicates the concept of terrorism.

In the introduction to this paper, three scenarios involving terror were described. Each depicted distinct acts of violence with different perpetrators: The first event involved the German state, the second event involved the German press, and the last event involved the RAF. Together, the scenarios illustrate the difficulty of assigning specific descriptions to various groups: Supporters of the state and its employees and representatives were most likely more lenient and forgiving regarding the actions taken against the protesters in 1968; similarly, followers and sympathizers of the RAF were more likely to justify the U.S. Army base bombing in 1972. Overall, the state viewed itself as being “right,” working to protect innocent civilians from the radical, unpredictable, and dangerous acts of student protesters, and later, the RAF; likewise, members of the RAF viewed themselves as being “right,” fighting for social and political change on national and international levels while protesting injustices at home and abroad. With regard to the concept of the “Other,” these historical examples reveal that classification depends greatly on affiliation.
While the influence of the press should not be underestimated, it may be difficult to place any substantial amount of responsibility on the Springer group for the radical actions of Josef Bachmann. However, the corporation’s ongoing campaign against Rudi Dutschke helped increase negative perceptions of him and the entire student movement within particular circles. In reality, Germany’s media publications were used by both the state and the RAF at various times to further their respective campaigns. The RAF published numerous manifestos in accommodating newspapers, protesting state actions and recruiting supporters, while state officials publicly criticized and condemned the RAF, knowing their statements would be published and widely circulated (Davis 40-41). The media corporations proved indispensable to both parties, who realized that, “if you can control people by force, it’s not so important to control what they think and feel. But if you lose the capacity to control people by force, it becomes more necessary to control attitudes and opinions” (Chomsky 2). The German state and the RAF seemed to recognize this idea, and both sought to influence the greater German population through strategic use of the press.

In broad terms, the previous section demonstrated how the RAF and the German state existed in opposition to one another. Each group attempted to create a clear distinction between themselves as “good” and the “Other” as the “enemy.” From an external, historical perspective, an argument could be made in favor of either group; while this essay focuses primarily on the RAF, it is important to understand the state’s role in the production of fear. In her 2003 article concerning the relationships between activism and terror, Belinda Davis succinctly describes government-generated terror and terrorism:
In the last decades, the terrorist has been defined by political enmity and otherness...this very rhetoric can and has created terrorists, and (in part thereby) terror itself. In 1970s Germany, for example, it meant the official (and media) identification of tiny groups of individuals as terrorists, whose importance was then magnified completely out of proportion with their size and influence...West German officials generated and maintained a public hysteria that threatened to divide a society in the name of unity, to create massive insecurity in the name of security, and to destroy liberty and democracy in the name of protecting them.

(39)

As Davis points out, the German state was not exempt from the creation and perpetuation of civilian terror and anxiety. In 1968, the Notstandsgesetze, or Emergency Laws, were passed, which “permitted the government to make quick decisions without consulting the parliament in case of a national disaster” (Stehle 27). Then, in 1972, the officials passed the Radikalenerlass, or Decree on Radicals, which allowed “those who had supported organizations that sought to undermine the constitution [to be] barred from government posts. This effectively removed teachers, civil servants, lawyers and so on, who had any record of membership in radical organizations and parties” (Thomas 207). The legislation led to heightened public anxiety and paranoia, and significantly inhibited freedom of speech. Many citizens feared for their jobs, often because of a previous temporary or indirect affiliation with what might have been considered a radical group. The state’s determination to implement these regulations reinforced the RAF’s depiction of the state as an oppressive opponent. The following section provides a detailed analysis of these types of representations in an RAF declaration from 1970. Specifically, it examines the RAF’s reasons for the declaration, how the group represented itself and the
“Other,” and the language and structures they used to further distance themselves from their opponents.

V. Constructions of the “Other” in “Die Rote Armee aufbauen”

“…In order to recognize the enemy, conceptual subsumption under pre-existing categories is not enough; one has to ‘schematize’ the logical figure of the Enemy, providing it with concrete, tangible features which make it an appropriate target of hatred and struggle.”

- Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*

The RAF’s first public announcement was circulated after a series of events that began with Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ensslin. In 1968, Baader and Ensslin were convicted of bombing a department store in Frankfurt and sent to prison. They appealed, and in 1969, were temporarily released on bail to await the verdict. The appeal was overturned, but instead of returning to finish their sentences, the pair went into hiding. Unfortunately for Baader, a chance encounter with the police in April 1970 led to his arrest and return to prison (Thomas 203-204). Ensslin, along with Ulrike Meinhof and a group of RAF members and supporters, devised an elaborate plan to help Baader escape, and on May 14, 1970, under the false pretense of attending an interview with Meinhof, he successfully accomplished his breakout from prison (Aust 12-16).

Three weeks later, “Die Rote Armee aufbauen” (“Build up the Red Army”) appeared in an alternative West Berlin newspaper, *Agit 883*, purportedly written by Meinhof on behalf of the group. Baader’s escape was central to the piece, and was often referenced as the “Baader-Befreiungs-Aktion.” This publication allowed the group to openly claim responsibility for Baader’s newfound freedom and simultaneously announce their successful rebellion against the
state. In addition, discussing their success allowed the group to advertise themselves to the public. There was a general sense of urgency throughout the declaration regarding the need for more supporters and, above all, more action; there were also underlying tones of frustration and impatience directed at the group’s adversaries.

From the outset, the statement establishes a clear dividing line between the RAF and their opponents: “Es hat keinen Zweck, den falschen Leuten das Richtige erklären zu wollen.” The RAF, its supporters, and its campaign are deemed the ‘right’ people and things, while their adversaries are ‘wrong’. From this point forward, opponents are referenced in an inherently negative, and often derogatory manner; examples within the first paragraph include “die intellektuellen Schwätzer,” “die Hosenscheißer,” and “die Alles-besser-Wisser.” In contrast, potential allies to whom the RAF is appealing are referenced in a more objective manner: “die Jugendliche,” “die kinderreichen Familien,” and “die verheirateten Arbeiterinnen.” This clearly delineated and highly subjective system of classification encourages readers to associate themselves with the latter category, and also encourages alignment with the RAF and its goals and beliefs (Hoffmann 24).

In its manifesto, the RAF identifies two predominant opponents. First, the group directs its criticism toward adversaries who they claim are encountered daily in many forms; this includes petit bourgeois intellectuals (die kleinbürgerlichen Intellektuellen), as well as teachers, social workers, and caretakers – essentially people whose professions provide them a somewhat elevated position of power and prestige. The statement accuses these individuals of telling lies and making false promises to their subordinates, who are the very same people the RAF is attempting to recruit. The declaration emphasizes that, in place of what is promised, the working class will continue to be exploited and insufficiently compensated “durch Lebensstandard,
Konsum, Bausparvertrag, Kleinkredite und Mittelklassewagen.” The overall objective of this statement is to stimulate outrage and motivate these workers to rebel against their oppressors (Hoffmann 24).

The second and more threatening opponent emphasized in the statement is the police, often referred to degradingly as “die Schweine.” The RAF provides three examples where the sources of conflict and regulation can be traced back to the police: “Hinter den Eltern stehen die Lehrer, das Jugendamt, die Polizei. Hinter dem Vorarbeiter, steht der Meister, das Personalbüro, der Werkschutz, die Fürsorge, die Polizei. Hinter dem Hauswart steht der Verwalter, der Hausbesitzer, der Gerichtsvollzieher, die Räumungsklage, die Polizei” (Hoffmann 25). The implication is that police influence and control are inescapable. At the height of its argument, the RAF encourages supporters to react through protest and rebellion against the police’s supreme authority regarding the enforcement of rules and the imposition of control; it implies that failure to act will only result in the deterioration of society and further increase the power of the police:

Ohne gleichzeitig die Rote Armee aufzubauen, verkommt jeder Konflikt… zu Reformismus… Ihr setzt nur bessere Disziplinierungsmittel durch, bessere Einschüchterungsmethoden, bessere Ausbeutungsmethoden. Das macht das Volk nur kaputt, das macht nicht kaputt, was das Volk kaputt macht! Ohne die Rote Armee aufzubauen, können die Schweine alles machen, können die Schweine weitermachen: einsperren, entlassen, pfänden, Kinder stehlen, einschüchtern, schießen, herrschen. (Hoffmann 26)

This emphatic proclamation serves many purposes. It provides an especially negative and frightening portrayal of the police, as well as other opponents of the RAF, and depicts a bleak
and despondent future. It also serves to inspire and encourage potential supporters and RAF sympathizers to actively defend themselves against such threats. Most importantly, it indicates the importance of affiliating oneself with the RAF in order to increase the chances of a successful fight.

Aside from identifying its enemies, the RAF seeks to motivate and agitate its fellow citizens. The idea of fortification, or “building up,” (aufbauen) is a recurring theme in the declaration, which begins and ends with a call to “build up the Red Army;” it also expresses the need to “build up the distribution system” (das Vertriebsnetz), once again referencing the need for more advocates. The haphazard construction and erratic tone creates discomfort and bewilderment for the reader and conveys a need for better organization.

VI. Conclusion

“Thinking is actually and above all the force of resistance... Whoever thinks is without anger in all criticism: thinking sublimes anger. Because the thinking person does not have to inflict anger upon himself, he furthermore has no desire to inflict it upon others.”

- Theodor W. Adorno, “Resignation”

As we have seen, the RAF members’ depictions of themselves in their writings differ greatly from the careless and violent acts they committed in reality. Close analysis of two manifestos reveals their self-conception was often exaggerated or unrealistic. While their writings called for an organized, armed resistance, and promoted a rational and systematic uprising, their actions directly contradicted this, and resulted in excessive and unnecessary death and destruction. Whatever their initial intentions, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, Ulrike Meinhof, and Horst Mahler ultimately created an alliance that rapidly evolved from a group of
disillusioned radicals into a terrorist organization. This thesis illustrates that it is a much simpler task to apply contemporary theories (like definitions of terrorism) to historical actions (like those of the RAF); conversely, it is extremely difficult to construct useful theories (like a universal definition of terrorism) in attempt to prepare for unpredictable future events. Clearly, such preparation is impossible, and a fundamental question remains: How do we define terrorism?

In his book, *On Suicide Bombing*, Talal Asad states “law is always a matter of argument because it requires interpretation” (21). The same logic should be followed with regard to terrorism. Instead of attempting to create a comprehensive definition, “it must be recognized that there is no single, universal solution to the problem of terrorism – be it either the domestic or international variant. Yet, this fact only reinforces the need for multiple creative solutions, if not to resolve, then at least to control the growth of terrorism and contain its violent manifestations” (Hoffman 74). Indeed, lack of agreement on such a complex topic should be expected and even fostered. By challenging one another’s preconceived notions and beliefs, it forces individuals and societies to maintain an open mind and consider new ideas. Furthermore, active and engaged debate also confronts the inescapable element of subjectivity. We are often incapable of interpreting things from a different perspective due to our individual bias, and require external influence in order to overcome this. As a society, we must actively and continually engage in debates and critical thinking, especially with regard to the most complicated and controversial topics, such as terrorism.
Bibliography


