I would like to thank my examiners for taking the time to thoroughly read and assess my thesis. The feedback that they provided both in the viva and in the subsequent reports is appreciated and has enabled me to further refine my work. The feedback has helped me to clarify the academic debates my work engages with and contributes to, as well as the significance of this work. It has also added to the precision and clarity of my analysis. Below I provide my response to the examiners' feedback, explaining how I have reflected on and responded to their comments.

As my thesis, when first submitted, was already at the upper limit of acceptable word count, I have worked to complete the changes in a concise manner. The feedback from the examiners which suggested areas where the word count could be trimmed down has been especially useful in creating space to address the key points in the report.

Examiners' joint report on the *viva voce* examination:

Following the viva voce examination of the thesis, the examiners were very pleased with the candidate's responses to their questions and feedback and agree that the dissertation was successfully defended. From the discussion, which was highly constructive and productive, several important dimensions of the thesis were further clarified, and the overall approach and contribution was justified. Accordingly, the examiners passed the PhD subject only to minor correction of up to 3 months, which the examiners believe can be easily achieved within this timeframe.

Throughout the viva, Oli provided thoughtful and reflective responses to the questions posed, which meant that where there remain some disagreements in terms of approach in the broader sense (e.g. around positivism or research design elements that strive for objectivity), these do not require amendment in the dissertation itself, having been successfully defended in the examination. Indeed, the examiners were both impressed by Oli's openness to dialogue about his work, which was deemed interesting and important.

Given the performance at viva, *the examiners recommend three amendments within 3 months*:

1. **Clarifying the contribution and situation of the project within the literature**

   . While the argument and thesis of the dissertation is clear and plausible, the overall contribution or impetus behind the project could be clarified more fully. One way to do so would be to use the literature review to effectively situate the project in the wider landscape of debates.

I agree with the examiners and appreciate the opportunity to further clarify the overall contribution of my project by using the literature to more effectively locate my work in the wider landscape of terrorism studies. To that end, I have incorporated further discussion around the debates in the literature into this chapter. On page 31, I have highlighted how the understanding of strategy influencing decision making contributes to the significant and ongoing debate in the literature over terrorist groups carrying out mass casualty civilian attacks. Additionally, I draw attention to how strategy interacts with other factors which may influence decision making – discussed further down in the bottom point of this suggested amendment.

. At present the LR serves mainly to operationalise concepts for the dissertation or to comment of strands of terrorism studies. As such, the intellectual debt owed to Kydd and Walter (K&W) is made clear – rightly so in terms of its importance to the thesis – but this might be done in more succinct, less repetitive fashion (cf pages 10 and 23; cf pages 11-12, 28-29, 41-3, 48-57, 59-60). Some abbreviation of that material would create more space for a broadening of the literature horizon.

The suggestion for content which can be made more succinct has been useful in reducing unnecessary repetition and freeing up space to make other changes. Due to alterations made throughout the thesis, the corresponding passages are now on different pages. On page 12, I have simplified the descriptions of the individual strategies of terrorism. On page 29, I have also streamlined the descriptions of the strategies and simplified my explanation of the difference between attrition and intimidation. On page 43, I have removed/reduced repetition such as the detail of the definition of terrorism and how it differs from that used by Kydd and Walter. On pages 48-56, I have removed unnecessary additional information which does not feed into the core arguments necessary for this thesis (for example, I have removed mention of the moral hazard of humanitarian intervention as it is not essential for this research). I have reduced and streamlined descriptions of the strategies of terrorism but much still remains as the formulation of hypotheses is dependent on that information being present in that section. I have tried to ensure that it is clear that it is building on the understanding of the individual strategies, which requires pointing to specific, already mentioned, aspects of them. Finally, on page 58, I have removed repetition of why the model has been selected as this is already covered elsewhere.

. There is a clear sense that the work undertaken here is novel and innovative, but it would be helpful for the candidate to argue further why it is so *necessary* and what the wider contribution is to the literature. This could also be borne out further in the conclusion (see below).

The corrections have offered me an opportunity to highlight the necessity of the work beyond Kydd and Walter. In particular, as discussed above, this thesis contributes to our understanding of why mass casualty attacks against civilians occur, or why groups choose to avoid these attacks. This is not just relevant as part of the academic debate but also to furthering the real-world applicability of this work. This has the potential to influence practitioners' understanding of how groups operate and the actions they take as a result (p.31). I have shown how strategy interacts with other factors, contributing to the creation of a clearer picture of how terrorist groups make decisions – what constrains and what enables them. This academic debate over mass casualties is linked to in the conclusion; on page 204 I point to the MRTA's outbidding campaign having variation in casualty counts given constraints placed on them by the political context of their campaign and their constituency. Conditions led to them avoiding using civilians for mass casualty events.

. Relatedly, an expectation of the LR would be to put this thesis (i.e. that strategy can/does determine decision making around mode/type of violence) into dialogue with competing explanations, e.g. the literature on terrorist learning, material or social factors (this is especially true in some case studies where these factors are mentioned in the discussion and do seem plausible). Doing so would help both to enhance the sense that the project sits within and speaks to a particular wider discussion within security or terrorism studies and to underscore the need for this expansion of K&W's own model.

In the literature review, on pages 25-26, I now consider competing explanations. This discussion not only highlights that these other perspectives exist, but that they exist in an interconnected way. These factors include terrorist learning, material factors, and social and political factors, such as constituent population distribution and regime type. These factors can interact with and influence each other, this is to say that they are not presented as existing in isolation but as factors which can link to strategy to potentially influence outcomes. It is not the goal of this study to adjudicate which factors are the most

influential in determining terrorist decision making. This theme re-emerges in the individual chapters and is highlighted in the conclusion (discussed below).

2. **Expansion of the conclusion**

. The conclusion is helpful insofar as it points forward to future avenues of research and provide a succinct and lucid account of the preceding study. However, this is where the Oli could really unpack and communicate the bigger take-aways of the project itself and argue beyond the presentation of the model and recapping where the hypotheses do (or do not) show validity. The presentation here is somewhat mechanistic and it would be beneficial to analyse all 10 cases in concert here and extract some bigger lessons from the research, when read as a whole, e.g. what are we to make of the fact that the spoiler hypothesis was less substantiated than those of provocation?

On page 203, I have added a paragraph that the spoiling hypotheses being less substantiated than others does not disprove strategy being a driving factor but does highlight something that has been present throughout the thesis, and reinforced by corrections, that other factors can and do influence terrorist group decision making. I have also included an addition as a response to this feedback that specific strategies may be more or less influential than others, that while strategy as a whole is shown to be influential some may be more powerful than others.

. If we take the 87% overall validity as true, then what are the wider implications of this (this could/should be linked back to the discussions in the literature review earlier)? The aim here should be to transcend K&W, rather than remain confined within the terms of the conversation that they initiated.

On page 204, I have expanded the "Discussion and Contribution" section. As part of this, I have addressed the additions made to the literature review recommended by the examiners. This includes the reiteration of the contribution to the debate on mass casualty attacks against civilians, and I have also included a small addition on this to the "Applicability" section of the conclusion (p. 207). I have also linked it back to the expanded discussion in the literature review on interaction with other factors that can influence decision making, reiterating that strategy is a major factor but it is clear that other factors do have an influence. I show that the 87% figure is testament to that,

strategy does emerge as a major factor but it does not exist in isolation (p. 204). My study, therefore, invites a larger research programme on the conditions under which certain factors, including strategy, are more or less influential in shaping certain outcomes.

3. **Framing of the argument, engagement with context', and 'softening' the language**

. From the viva itself, the main feedback relates to the way some claims are made or how the importance of the project is framed. In the dissertation, there are claims to deliberately not engage with ideology (and, at viva, some of the more contextual factors that explain within case idiosyncrasies etc.). The examiners note that such claims are not needed for the validity or the quality of the thesis to shine through, but these do create vulnerabilities in the argument.

This is an important clarification highlighted by the examiners, ideology cannot be totally ignored when addressing this subject and is perceived as a factor in terrorist group decision making. On page 43, I have now nuanced my explanation of approach to ideology. It is not the main focus of my research, but I do acknowledge its importance and how it does interact with my research as context and that it can have some degree of influence on terrorist decision making. This relates to the discussion on pages 25-26 concerning the interaction between different strands of the literature on terrorist group decision making.

. Oli is recommended to add some (brief) discussion of context throughout the dissertation where this would be helpful for advancing his claims, e.g. the spoiler section doesn't confirm the hypotheses as fully as other sections, so putting discussion about spoiling within the relevant historical contexts might alleviate the burden of proof here. Of course, 'context' is itself a protean term and to some degree subjective (who decides what 'context' matters?). But given the focus here on strategy, the political context seems especially apposite – thinking about the dynamic between a given organisation and the State.

I have included additions in the introductions to each group clarifying important context and how it might feed into the conduct of the campaign. This includes the political context of the campaigns, such as the dynamic between the state and group examined (for

example, pre-existing violence), but also other context such as the geographical separation or mixing of populations. This addition of context can be seen on pages 73, 85-86, 98, 109, 121, 135, 149, 160, 173-174, and 183. These do relate to themes which emerge in the analysis of the groups and the addition of the context points a more obvious arrow to them.

. Elsewhere, the examiners agreed that thinking about spoiling as an action (rather than 'spoiler' as an ontology, which is sometimes implied in the thesis) could be emphasized further. In this way, the context specific aspect of a particular campaign – when an actor deploys spoiling behaviour – would nuance the claim.

On page 71, in the introduction to the spoiling chapter, I have clarified the language to specify that groups engage in spoiling activity rather than solely existing as spoilers. This is an important clarification to make as spoiling relates to process goals and not outcome goals, which this adjustment helps to clarify.

. The chapter on spoiling might therefore be improved by being clear that analysis is confined to one sub-section of a wider campaign – and in line with this, Oli might step away from the effort to discuss the campaign of, say, the Real IRA, across its entire history. A more targeted analysis of these case studies would improve things.

On page 73, I have now clarified that while my research covers the time of the group's existence, it does not cover its all aspects of the group's history. It only focuses on the terrorism aspect of the group and does not include organised crime and non-violent political actions. I have also added a brief clarification on page 59 that applies this approach to all groups concerned, that the analysis is already confined to very particular aspects of groups' histories.

. Relatedly, a vulnerability within the argument relates to the model itself – the external has encouraged Oli to avoid being overly 'doctrinaire' about K&W's own model as some of the critiques available of that model (e.g. that the typology is overly simplified, relies heavily of categorical binaries, or often relegates context to secondary importance) are translated into the dissertation itself. Given that the dissertation seeks to advance and

significantly expand upon K&W, some discussion in the opening sections/ theoretical framework on the model would be beneficial; doing so would not only allow a little more flexibility to the argument – where K&W are seen as a helpful heuristic or starting point but not gospel – but might also enable the contribution to the wider literature to shine through more clearly.

On pages 29-30, I have expanded on some the shortcomings of Kydd and Walter's model. Some of these were included elsewhere in the thesis but are made more obvious as shortcomings here, and some of them are the examiners' suggestions. These include: the model being an oversimplified typology, the lack of appreciation of context, the use of categorical binaries. This addition serves to highlight that, while Kydd and Walter do provide a strong model whose use is appropriate in this thesis, it has flaws which this thesis engages with and adapts to accordingly. This engagement enables the original contributions of this work to be seen more clearly.

Overall, the examiners assessment of the work at viva voce is that the piece is very interesting and often nicely detailed with a clear academic writing style. The work itself is of high quality and has the potential to offer a notable contribution, but the main task uniting the three amendments is clarifying the specific nature of that contribution and relaxing some of the more rigid claims.

Overall summary: The examiners' feedback, both in the viva itself and the subsequent report, has been very helpful in helping to refine my thesis and identify areas of improvement. The corrections made interlink with work that was already in the thesis, making the connections clearer and also helps to link more effectively between chapters, bringing together the literature review, conclusion, and empirical chapters to make a more obviously cohesive piece of work with clear contributions and which is situated in the relevant literature.