

# Ideology and Armed Groups – Final Workshop Report

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This year's workshop on Ideology and Armed Groups took place in Baltimore in advance of the ISA, on February 21, 2017. It was a great success. The workshop participants universally felt that it was a rich and worthwhile experience. From my own perspective, it was among the most beneficial workshops I've ever attended, and probably the richest event I've participated in over many years of attending ISA.

## 1. Budget report

### Expenses

<b>Item</b>	<b>Budgeted</b>	<b>Actual</b>
Lodging	\$4623	\$2750.15
Room	\$250	\$250 <sup>a</sup>
Coffee	\$360	\$360 <sup>a</sup>
Lunch	\$798	\$620.90 - \$798 <sup>b</sup>
Audio/visual	\$1070	\$910 - \$1070 <sup>b</sup>
Per diem	\$1725	\$1350
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$8826</b>	<b>\$6241.05 - \$6578.15</b>

<sup>a</sup>ISA paid for this item, and there is no reason to suppose a difference between budgeted and actual.

<sup>b</sup>ISA paid for this item directly. With only fourteen participants in attendance rather than the 18 we originally budgeted for, I have recalculated the expenses accordingly. But I caution that I do not know how much ISA actually paid for this item – hence the uncertainty on the item and the final tally.

## 2. Workshop description

Our fifteen participants (14 on-site, one by Skype) presented thirteen papers in total. The presentations lasted 8-10 minutes, with 5 minutes for discussant comments and 15-20 minutes for general discussion after each presentation. The panellists had all read the papers, with the consequence that discussions were rich and lively. The presenters got excellent feedback on their papers.

The presentations covered how ideology shapes four major aspects of armed groups: mobilization, violence, governance, and alliances. The papers examined these questions in a wide array of cases, from El Salvador and Colombia to Spain, France and Italy to Nigeria and South Sudan to Lebanon and Syria to Georgia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Two papers also conducted large-N cross-national analyses.

The first subject is of perennial interest. Why do people participate in armed groups? How do we assess the degree to which ideology plays a role in their participation? How does ideology intersect with other motivations, such as material gain or emotional expression? And how do armed groups use ideologies to mobilize? Presentations by Cunningham, Ruggeri and Shesterinina took up these questions.

Second, to what degree is ideology a driver of violence? Are “ideological” and “strategic” logics of violence really contradictory, or can they be reconciled? When can ideological training of armed group members in fact restrain violence? Ahmad, Hoover Green, Leader Maynard and McLaughlin addressed these questions, each with a good deal of attention to the micro level of individual participants and victims of violence.

Third, how do ideologies shape the ways in which armed groups govern civilians in times of conflict? Three papers examined this question in various manifestations. Mampilly took up ideological drivers of rebel taxation practices, Weintraub examined rebel economic policies and economic growth in rebel-held territory, and Szekely's paper focused on how armed groups come to take positions on gender relations.

Finally, Balcells and Pischedda, Gade and Gabbay, and Parkinson examined, in different ways, how ideologies shape factional alignments in civil conflicts. Do birds of a feather flock together or do opposites attract? More deeply, how do factional alignments and ideologies mutually constitute each other, such that one's sense of identity and position in a conflict is shaped by the faction one is a part of?

Our discussions yielded three major observations cutting across the papers. First, a critical area for theory and empirical research is to connect large-scale ideological claims with the individual experience of ideology in wartime (what Leader Maynard at one point in the proceedings called "vernacular ideology"). Some papers saw ideologies as providing exogenous options for individuals while others saw new ideological claims as emerging endogenously from new opportunities to mobilize in response to wartime events. Others examined the interplay between the macro and micro levels. There is probably mutual influence between these levels, but this raises the question of when it is analytically helpful to bracket one direction of influence for the sake of focusing on the other.

Second, and relatedly, there was an interesting tension in how papers treated theories emphasizing ideology vis-à-vis reigning rational-choice, strategic theories focused narrowly on an armed group trying to maximize its chances of winning a war, and individuals trying to maximize chances of survival and material gain. Some saw the two as rival theories of behavior in wartime—that ideologies might induce behavior that is counterproductive to aims like war-winning, survival or profit. Others, however, sought to examine how ideology and rational choice might be reconciled, beyond the instrumental adoption of ideologies for the sake of some gain that brings you closer to winning or surviving a war. Instead, there was interest in how ideologies and an ideological environment shape strategic action (for example, in some papers, it became clear that if ideologies help to cement collective action, they cannot help but enter a calculus about how best to win a war). Further, especially with wartime governance of civilians, it became clear that ideologies do not need to be laid aside until the war is won to focus on the war effort, but can be enacted in wartime.

Finally, there was an interest across many of the papers in contestation over what a conflict is "about". Zooming out from the level of the individual combatant or the armed group, some of the papers considered whole conflicts as ideological systems in some regards, suggesting that armed groups' ideological behaviours respond to one another in important ways. That is, armed groups respond to each other in deciding what ideological claims to make, how to make alliance choices that align with their ideologies, and what ideologically-informed kinds of violence they employ.

Ultimately, then, the workshop achieved its objective of advancing knowledge on ideology in armed groups.

### 3. Logistical report

Logistically, the workshop began very well. The room setup was quite amenable to discussions. Audiovisual equipment was set up and ready to go with no problems. Coffee was provided smoothly and quietly, and was much appreciated by all throughout the day.

However, there was an unfortunate problem with lunch: our box lunches didn't initially arrive, and it appeared that the caterer didn't know that our room needed lunches. ISA staff responded quickly and got our lunches to us (though initially without vegetarian options, a problem soon rectified). I'm not sure where the problem lay. I would like to thank ISA staff for their quick response to this situation, though.

One of our participants, Professor Aisha Ahmad of the University of Toronto, did not attend the conference because of the Trump Administration's travel restrictions on Muslim entrants into the US. Professor Ahmad gave her talk by Skype. This worked well for the presentation but had trouble in the Q&A. While Professor Ahmad did get the chance to receive some feedback, it was clearly far from an ideal situation. If these restrictions continue, I would ask ISA to please commit a larger share of workshop budgets to more powerful A/V equipment to better handle web conferencing.

#### 4. Publication plans

The papers were of a high quality, and we are pleased to report that plans are in progress for a special issue of a major journal involving five of the papers. We are organizing a follow-up conference in Montreal June 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> of this year, with the intention that authors will give new versions of their papers, revised based on the feedback they got at the ISA workshop. Given the quality of the papers presented, we have high hopes that the special issue will be well-received.

# Ideology and Armed Groups

Pre-ISA Workshop  
February 21, 2017

Hilton – Peale B, Baltimore, Maryland

9:00	<i>Welcome</i> Theodore McLaughlin, Université de Montréal	
9:15	<i>Fighting About Women: Gender Ideology as a Point of Cleavage in the Syrian Civil War</i> Ora Szekely, Clark University	Discussant: Emily Gade, University of Washington
9:45	<i>Infighting, Ideology, and Network Structure in the Syrian Insurgency</i> Emily Gade and Michael Gabbay, University of Washington	Discussant: Costantino Pischedda, University of Miami
10:15	<i>Territorial Control and Economic Growth: Quasi-Experimental Evidence from the Colombian Insurgency</i> Michael Weintraub, Universidad de los Andes	Discussant: Theodore McLaughlin, Université de Montréal
10:45	<b>Coffee</b>	
11:00	<i>Emotions, Ideologies and Armed Groups</i> Andrea Ruggeri, University of Oxford Stefano Costalli, Università di Firenze	Discussant: Michael Weintraub, Universidad de los Andes
11:30	<i>Mythologies of Militancy: Ideology and Intimacy in Rebel Groups</i> Sarah Elizabeth Parkinson, Johns Hopkins University	Discussant: Jonathan Leader Maynard, University of Oxford
12:00	<i>Ideologies, Violence, and Self-Fulfilling Prophecies of Disloyalty: Evidence from Spain</i> Theodore McLaughlin, Université de Montréal	Discussant: Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, Vassar College
12:30	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:30	<i>"We Have Captured Your Women": Explaining Normative Change in Jibadist Violence</i> Aisha Ahmad, University of Toronto	Discussant: Amelia Hoover Green, Drexel University
2:00	<i>Taxation and Rebel Governance</i> Zachariah Cherian Mampilly, Vassar College	Discussant: Laia Balcells, Duke University
2:30	<i>Institutions, Ideologies and Combatant Socialization in El Salvador's Civil War</i> Amelia Hoover Green, Drexel University	Discussant: Anastasia Shesterinina, University of Sheffield
3:00	<i>Ideological Diversity in Mass Violence</i> Jonathan Leader Maynard, University of Oxford	Discussant: Sarah Elizabeth Parkinson, Johns Hopkins University

3:30	<b>Coffee</b>	
3:45	<i>Do Opposites Attract? Co-constituency and Alliances Between Rebel Groups</i> Laia Balcells, Duke University Costantino Pischedda, University of Miami	Discussant: Ora Szekely, Clark University
4:15	<i>How Ideologies Form, Whose Ideas Matter: The Case of Abkhaz Mobilization in the Georgian-Abkhaz War</i> Anastasia Shesterinina, University of Sheffield	Discussant: Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, University of Maryland
4:45	<i>Grounds for separation: Religion and recruitment in separatist conflicts</i> Kathleen Gallagher Cunningham, University of Maryland	Discussant: Andrea Ruggeri, University of Oxford
5:15	<i>Concluding remarks</i> Theodore McLauchlin, Université de Montréal	