The Development of Strategic Culture in Terrorist Organisations

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Abstract

In the last two decades, the rapid growth of terrorist groups and organisations has posed a strategic surprise to counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers. Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant are recent examples. Such terrorist organisations threaten the socio-economic and the socio-political cohesion of nation states via 'mass casualty' terrorist attacks, kidnappings and human trafficking, and hybrid, insurgent, and political forms of warfare.

This thesis addresses the following primary research question: How might the strategic studies framework of strategic culture explain the growth and maturation of certain terrorist organisations that can grow, persist and survive, over time? Supplementary research questions include: What identified causal mechanisms are relevant to the possible emergence and development of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations (terrorist strategic subcultures)? What does the failure to develop a viable strategic subculture mean to a terrorist organisation, to its senior leadership, to its tactical violence operatives, and to its indoctrinated followers?

To address these research questions this thesis develops a new analytical framework of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. The thesis builds on a late Cold War era debate regarding strategic culture and the use of force (strategic culture) that United States nuclear and think tank strategists originally conceptualised in order to understand the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics' war-fighting mindset. The thesis synthesises a new fourth generation approach for strategic culture that is relevant to contemporary security debates about an emerging multipolar world.

The chosen case study is Japan's Aum Shinrikyo. The thesis uses process tracing and new qualitative tests to examine Aum Shinrikyo's path dependent transition from a growth-

oriented new religious movement to a terrorist organisation—with a covert and compartmentalised research and development program on chemical and biological weapons. The lead-up to Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway on 20th March 1995—which killed 13 people and injured 5,500 others—is examined as well as the Japanese Government's executions in 2018 of founder Shoko Asahara, and senior and mid-level former members.

I look specifically at three causal mechanisms: the *cultural transmission* of a core ideology assembled from syncretic religious, cultic milieu, and subcultural sources; in-group *social learning* for its renunciates (religious adherents or followers) in an initiatory, religious sub-system; and the use of *folklore* to bond renunciates to the senior leadership. These three posited causal mechanisms facilitated the senior leadership's capture by an Indo-Tibetan worldview that created a decision preference for violence; the corruption of Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system; the social stratification of the (decision elite) senior leadership and religious members (renunciates); and the embrace of folklore-influenced thinking.

These three posited causal mechanisms converged on the indoctrinability of Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates. They also reinforced founder Shoko Asahara's paranoid, delusional belief system and facilitated the senior leadership's elite deviance. The thesis advances new causal tests that use process tracing to identify how and why terrorist organisations can grow, mature, or in Aum Shinrikyo's case, fail. A new research agenda for advancing strategic culture that synthesises insights from strategic studies, terrorism studies, and political economy is also identified.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Publications During Enrolment

Burns, Alex. ‘Doubting The War On Terror.’ *M/C* Journal 14, no. 1 (March) (2011): http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/338

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Introduction

This thesis addresses the following primary research question: How might the strategic studies framework of strategic culture explain the growth and maturation of certain terrorist organisations that can emerge, persist, and survive, over time? Supplementary research questions include: What identified causal mechanisms are relevant to the possible emergence and development of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations (terrorist strategic subcultures)? What does the failure to develop a viable strategic subculture mean to a terrorist organisation, to its senior leadership, to its tactical violence operatives (who carry out terrorist attacks), and to its indoctrinated followers?

In this thesis, I address these core research questions with a new, causal-informed, midrange theory of meso-level strategic subcultures, which I contend can exist in terrorist organisations—and that may shape their strategic, resource allocation, and operational decision-making. The analytical construct of a meso-level strategic subculture can help to explain a range of terrorist organisational activities from elite, group cohort, and strategic perspectives. These organisational activities can include: how terrorist organisations formulate their victory conditions (how and when they are successful) and the long-term strategic objectives that they decide to pursue; how they select and indoctrinate their senior leadership, tactical violence operatives, and followers; and how they seek to acquire what I call mobilisational counter-power capabilities to project power that can significantly shape their campaign success or failure, and their terrorist attack scope (which in turn can the number of casualties).

The terrorism studies literature to date has several dominant, competing interpretations. Rational choice theorists, for example, contend that terrorist organisations undertake attacks, such as Hezbollah's bombing of the United States military barracks in 1983, to maximise

their impacts for the efforts undertaken.[1] In this view, terrorists are utility maximisers and terrorist violence leads to desired outcomes. Strategic communication theorists focus on the message that terrorists wish to communicate beyond violence to a broader audience, such as the 1970s wave of aircraft hijackings and the Irish Republican Army's communiques to the media.[2] In this view, terrorists are attention-commanding communicators use violence to reach a broader and international audience for their demands. In contrast to these two dominant interpretations, I argue in this thesis that possible, interacting, combinatorial, and cumulative causal mechanisms such as the *cultural transmission* of attitudes, beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews; in-group and cohort-based *social learning* that facilitates social bonding; and shared *folklore* narratives and transpersonal symbol systems all remain under-appreciated by counter-terrorism analysts and national security policymakers. Each of these posited causal mechanisms—and their combined interplay—are important ways to understand terrorist decision-making, and the resulting path dependencies of how terrorist organisations can evolve.

The re-emergence and the rapid growth of religiously motivated terrorism has transformed the international security environment in the early 21st Century. Neojihadist terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have developed trans-national networks, and waged insurgencies to capture (and then subsequently lose) territory.[3] These more large-scale terrorist organisations conducted sophisticated psychological warfareand propaganda influence campaigns against many countries. Terrorist organisation predecessors such as Japan's new religious movement Aum Shinrikyo

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[1] Patrick J. Sloyan, *When Reagan Sent In The Marines: The Invasion of Lebanon* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2019).
[2] Derina Holtzhausen and Ansgar Zerfass, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Strategic Communication* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
[3] Pete Lentini, *Neojihadism: Towards A New Understanding of Terrorism and Extremism?* (Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013).

developed a covert and compartmentalised research program into chemical and biological weapons—thus highlighting how non-state actors can pose urgent, existential threats to nation-states—that simultaneously renders state-based conventional deterrence and negotiation ineffective as feasible strategies.

The central argument of this thesis is that terrorist organisations strive to develop what I call a viable *strategic subculture* in order for their senior leadership (decision elite) to achieve particular long-term strategic objectives (their *telos* and the specific *victory conditions* that mean achievable success). Underpinning this strategic subculture are the *mobilisational counter-power capabilities* (the ability to project power and to appear more dominant against a more powerful adversary or enemy) to survive and grow in an often adversarial, hostile, operational environment. Aum Shinrikyo's nebulous Shambhala Plan fantasised about overthrowing Japan's constitutional monarchy, installing its founder and leader Shoko Asahara as a new ruling Emperor, controlling the state's politico-military institutions, and establishing a utopian post-apocalyptic, spiritual community of Lotus Villages as safe havens, in an environment that was initially supportive to the religious corporation, but that was unaware of its actual, long-term strategic goals.[4] However, the initial short-term success via the strategic surprise of a terrorist attack that Aum Shinrikyo achieved on 20th March 1995 led, paradoxically, to the Shambhala Plan's strategic and operational failure. Aum Shinrikyo's envisioned Lotus Villages did not become long-term, sustainable institutions beyond several isolated, rural communes. The founder Shoko Asahara and his decision elite colleagues failed to gain control of Japan's politico-military institutions and to overthrow its regime structure.

[4] Christopher W. Hughes, "Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, the Changing Nature of Terrorism, and the Post-Cold War Security Agenda," *Global Change, Peace, and Security* 10, no. 1 (1998): 39-60.

The Puzzle

Terrorism studies scholars and counterterrorism analysts understand observationally that certain terrorist organisations can emerge, grow, and persist over time: the most notable example is Al Qaeda's continued survival - after both the September 11 terrorist attacks and the death of its leader and founder Osama Bin Laden - to create an enduring and international mujahideen subculture.[5] This survivability criterion distinguishes Al Qaeda and similar terrorist organisations (like Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) from other, more comparatively episodic, short-lived or sporadic clandestine, extremist, insurgent, militant, or terrorist groups like Italy's Red Brigades and the United States-based Symbionese Liberation Army.

This observable phenomenon raises many intriguing questions. What distinguishes or stratifies these two different cohorts: the long-term survivors versus the more relatively short-lived terrorist organisations? What gives one terrorist organisation a distinguishable and endurable cumulative advantage over time, when compared with a terrorist group that attempts to create a viable strategic culture, but that fails to do so? What implications emerge from this result for terrorism studies scholars and counterterrorism analysts who examine and monitor these terrorist organisations? How can these scholars and analysts better understand the potential growth trajectories of terrorist organisations which do survive over a longer time period? How might these insights inform effective, evidence-based, and targeted counterterrorism policy?

In this thesis, I posit a new, causal-informed explanation: the analytical construct or the midrange theory of a strategic subculture (an organisational level sub-set of a national

[5] Bruce Hoffman and Fernando Reinares, eds., *The Evolution of the Global Terrorist Threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's Death* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

strategic culture or a politico-military 'way of war') that facilitates internal decision-making in the terrorist organisation, and more efficient and effective resource allocation and coordination between its founders, its senior leadership, tactical personnel, and followers. I posit that conceptualising, developing, and implementing a viable strategic subculture is a major reason why some terrorist organisations are able to grow and survive, whilst other terrorist groups are unable to do so. The mobilisational counter-power capabilities provide the force power projection to pursue the decision elite's relevant strategic objectives and goals.

I contend in this thesis that a terrorist organisation's internal decision-making is underpinned by encultured, in-group beliefs and decision preferences—about the causal effectiveness of terrorist or insurgency violence—as a means to achieving envisioned strategic ends (the victory conditions). A moral calculus or a meta-ethical justification for this group conceptualised and coordinated violence—or for their possible proxy role in hybrid, information, political, and psychological warfare strategies—is needed to underpin the culturally transmitted core ideology, and also the socially learned values and worldviews of the terrorist organisation's (indoctrinated) membership.[6] Other possible pathways and solutions to achieving the victory conditions, such as participation in domestic parliamentary and political processes via forming a voting bloc or a micro political party, are likely to have been tried, and will also have failed for the terrorist organisation's decision elite.

Terrorist leaders are norm entrepreneurs who discover, identify, select, and cultivate a core ideological worldview (the core ideology) with which the terrorist organisation becomes identified over time. This core ideological worldview gains prominence within the terrorist organisation as a shared, mutual, and deep understanding between its affiliated membership.

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[6] William T. Vollmann, *Rising Up and Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom and Urgent Means* (New York: Ecco, 2004), 438-515.

Operational personnel—who I call tactical violence operatives—are recruited, socialised, trained, and ultimately mobilised to carry out terrorist attacks, using a variety of methods.[7] A terrorist campaign may achieve initial success through the directed psychological shock to adversaries of successful terrorist attacks that result in significant casualty numbers. However, the terrorist campaign may still fail strategically in the long-term. This adverse outcome for the terrorist organisation may in part be due to the possible path dependencies of early ideological beliefs and the cumulative strategic decisions that its founders and senior leadership have made, which over time may restrict optionality.

I define and outline a new analytical framework or midrange theory of strategic subcultures that strategic culture theory-building informs. This offers the analytical potential to help strategic studies and terrorism studies scholars, counterterrorism analysts, and national security policymakers improve their strategic anticipation of terrorist organisations—and their unfolding growth trajectory and lifecycle—before more large-scale terrorist attacks are undertaken that would result in mass casualties or the transition to open insurgencies. Acting on an informed understanding of meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations may assist analysts and policymakers to reduce the prospects for 'mass casualty' attacks. This would also have implications for terrorism risk reinsurance markets.

This thesis develops a new midrange theory for identifying and testing the possible existence of meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. This new midrange theory is conceptualised in Chapters 1 and 2, outlined methodologically in Chapter 3, explored further and tested in Chapters 4 to 6, and evaluated in terms of research findings and possible further research in Chapter 7. This conceptualisation may assist in examining the ambiguous, fragmentary, and uncertain information in order to have a necessary and sufficient evidence

[7] Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

threshold for advice to counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers on how best to counter and to deter the security threats that terrorist organisations pose. It is also possible to situate the policymaking value of this new framework about strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations in the policymaker context of the cost-benefit analysis to pursue specific deter, deny, degrade, and destroy strategies (as part of the counterterrorism response calculus).[8]

In particular, I focus on a terrorist organisation's development via a strategic subculture based in part on developing and deploying *mobilisational counter-power capabilities* which threaten to displace or to destroy an existing nation-state government or a politico-military elite. These capabilities enable a terrorist organisation to appear more powerful than it perhaps really is, and to dominate its environment against specific adversaries and enemies. Understanding a strategic subculture's important functional role in a terrorist organisation (what I call a terrorist strategic subculture) can help to identify where encultured, in-group beliefs and decision preferences for violence can come from: cultural, philosophical, political, religious, and subcultural sources.

A strategic subculture can help to identify meso-level factors (mid-level group or organisation factors that are distinct from macro-level world and micro-level individual factors) that may be relevant to the radicalisation and recruitment processes in terrorist organisations.One important factor is *indoctrinability* – the susceptibility to belief adoption and possible indoctrination that I discuss in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 concerning Aum Shinrikyo's relationship between its senior leadership and its followers. It also reflects group level and social psychological processes that bind the senior leadership or decision elites, and the mid-level or low-level tactical violence operatives together. The thesis contributes a midrange

[8] Cass R. Sunstein, *The Cost-Benefit Revolution* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2018).

theory about such meso-level factors, and it develops new process tracing tests to identify the existence of posited causal mechanisms that facilitate it. Being aware of these meso-level factors and posited causal mechanisms may help counterterrorism and intelligence analysts, and national security policymakers to devise more effective anticipatory and operational responses to prevent the growth and maturation of terrorist organisations, and more effective strategies to help to end their existence.[9]

The Argument

I argue in this thesis that the specific group and organisational meso-level processes which occur in strategic subcultures are important to begin to answer these puzzles. Understanding how these group and organisational processes work in terrorist organisations is an important key to developing more effective counterterrorism prevention and coercive deterrence strategies. To do so, I first draw on a late Cold War era debate from civilian think tanks and military war colleges about the comparative cultural-psychological influences of United States and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) politico-military elites to fight a possible 'limited' nuclear war.

An overlooked aspect of this late Cold War era debate in strategic studies is (1) the two-level identification of cultural-psychological influences on war-fighter decision-making (national or politico-military elite-based *strategic cultures*), and (2) the importance of a nation-state's politico-military elites, and defence and national security institutions in filtering, selecting, shaping, and prioritising those war-fighting decisions (meso-level, institutional, or

[9] Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

organisational *strategic subcultures*). This involves understanding the mindset of potential adversaries and their decision preference for violence over non-violent alternatives.[10]

Such meso-level group and organisational processes can also be understood in the context of a lifecycle model of terrorist organisation activity, and their pursuit of long-term strategic objectives, goals, and ultimate victory conditions. *Initiation* concerns: (i) the *formative experiences* of a terrorist organisation's founders, senior leadership, and decision elite (a leadership cohort that conceptualises organisational level strategy); and (ii) the *preference set formation for a meta-ethical, moral calculus* in order to achieve particular strategic and tactical objectives. *Capabilities* refer to the development of organisational resources, and the recruitment, retention, and the mobilisation of tactical violence operatives to carry out terrorist attacks. *Enactment* pertains to an unfolding terrorist campaign as a means to achieve strategic objectives via terrorist attacks that target the psychological vulnerabilities of adversaries. Going through the terrorist organisation lifecycle involves understanding a series of cumulative decisions about the *preferences* that are priorities, the operational *means* that are chosen, and the *ends* or the particular strategic objectives which are pursued.[11]

I conceptualise the existence of in-group beliefs adoption and decision preference formation by using three specific and interacting, posited causal mechanisms:

Causal Mechanism 1 (CM1): *Cultural Transmission* concerns how terrorist organisations and leaders adopt particular religious, socio-economic, or socio-political beliefs and decision

[10] Jack Snyder, "The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations" (R-2154-AF) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1977), accessed 31st October 2018, https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R2154.html.

[11] Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior As A Subject of Strategic Choice," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), 7-24.

preferences that inform their meta-theoretical, moral calculus.[12] This cultural transmission may be *vertical* (such as from familial and parental influences), *horizontal* (such as from in-group or peer group bonding), or *oblique* (such as from educational teachers, schools, and universities, or from other environmental and situational sources and experiences, including apophenia – recognising patterns when there are none - and hazard). It may also be from *proximate* (near) or *distal* (faraway) sources. It may be *synchronic* (present) or *diachronic* (through-time) in timeframe. Collectively, these different forms of cultural transmission can provide a spatio-temporal matrix to understand how beliefs and decision preferences inform the ideational foundations of terrorist organisations.

Causal Mechanism 2 (CM2): *Social Learning* is a particular horizontal form of cultural transmission that occurs in human cohorts, groups, and organisations.[13] It involves information transmission and learned behaviour within a collective group context. A terrorist organisation is considered as a specific membership sub-population in which the senior leadership and the decision elite cohort develop strategic innovations (perhaps on the basis of culturally transmitted knowledge), and which are then learned by the tactical violence operatives through indoctrination, persuasion, role modelling, propaganda, and undue influence. A variant of this can involve the possible mutual conversion dynamics between cohort peers in a group or organisation: a self-radicalisation process that may appear to be sudden or spontaneous to outsiders. This social learning dynamic has been observed in new religious movements, and also in activist social movements.

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[12] Ute Schonpflug, ed., *Cultural Transmission: Psychological, Developmental, Social, and Methodological Aspects* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Angela K.Y. Leung, Chi-Yue Chiu, and Ying Yi Hong, eds., *Cultural Processes: A Social Psychological Perspective* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[13] William Hoppitt and Kevin N. Laland, *Social Learning: An Introduction to Mechanisms, Methods and Models* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Causal Mechanism 3 (CM3): *Folklore* shapes in-group cohesion and identity through shared metaphors, legends, myths, narratives, rituals, stories, and symbols.[14] Folklore is both a unit of culturally transmitted information, and it also creates a social matrix of aligned, social learning and mutual understanding in the group or organisation that it unfolds within. It articulates and embodies a deeper stratum in a terrorist organisation in which terrorist leaders and decision elites will each mobilise narratives, stories and symbols to create in-group social bonds: this folklore can facilitate the radicalisation, recruitment, indoctrination, and retention of tactical violence operatives. In bureaucratic terms, folklore is one possible way that leaders and decision elites might be able to exert (possibly coercive) psychological influence over mid- and low-level tactical violence operatives as a form of bounded rationality: to ensure that they carry out mandated actions that advances or progress a terrorist campaign that will fulfil the terrorist organisation's chosen strategic objectives. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 further explore this possibility using the chosen case study of Aum Shinrikyo.

The Analytical Framework: Strategic Culture and Strategic Subcultures

The midrange theoretical framework that this thesis conceptualises and explores is the possibility of meso-level strategic subcultures existing in terrorist organisations: the observable existence of in-group attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, norms, preferences, values, and worldviews (the ideational *preferences*) that inform organisational capabilities about the prioritised use of terrorist violence (the *means*) in order to achieve a particular strategic vision, goals, or a set of ultimate victory conditions (the *ends*).

The notion of strategic subcultures first arose during the Cold War's late period, when the United States political scientist Jack Snyder sought to understand the mindsets of Soviet

[14] Regina F. Bendix and Galit Hasan-Rokem, eds., *A Companion to Folklore* (Chichester, West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

nuclear strategists. In his RAND Corporation analytical report in 1977, Snyder posited an overarching strategic culture or the choice sets of attitudes, beliefs, and preferences based on historical experience and governance structures, which influenced how the USSR's nuclear strategists theorised and thought about the operational use of force in a possible 'limited' nuclear war exchange between the two superpowers.[15]

Strategic subcultures (in the original subfield context of strategic studies) referred to the custodians of 'national ways of war'. These were the defence, national security, and politico-military institutions and elites that might have variations in attitudes, beliefs, norms, and preferences about war-fighting decisions. Yet this insight about the important role of meso-level strategic subcultures which take on organisational forms has remained an overlooked footnote in the strategic culture literature, which instead has, to date, largely focused on nation-states, politico-military institutions and elites, and the historical analysis of how national ways of warfare have emerged and evolved (discussed further in Chapters 1 and 2).

Jack Snyder's initial conceptualisation of strategic culture occurred at the influential RAND Corporation think tank. He distanced his initial research on strategic culture from RAND's historical influence and its previous interest in game theory frameworks. Later, Snyder subsequently adopted rational choice and neoclassical realism frameworks in his mature research program at Columbia University.[16] This decision began an observable trend of researchers eventually abandoning strategic culture for more established conceptual and methodological frameworks.

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[15] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 26-27, 30-33, 34, 35.

[16] Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Meanwhile, the strategic studies researcher Colin S. Gray, located at nuclear strategist Herman Kahn's think tank the Hudson Institute, conceptualised an explicitly war-fighting form of strategic culture. Gray's think tank puzzle was to consider how the United States nuclear strategists might win a 'limited' nuclear exchange with the Soviet Union.[17] Gray's possible path to victory mirrored the Carter Administration's Schlesinger doctrine of 'flexible response.'[18] Ken Booth at the United States Naval War College considered a third perspective; that is, warning of possible ethnocentric biases in strategic studies epistemology and ontology regarding the mindset and the worldviews of potential enemies and adversaries.[19]

Contemporary security challenges suggest that these early, individual, parallel research programs on strategic culture might be reconceptualised to deal with new and emerging threats: what I call in Chapter 2 the post-2002, fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building. Jack Snyder's early RAND work anticipated current attempts in comparative international politics and public diplomacy to understand and negotiate with authoritarian nation-states and the strategic rivalry between great powers and rising powers. This has become important in an emerging multipolar world order defined by shadow wars, twilight operations, and gloaming perceptions.[20]

In particular, Russia's Putin Administration was alleged to have deployed sophisticated disinformation operations and covert information warfare to meddle in the 2016 United States

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[17] Colin S. Gray, "Across The Nuclear Divide: Strategic Studies Past and Present," *International Security* 2, no. 1 (Summer) (1977): 24-46.
[18] Colin S. Gray, "Nuclear Strategy: The Case for a Theory of Victory," *International Security* 4, no. 9 (Summer) (1979): 54-87.
[19] Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979).
[20] Austin Carson, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

Presidential election campaign: a claim that continues to be debated.[21] Colin S. Gray's original war-fighting stance looks more ominous given nuclear arms proliferation in Pakistan and North Korea, and given the failed development programs for nuclear capabilities in Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Ken Booth's prescient warning about ethnocentric biases has foreshadowed analytic misperception in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia of the 2003 Iraq War; the Arab Spring protests in the Middle East; state failure in post-Gaddafi Libya; and Syria's on-going civil war, and the great power alliances behind it.

Extremist, militant, and terrorist organisations continue to pose significant international security challenges to nation-states that require trans-national alliances to combat. Some have developed radical or terrorist subcultures about the moral justification for violence—but not necessarily the strategic subculture to focus this will into mobilisational counter-power capabilities that would achieve niche dominance. As I will detail in Chapter 2's literature review and thematic discussion, these international security challenges have also prompted significant debates in strategic culture and terrorism studies. For example, although the psychiatrist and political psychologist Jerrold M. Post has explicitly employed first generation strategic culture to understanding terrorist psychology, this important connection and its analytical implications remain underappreciated in both the strategic culture and the terrorism studies literature.[22] Post's psychiatric and political psychology understanding of terrorist leaders, followers, and organisations deserves further scrutiny to fully grasp the long-term security threat that mature terrorist organisations pose to nation-states, and also to their communities and voter blocs. Post's psychiatric insights also need to be updated in the context of contemporary knowledge about strategic culture such as the fourth generation that

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[21] Mueller III, Robert S., *The Mueller Report: The Final Report of the Special Counsel Into Donald Trump, Russia, and Collusion* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2019). Simpson, Glenn and Peter Fritsch, *Crime In Progress: The Secret History of the Trump-Russia Investigation* (New York: Allen Lane, 2019).

[22] Jerrold M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

I define and discuss further in Chapter 2, and the growing literature in terrorism studies about radical and terrorist subcultures.

For example, the Japanese new religious movement turned terrorist organisation Aum Shinrikyo crossed a significant threshold when it became the first contemporary militant non-state actor to deploy biological and chemical weapons against Japanese civilians. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) captured significant territory in northern Iraq and Syria, and expropriated oil assets to sell on black markets. Their battlefield combat success has forced the United States, Iraq, Russia, and other countries to counter and rollback Islamic State's geographic footprint, which these forces largely succeeded in doing so in 2017-19. Their combat success then led ISIL to implement a more decentralised network strategy. Colombia's government spent much of 2016 negotiating a successful peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People's Army, which has led to the emergence of militant sub-factions.[23] Other extremist, militant, and terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hamas, and Hezbollah remain active threats against which defence, intelligence, and national security agencies monitor and continue to conduct special warfare operations against.

Strategic subcultures enable decision elites—senior leaders and the core nucleus that is responsible for strategic level decision-making—to shape how a terrorist organisation wages a campaign of violence against its adversaries. They are a meso-level feature of terrorist organisations that facilitate cumulative advantage over time, and that lead to the outcome of long-term organisational survivability. This means that different counterterrorism strategies need to be used against these kinds of terrorist organisations—with cost-benefit analysis, logistics, and resource allocation consequences. Strategic subcultures can be contrasted with

[23] Alexandra Phelan, "Engaging Insurgency: The Impact of the 2016 Colombian Peace Agreement on FARC's Political Participation," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 9 (2019): 836-852.

radical or terrorist subcultures which are broader and that may involve followers, self-radicalised individual operatives, small cells, and a broader community of support (as discussed further in Chapter 2).

In this thesis I conceptualise, define, and examine three key aspects that are germane to a strategic subculture: First, a strategic subculture has a *strategic worldview* about the external environment and its adversaries or enemies as well as about the specific, desired changes to the operational environment that the terrorist organisation wishes to make in pursuit of its long-term goals (its *ends* and its ultimate *victory conditions* under which its goals will be achieved). This strategic worldview may arise from past collective experiences via *cultural transmission*; from *social learning* within the decision elite or from its founders; or from *folklore* narratives about the terrorist organisation's genesis, founders, decision elite, its long-term strategic vision, and its combat learning experiences. These three posited causal mechanisms (CM1 to CM3 respectively) are further defined and explored in Chapter 3's discussion of research design, qualitative methodology, and case study selection.

Second, a strategic subculture has *ranked ordered preferences* that prioritise terrorist violence (the *means*) as the way to achieve the specific changes that are sought in the world (the *ends*) over alternative non-violent strategies which might be pursued instead (the *alternatives*). A terrorist organisation may emerge from ongoing philosophical, political, metaphysical, or religious debates within a nation-state, region, or society of which it becomes a particular, crystallised, and violent mesocosm. A conceptual and ideological distance often develops between a terrorist organisation and its host society or nation-state. These varied debates may also be found in the wider radical or terrorist subculture in terms of shared narratives, mindsets, and symbols.

Third, a terrorist organisation that develops a viable *strategic subculture* means that it is now more likely to have a cumulative advantage over other competitive strategic actors: specifically, it has the *mobilisational counter-power capabilities* which enable it to persist and survive in the face of adversaries, enemies, or against the active counter-measures which are made against it (such as terrorist leader decapitation or degrade, deter, denial, and destroy operations, which themselves can be highly problematic and can lead to adverse or unexpected outcomes).[24] For successful terrorist organisations, these mobilisational counter-power capabilities create a better fit or match with their strategic environment, in an evolutionary sense. The terrorist organisation is also more likely to achieve, at least in the short-term, an *escalation dominance* over its strategic rivals, challengers, and competitors: it is able to control a strategic crisis through the use of coercion, fear, power, and threat. In contrast, a mis-match between the terrorist organisation and their strategic environment will likely mean eventual failure.

Strategic subcultures explain functionally how terrorist organisations transform ideas, preferences, values and worldviews about waging violence into sustainable, long-term mobilisational counter-power capabilities. Strategic subcultures are midrange, mesocosm, or meso-level structures that mediate between two other levels of analysis. The first is the *micro-foundations* of individual lives, beliefs, decisions, and preferences. The micro-meso link is developed further in Chapter 4's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo's path dependent transition into militant, terrorist violence. The second is the large and vast *macro-foundations* of material economic, geographic, and mass societal conditions. The meso-macro link is examined further in Chapter 5's discussion of the various counterfactuals (alternative,

[24] Jenna Jordan, *Leadership Decapitation: Strategic Targeting of Terrorist Organizations* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019); Bryan C. Price, *Targeting Top Terrorists: Understanding Leadership Removal in Counterterrorism Strategy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

branching histories or decision pathways) that Aum Shinrikyo faced, and in Chapter 6's analysis of its initiatory, religious sub-system (what I call Aum Initiation).

Strategic subcultures emerge from the formative experiences of a senior leadership cohort, founders, or a core nucleus that I call the *decision elite*. Strategic subcultures become embedded over time cumulatively as shared collective, group level capabilities in terrorist organisations, particularly via preferential resource allocation and opportunity hoarding by the decision elite when compared with other organisational members (in which the majority of the opportunities and the resources go to the decision elite which leads to a lock-in of cumulative advantage, over time). This enables and ethically justifies the terrorist organisation's use of violence as a targeted, will-driven, asymmetric force against its own adversaries: politico-military opponents and civilian populations. The tactical forms that terrorist organisations initiate may include clandestine operations, network-based coordination and mobilisation, surprise attacks, open insurgency, propaganda, and hybrid, information, psychological, or political warfare strategies. Collectively, these tactical forms use covert and dark network structures to engage in terrorist attacks against physical infrastructure and information systems.[25]

These shared collective, group level capabilities are often first observationally visible through two aspects: (1) the conceptual development of a core ideology (a metaphysical, philosophical, political or religious ideology that is core to the terrorist organisation and to its decision elite) that attracts, sensitises, and mobilises individual recruits into trained, tactical violence operatives, via a bounded rationality (making decisions on the basis of asymmetric or limited information), and (2) the meso-level, cybernetic systems-like control of available choice architectures (the pathways of possible choices that can actually be made) within the

[25] Daniel Cunningham, Sean Everton and Philip Murphy, *Understanding Dark Networks: A Strategic Framework for the Use of Social Network Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016).

terrorist organisation to influence individual beliefs and decision preferences towards certain predetermined ends (such as undertaking a terrorist attack as part of a campaign). Taking this initial, conceptual definition of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations into account, Al Qaeda's training camps for militant mujahideen in the Taliban's Afghanistan were just as important a strategic innovation as the Hamburg Cell's terrorist attacks against the United States on 11th September 2001.

A terrorist organisation with a viable strategic subculture has specific growth and momentum-like effects which make it observationally different to smaller groups whose members survived for many years after an initial period of high-profile activity. Examples of the latter, smaller groups include the Weather Underground or the Red Army Faction (also known as the Baader-Meinhof Gang) in the United States and West Germany, respectively in the 1970s and the 1980s. Such a terrorist organisation has evolved from a small clandestine group into an open insurgency or into a large-scale network, and may have developed quasi-state governance, infrastructure, and resources. To do so, they achieve escalation dominance in a particular nation-state or region versus other competing strategic actors. This may involve hybrid warfare strategies such as cyberwarfare, information warfare, propaganda, and psychological operations. They may merge with or seize control of other militant and terrorist groups: a volatility-seeking strategy which involves using leverage, event arbitrage, and risk management.

Terrorist organisations use an asymmetric, coercive form of psychological warfare to exploit the vulnerabilities and weaknesses of a nation-state's military forces, and to target the civilian population that it defends. Terrorist organisations may use deception operations, information warfare, and other forms of special and unconventional warfare to create analytic misperception by its enemies and adversaries. Yet once they achieve and sustain initial

success, such terrorist organisations may also create a psychological climate of panicked threat escalation responses from nation-state military forces, leading to their over-extension. The terrorist organisation seeks to capitalise on this panic.

These terrorist campaign and war-fighting outcomes can be modelled as a causal decision process. This can be uncovered through the process tracing of publicly available evidence and through the causal, probabilistic inference of non-public information and knowledge gaps (discussed further in Chapter 3). A decision elite cohort or senior leadership in a terrorist organisation first formulates its strategic subculture as a choice set of attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and values that inform their internalised strategic worldview. It then builds specific organisational capabilities, acquires resources, and indoctrinates potential recruits to become mobilisable tactical violence operatives. A terrorist violence campaign enables the terrorist organisation to influence other strategic actors coercively in order to achieve its strategic objectives, goals, and ultimate victory conditions. Alternatively, it may become locked in to this ranked ordered preference at the expense of pursuing other alternatives: a loss of degrees of freedom and optionality.

Counterterrorism, defence, intelligence, and national security institutions and personnel have sought to develop effective strategies to halt such terrorist organisation growth. 'Degrade and destroy' or leadership decapitation counter-measures may deliver volatile shocks to the terrorist organisation but often also lead to hydra-like regeneration, such as Al Qaeda's continued survival after Osama bin Laden's death. Amnesties, negotiation, and peace deals may all work in favourable conditions but are each potentially vulnerable to falling apart, such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejercito del Pueblo or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army.[26] If it has a viable strategic

[26] Basal Baysar, *Securitization and Desecuritization of FARC in Colombia: A Dual Perspective Analysis* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019).

subculture then the terrorist organisation's decision elite will remain motivated by its core ideology. Over time the decision elite and its core ideology are more likely to persist in an enduring and influential form that will ensure some form of organisational survivability.

Methodology and Case Study Selection

I use the qualitative research methodologies of process tracing (also informed by past experience with event analysis and subcultural identity formation) to examine the selected case study of Japan's new religious movement turned terrorist organisation Aum Shinrikyo. This is a deviant case of apocalyptic-driven, religiously motivated terrorism. Aum Shinrikyo was a Japanese new religion whose decision elite sought to develop chemical and biological weapons capabilities in a covert, compartmentalised research program that many of its mid- and low-level members (who I call renunciates and followers) did not know existed. As discussed further in Chapter 4, these members were shocked to discover the existence of the chemical and biological weapons capabilities after Aum Shinrikyo's coordinated sarin gas attack on Tokyo's subway on 20th March 1995.

Alexander George and his political science colleagues originally developed process tracing in the late 1970s to understand the operational codes or decision styles of political leaders.[27] Process tracing maps a causal pathway from *independent variables* such as belief adoption or moral calculus formulation, via posited *causal mechanisms*, to *dependent variables* (such as the possible existence of meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations) or *outcome variables* (terrorist organisation growth, decline, survival, or failure).[28] Process tracing's epistemological roots in Bayesian probabilistic inference enables me to examine and

[27] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005).
[28] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

evaluate a range of English language secondary data and information sources on Aum Shinrikyo, and to make estimative inferences regarding publicly missing data in my case study chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Self-Reflexive Background and Relevant Pre-Doctoral Research

I draw on several personal experiences and a self-reflexive background that informs this thesis. My personal experience with new religious movements and religious traditions includes an Anglican high school, a small Gurdjieff Work group in J.G. Bennett's lineage; the Temple of Set; Chan, Soto, and Rinzai Zen meditation practices; and engagement with countercultural luminaries. I edited the former United States alternative news website and subculture search engine Disinformation during the September 11 attacks in 2001 (whilst as a homeless undergraduate student: I missed the television news coverage and found out about the terrorist attacks from a *Herald Sun* newspaper headline).[29] I became interested in terrorism studies specifically after seeing the World Trade Center dust cloud from author Howard Bloom's Brooklyn, New York City apartment block rooftop on 21st September 2001, the day after my birthday and United States President George W. Bush's announcement of the Global War on Terror grand strategy. My pre-doctoral research included articles about

[29] Alex Burns, "US Terrorist Attacks: Due To Circumstances Beyond Our Control," *Disinformation*, September 17th 2001, accessed 8th November 2019, http://web.archive.org/web/20010920103557/http://www.disinfo.com/pages/article/id1578/pg1; Alex Burns, "US Terrorist Attacks: Smashing The Control Images," *Disinformation*, September 18th, 2001, accessed 8th November 2019, http://web.archive.org/web/20010922235735/http://www.disinfo.com/pages/article/id1580/pg1/; Alex Burns, "US Terrorist Attacks: News Frames and Filters," *Disinformation*, September 22nd, 2001, accessed 8th November 2019, http://web.archive.org/web/20010925084112/http://www.disinfo.com/pages/article/id1591/pg1/; Alex Burns. "US Terrorist Attacks: A Canticle for Osama Bin Laden," *Disinformation*, September 26th, 2001, accessed 8th November 2019, http://web.archive.org/web/20010928190222/http://www.disinfo.com/pages/article/id1596/pg1/; Alex Burns, "US Terrorist Attacks: Nevermind Bin Laden, Here's The Arms Trade," *Disinformation*, October 2nd, 2001, accessed 9th November 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20011003210516/http://www.disinfo.com/pages/dossier/id1618/pg1/.

September 11's effects on journalists and counterfactual grand strategy,[30] the internet's dark and disruptive potential,[31] making pattern recognition inferences from public information about non-public actions and decisions,[32] how social media platforms deal with crisis decision-making and the unanticipated consequences,[33] defining the fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building, and examining the existence of politico-military silos in Australian strategic culture.[34] Collectively, this has also led me to study event arbitrage in financial markets,[35] and the global macro investment style that actively manages volatility.[36] These background experiences and pre-doctoral research have informed my focus and emphasise in the thesis chapters that follow.

Chapter Structure

Chapter 1 lays out the historical evolution and the new theoretical framework for identifying strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations, and why it is important for counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers to do so. This historical evolution and new

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[30] Alex Burns, "The Worldflash of a Coming Future," *M/C Journal* 6, no. 2 (April) (2003), accessed 11th March 2019, http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0304/08-worldflash.php; Alex Burns, "Doubting the Global War on Terror," *M/C Journal* 14, no. 1 (March) (2011), accessed 11th March 2019, http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/338.

[31] Trevor Barr, Alex Burns and Darren Sharp, *Smart Internet 2010: A Smart Internet Technology* CRC Report (Sydney: Smart Internet Technology CRC, 2005), accessed 11th March 2019, http://www.alexburns.net/Files/Smart-Internet-2010.pdf.

[32] Alex Burns, "Event Modelling for Policymakers and Valuation Analysts in Disruptive Innovation Markets: Digital Download Strategies for Radiohead's In Rainbows and Nine Inch Nails' The Slip," in Record of the Communications Policy & Research Forum 2008, eds. Franco Papandrea and Mark Armstrong (Sydney: Network Insight Institute, 2008), 155-175, accessed 11th March 2019, http://vuir.vu.edu.au/1948/1/DisruptiveRadioheadNIN%2520-%2520Alex%2520Burns.pdf.

[33] Alex Burns and Ben Eltham, "Twitter Free Iran: An Evaluation of Twitter's Role in Public Diplomacy and Information Operations in Iran's 2009 Election Crisis," in *Record of the Communications Policy & Research Forum 2009*, eds. Franco Papandrea and Mark Armstrong (Sydney: Network Insight Institute, 2009), 298-310, accessed 11th March 2019, http://vuir.vu.edu.au/15230/1/CPRF09BurnsEltham.pdf.

[34] Alex Burns and Ben Eltham, "Australia's Strategic Culture: Constraints and Opportunities in Security Policymaking," *Contemporary Security Policy* 35, no. 2 (2014), 187-210.

[35] Andrew Busch, World Event Trading: How to Analyze and Profit from Today's Headlines (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2007).

[36] Greg Gilner, *Global Macro Trading: Profiting In A New World Economy* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014); Leah McGrath Goodman, *The Asylum: The Renegades Who Hijacked The World's Oil Market* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011); John Netto, *The Global Macro Edge: Maximizing Return Per Unit-of-Risk* (Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear Publishing, 2016).

theoretical framework lies at the confluence of two subfields in international security: (1) a strategic studies debate in the Cold War about nuclear war-fighting, and (2) the terrorism studies analysis of terrorist groups and organisations.

Chapter 2 considers relevant literature and research programs from the two distinct international security subfields of strategic studies and terrorism studies. I define and outline what I call the fourth generation of theory-building in strategic culture, which has emerged since 2002 and focuses primarily on economic statecraft and national security policymaking in a volatile, multipolar world (where there are competing nation-states with power and influence). I also consider relevant research findings and insights from adjacent subfields that include new religious movements and comparative religious studies. Relevant insights for theory-building and closer subfield integration are also considered, including the possibility to develop a research program on possible strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations from a Lakatosian-informed perspective of regeneration (in terms of having a viable research program that advances a focused agenda).

Chapter 3 outlines process tracing as the chosen research methodology (along with aspects of causal inference and event analysis); the selection and inclusion criteria for the case study on Aum Shinrikyo; the three posited causal mechanisms of cultural transmission (CM1), social learning (CM2), and folklore (CM3) which are abbreviated in the rest of this thesis; and then defines new tests for the identification and the distal ('at a distance') observation of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 focus on Aum Shinrikyo in two dimensions: its pathway into terrorist violence, and continuing Chapter 3's process tracing analysis to understand the role of cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore. This includes a discussion in Chapter 5 of counterfactuals—'minimal rewrite', apocalyptic, and 'maximal rewrite' forms—for what

Aum Shinrikyo might have become had different decisions been made. I also investigate in greater detail in Chapter 6 the initiatory, religious sub-system in Aum Shinrikyo, and how it shaped the experiences of renunciates, in order to create a receptive environment for extremist thinking and terrorist violence to occur.

Chapter 7 then discusses the thesis conclusions and possible future research. The academic, original contributions to knowledge include a new causal, midrange theory of meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations, and the exploration of new process tracing tests. Furthermore, analytical implications are discussed for counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers who study, monitor, and seek to disrupt, deter, deny, degrade and to destroy terrorist organisations. An evolving agenda of possible future research concerning strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations (as part of the current paradigm of fourth generation scholarship in strategic culture) is identified, along with a range of other, possible future research to identify, understand, and to ultimately deter and defeat terrorist organisations. This evolving research agenda will enable greater integration between the subfields of strategic culture and terrorism studies, as well as with other related subfields and individual research programs that Chapter 2's literature review identifies.

I conclude with some final remarks about how understanding the development of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations is closely linked to their pursuit of mobilisational counter-power capabilities and seeking to achieve escalation dominance over their adversaries. Viable strategic subcultures mean that some terrorist organisations are highly likely to continue their existence for a longer time period—becoming security

challenges for counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers, and creating a potential market for unconventional risk transfer.[37]

[37] Maurizio Pompella and Nicos A. Scordis, *The Palgrave Handbook of Unconventional Risk Transfer* (Cham, Switerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

Chapter 1: Strategic Subcultures in Terrorist Organisations

Japan's new religious movement Aum Shinrikyo developed an entrepreneurial and commercial organisation that publicly advocated for a syncretic, new religion. It simultaneously hid a covert, compartmentalised research program on acquiring, developing, and mobilising chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. Aum Shinrikyo achieved momentary escalation dominance when it launched a surprise terrorist attack using sarin gas on Tokyo's subway system on 20th March 1995. The surprise terrorist attack killed 13 people and injured approximately 5,500 others. It created deep and enduring psychosocial shocks in contemporary Japanese society that continue to reverberate to this day (to be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5).

A major puzzle for counterterrorism analysts and national security policymakers is to understand how and why some insurgent, militant, and terrorist organisations are able to emerge, grow and to persist, whilst others do not. Such insurgent, militant, and terrorist organisations may develop beyond a small, clandestine group into a more institutional form that undertakes larger-scale attacks or that becomes an open insurgency. In contrast, other insurgent, militant, and terrorist groups may be more episodic and sporadic in lifespan, and may also lack the coherence of a long-term strategic vision (a *telos*). Understanding the difference between these two cohorts has Red Team (adversary war-gaming) implications for effective counterterrorism and national security strategy; operational decision-making in special and unconventional warfare; and logistics, resource allocation, and capability development. I contend in this thesis that Aum Shinrikyo illustrates a unique case study to consider in these respects.

How might the strategic studies framework of strategic culture explain the emergence, growth, and maturation of terrorist organisations like Aum Shinrikyo, who surprised

counterterrorism and national security policymakers? This theory-building chapter advances a new theoretical explanation: terrorist expansion and organisational survivability may be due to the possible existence of strategic subcultures as meso-level capabilities and structures that shape and influence a terrorist organisation's founders, its senior leadership or decision elite cohort, its operational planning, and its in-group milieu, adaptiveness, and social learning. I first outline a late Cold War debate about strategic culture - as an analytical framework from strategic studies – which United States think tank strategists used to better understand leader and institutional decisions regarding the war-fighting use of nuclear force. I then state this as a new analytical, midrange theory of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations, in a falsifiable manner. This is further defined below and also later discussed in Chapter 3's new analytical tests and confirmation levels for process tracing. I also identify several possible indicators as well as its potential limitations for counterterrorism policy and estimative intelligence use. In doing so, I go beyond past inter-paradigmatic, meta-theoretical, civilian think tank, and military war college debates in strategic studies and terrorism studies, in order to conceptualise a new possible research agenda for identifying, studying, understanding, and responding to meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Defining Strategic Culture

Strategy is the doctrinal approach to war-fighting, resource allocation and mobilisation in order to achieve goals and objectives. Tactics deals with the decision-making in particular battles and conflicts. Culture is an inheritable, culturally transmitted symbol system to communicate and to impose meaning on the world. (These are explored further in Chapter 2's literature review.) What does the strategic studies framework (about defence and politico-military decision-making on the use of force) of strategic culture mean, and how might it relate to terrorist organisations that can emerge, grow, and mature over time? Strategic

culture is a cross-comparative framework in strategic studies about how defence, national security, and politico-military elites choose, evaluate, and prioritise decisions on the strategic and the war-fighting use of force. Its core knowledge base draws on research findings from anthropological area studies; from cognitive, cultural, and organisational psychology; and from the institutional and the organisational foundations of social learning. Originally developed in a Cold War historical context to advise United States policymakers and negotiators about Soviet decision-makers, it is now used more broadly to understand international elites, regimes, and rising powers in a multipolar world (a world in which there are multiple and possibly competing great powers).

In 1977 while working at the RAND Corporation think tank, the United States political scientist Jack Snyder defined strategic culture as:

> the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behavior that members of a national strategic community have achieved through instruction and imitation with each other with regard to nuclear strategy.[38]

Jack Snyder's original definition of strategic culture grouped together several definitional elements. Snyder articulated a cognitive model of human decision-making with an ideas-emotions-behaviour triad. This reflected a transition in strategic policymaking from Behaviourist to Cognitive psychology frameworks and knowledge. Snyder identified cultural transmission and organisational learning processes in a politico-military elite that involves elite formation, circulation, and legitimation. He noted social learning as a possible causal mechanism and as an institutional process for what might become a bounded rationality within a defence or a politico-military elite. Snyder's original scope of application for strategic culture was as a decision framework in cross-comparative nuclear strategy that

[38] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 8.

involved the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Subsequent theorists across several theory-building generations have applied it to a broader and deeper range of defence and national security challenges. Chapter 2 discusses some contemporary applications of strategic culture.

In 1995, Harvard University's Alastair Iain Johnston defined strategic culture as:

> An integrated system of symbols (e.g. argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long lasting preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs.[39]

Alastair Iain Johnston's later definition of strategic culture also grouped together several elements. Johnston contended that strategic culture is a linguistic-like symbol system that shapes and influences preferences about the strategic and operational use of military force. This is a broader, potential applied scope than Jack Snyder's original focus in 1977 on comparative nuclear strategy that involved the two Cold War era superpowers. Johnston's research program emphasis on interstate political affairs has resituated strategic culture as a form of 'cultural realism' as distinct from the more influential schools of realpolitik, classical realism, structural realism, and neoclassical realism in international relations.

Johnston has posited three distinct generations of theory-building in strategic culture. The first generation of national culture studies flourished in the late-1970s and early-to-mid-1980s. The second generation briefly occurred in the late-1980s and involved the critical analysis of declaratory policy and hegemonic, transnational security alliances. Johnston situated his University of Michigan doctoral research within a third generation in the early-to-mid-1990s which involved neopositivist examinations of defence and national security

[39] Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (1995b), 46.

organisations (with well-defined variables, testable hypotheses, and logical reasoning). Post-September 11 scholarship on strategic culture forms a possible fourth generation that investigates national ways of war, rising powers, and non-state actor threats in an emerging multipolar world. As will be discussed further in Chapter 2, these geostrategic changes partly reflect deeper, underlying shifts in great power economic and politico-military dominance, in the emergence and the power projection expansion of rising powers, and also in the strategic bargaining leverage that nation-states deploy in complex, multilateral negotiations on arms control, climate change, and international trade.

The Initial Geopolitical Context for Strategic Culture

On 17th January 1974, the Nixon Administration in the United States announced in National Security Decision Memorandum 242 (NSDM-242) significant changes to its strategic thinking about nuclear weapons.[40] James R. Schlesinger who was President Richard Nixon's Secretary of Defense adopted a counterforce stance on the possible 'limited' use of tactical nuclear weapons, in order to achieve escalation dominance in a crisis, and to more effectively target an enemy's political, economic, and military capabilities. NSDM-242 signalled a shift from Thomas Schelling's strategic doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) to Herman Kahn's war-fighting Nuclear Utilization Target Selection (NUTS): a shift to a 'flexible response' during nuclear escalation crises, and the more precise targeting of Soviet infrastructure and institutions to prevent a retaliatory nuclear strike against the United States. James R. Schlesinger subsequently became the first Secretary of Energy in the Carter Administration. He participated in policymaking and war-fighting debates on deploying

[40] Nixon Administration, "National Security Decision Memorandum 242," (College Park MD: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, 1974), accessed 1st August 2019, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/nsdm/nsdm_242.pdf.

tactical neutron bomb weapons in West Germany to counter Soviet-led Warsaw Pact forces.[41] On 25th July 1980, the United States President Jimmy Carter signed Presidential Directive 59 (PD-59), which replaced NSDM-242 and embraced a 'flexible response' stance on nuclear weapons.[42]

NSDM-242 and PD-59 both signalled a decisive shift away from the earlier nuclear deterrence policies advocated by Bernard Brodie, Albert Wohlstetter, and Thomas Schelling: it meant a greater focus on nuclear crisis decision-making, on the need to understand the decision-making and psychology of Soviet politico-military institutions, and on preventing retaliatory responses through more effective, pre-emptive targeting of Soviet infrastructure and institutions.[43] This was the urgent strategic need that early strategic culture research would address.

NSDM-242 and PD-59 instead reflected a decade of crises, shocks, and volatility for the United States, which included the 1973 oil crisis that strengthened Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) member-states, and the United States military's withdrawal from Vietnam in 1975. They also reflected growing pessimism about the Ford and Carter Administrations' respective involvement in the diplomatic negotiations that led to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) II Treaty that Carter and the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev signed on 18th June 1979.[44] The Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 and the

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[41] S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason: Game Theory and the Neoliberal Political Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 110; Michael A. Aquino, "The Neutron Bomb," (PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 1980).

[42] Jimmy Carter, "PD-59: Nuclear Weapons Employment Policy," (Washington DC: The White House, 1980), accessed 1st August 2019, http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb390/docs/7-25-80%20PD%2059.pdf; S.M. Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason*, 112-114, 120-121.

[43] Marc Trachtenberg, "Strategic Thought In America, 1952-1966," *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (Summer) (1989), 301-304.

[44] Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev, "Treaty Between The United States of America and The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (SALT II)," (Bureau of Arms Control, Verification, and Compliance. Washington DC: United States Department of State, 1979), accessed 1st August 2019, http://www.state.gov/t/isn/5195.htm.

Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 created a more uncertain and volatile geopolitical climate for United States policymakers.[45]

During the SALT II arms control talks, the United States negotiators discovered that their Soviet counterparts held very different strategic worldviews to those held by Western civilian and military strategists about nuclear weapons use. What negotiation implications did this have for SALT II, and for détente as a late Cold War strategic bargaining process? How could this diplomatic contestation be applied to other strategic actors like the Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Warsaw Pact alliance, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization? What about nation-states whose regimes were experiencing revolution or who actively sought to acquire nuclear capabilities? Reflecting on these knowledge gaps, James R. Schlesinger had drawn on his in-depth expertise of RAND Corporation war-gaming simulations to formulate what became the Schlesinger Doctrine of flexible response.[46] And it was at RAND that the political scientist Jack Snyder first defined strategic culture amidst the background policy context of NSDM-242 and the SALT II arms control negotiations.

Snyder, Booth and Gray: The Origins of Strategic Culture, Re-evaluated

Jack Snyder: Conceptualising Strategic Culture

In September 1977, the United States-based global policy think tank the RAND Corporation released a research report by Jack Snyder that conceptualised the strategic studies framework of strategic culture. Building on earlier research in political psychology, and the Schlesinger Doctrine in NSDM-242, Snyder sought to critically assess how Soviet decision-makers viewed the prospect of 'limited' nuclear war with the United States. Snyder found that Soviet

[45] David Crist, *The Twilight War: The Secret History of America's Thirty-Year Conflict with Iran* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012). Gregory Feifer, *The Great Gamble: The Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009).
[46] Amadae, *Prisoners of Reason*, 106.

national security elites were socialised into a different choice set of attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews about nuclear weapons use. This different worldview was rooted in the Soviet collective and societal experience of war and revolution. It was distinct from Soviet declarative statements about nuclear weapons, which were often really propaganda targeted to receptive international audiences.[47] Although Snyder wrote several other reports for RAND between 1976 and 1978, it was the 1977 report on strategic culture that has been most influential in strategic studies over the long-term.

An overlooked yet important insight of Snyder's 1977 RAND research report was the likely existence of multiple, doctrinal strategic subcultures in Soviet defence, national security, and politico-military institutions.[48] This insight differed from the social sciences understanding of subcultures and the later, criminological analysis of terrorist subcultures, which are both discussed in Chapter 2's literature review. The Soviet military emphasised war-fighting and strategic surprise in order to win a 'limited' nuclear war with the United States. In contrast, Soviet politicians and the Academy of Sciences emphasised conventional deterrence. Whilst the Soviets had no equivalent to US civilian defence intellectuals such as at RAND, their military planners could update doctrines and adapt organisations to new security challenges and contexts.[49] Snyder's strategic subcultures were thus crucial for "doctrinal and organizational adaptiveness" in the face of a changing world order in the late Cold War.[50]

Snyder's 1977 RAND research report has been widely cited in the subsequent academic literature in strategic studies on strategic culture. The division between United States civilian intellectuals and Soviet military planners about nuclear weapons war-fighting also anticipated the later Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) literature and politico-military debate in the

[47] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 5, 7.
[48] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 11.
[49] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11.
[50] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 9-10.

United States.[51] In subsequent research, Snyder broke with strategic culture to pursue a rational choice approach: this departure would become a pattern for other researchers and for strategic culture as a fractured subfield of strategic studies.

Ken Booth: The Ethnocentric Biases in United States Military War Colleges

In 1976, the international relations theorist Ken Booth presented a conference paper on the 'fog of culture' to the International Studies Association's annual convention. Booth was concerned about ethnocentric biases in strategic studies which created images, generalisations, and habituations about enemies in combat, war-fighting contexts. These ethnocentric biases Booth reasoned were similar to how war-time propaganda functioned between adversaries and their target audiences in enemy domestic populations. In 1977, Booth became scholar-in-residence at the United States Naval War College. Booth's encounter with war-fighting realists would create a second trajectory in strategic culture theory-building to Jack Snyder's original definition at the RAND Corporation.

Jack Snyder advocated at RAND for area studies as an important data collection source for strategic culture. Booth was more cautious and sceptical about United States war-fighters. In his influential book *Strategy and Ethnocentrism* (1979), Booth contended that US decision-makers were "culture-bound" and relied on "faulty methodology" such as "bad anthropology" in making judgments.[52] Booth anticipated by several decades the academic debate on the United States Army's Human Terrain System that attempted to deploy anthropologists, linguists, sociologists, and political scientists in order to provide decision-making intelligence for military commanders in Iraq.[53] Booth believed that the strategy formulation process from the intelligence analysis of emerging threats to a war-fighting

[51] Snyder, "Soviet Strategic Culture," 6.
[52] Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, 9, 10, 24, 33, 65, 80.
[53] Montgomery Mcfate and Janice H. Laurence, eds., *Social Science Goes to War: The Human Terrain System in Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

doctrinal renewal was deeply flawed because enemies were often misunderstood in terms of their epistemology and strategy.

Booth advocated a different strategy that converged with Snyder's conceptualisation of strategic culture. Military commanders first needed to understand their enemies, then consider how to use military force. National outlooks could filter these perspectives. Booth rejected the dominant realist tradition in strategic studies and instead pursued an independent, post-positivist trajectory (involving a critique of both strategic studies writers and the larger politico-military system in which they conceptualised and produced their knowledge), in what would later become the new subfield of critical security studies.[54] Booth later co-edited an influential volume of case studies on Asia-Pacific based strategic cultures,[55] and conceptualised a post-positivist approach to world security.[56] In doing so, Booth expanded the potential case universe of strategic culture and further advanced his normative research agenda.

Colin S. Gray: National Strategic Culture and Nuclear War-Fighting Strategy

Jack Snyder and Ken Booth both influenced Colin S. Gray, a young nuclear strategist who monitored arms control agreements for Herman Kahn's think tank, the Hudson Institute. Kahn was a controversial nuclear strategist who used war-gaming to forecast the potential impacts of nuclear war exchanges between the United States and the USSR. He conceptualised what became the Nuclear Utilization Target Selection strategic approach to nuclear deterrence which would influence the Carter and the Reagan Administrations. In 1977, Gray wrote a journal article in *International Security* on the importance of the "pre-

[54] Ken Booth, "Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist" (YCISS Occasional Paper 26), Centre for International and Strategic Studies (York University, 1994).
[55] Ken Booth and Russell B. Trood, eds., *Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific Region* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).
[56] Ken Booth, *Theory of World Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

nuclear heritage" to the knowledge base of strategic studies. He wrote of a 'Soviet Way' of strategy that paralleled Snyder's RAND report, which was also written in 1977.[57] Gray soon adopted Snyder's definition of strategic culture. He also praised Booth's stance on the dangers of ethnocentrism in United States military war colleges and in strategic studies more generally.

Snyder's RAND report on strategic culture suggested the Soviets had an offensive, pre-emptive strategic culture regarding nuclear weapons. Gray now considered the implications of this cross-comparative research insight for United States politico-military decision-makers. Gray specifically evaluated the plausibility and prospects of how the United States could achieve victory in a 'limited' nuclear conflict with the USSR.[58] This strategic stance proved controversial in the provocative tradition of Herman Kahn's 'unthinkable' scenarios and simulations on how United States war-fighters could plan to actually win nuclear wars in the future. Colin Gray then consolidated his views on the American national style of defence strategy and the specific theory-building contribution that strategic culture could make to an ongoing renewal of strategic studies.[59]

In a footnote to *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, Gray signalled his developing research agenda. "This author expects to participate in a major international study program on 'comparative strategic culture' over the next few years," he wrote.[60] Gray subsequently developed a comparative analysis of United States and Soviet decision-making about nuclear weapons that was informed by his defence and national security experience in the Reagan

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[57] Gray, "Across the Nuclear Divide," 28.
[58] Gray, "Nuclear Strategy," 54-87.
[59] Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy: The American Example," *International Security* 6, no. 2 (Fall) (1981): 21-47; Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessmen*t (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1982a); Colin S. Gray, *Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1982b).
[60] Gray, *Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment*, 182 n34.

Administration.[61] This middle period of Gray's research program matured into new, comparative studies of United States–Soviet statecraft and case studies on innovations in late Cold War strategic thinking.

Gray's later period integrated strategic culture frameworks into a deeper portrayal of strategic history, as well as developing a comprehensive Clausewitzean philosophy of war-fighting for the United States and the United Kingdom. Gray built his deep knowledge of war-fighting strategy on Carl von Clausewitz's influential perspectives on war, which for Gray also stressed the need for moral clarity and for using enduring wisdom to solve contemporary military challenges. Gray updated his definitional views on strategic culture: "Culture changes, adapts, sometimes adapts poorly, and as an effect of societal shock, can alter radically."[62] This interpretivist approach of culture's pivotal role in strategic culture thus acknowledged the presence of potential volatility as a causal factor in long-term change. It also anticipated the later emergence of the neoclassical realism school of thought in international relations theory.[63] Finally, it also included a reflexive self-awareness of the insights and limits of civilian defence intellectuals and the think tank subculture in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Re-evaluating Johnston's Generations Framework

In 1995, Harvard University's political scientist Alastair Iain Johnston wrote a now highly cited and influential article in *International Security* that defined a new conceptual structure

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[61] Colin S. Gray, "Comparative Strategic Culture," *Parameters* 14, no. 4 (Winter) (1984): 26-33; Colin S. Gray, *Nuclear Strategy and National Style* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986).
[62] Colin S. Gray, "Out of the Wilderness: Prime Time for Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 26, no. 1 (2007): 1-20.
[63] Norrin M. Ripsman, Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, and Steven E. Lobell, eds., *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, eds., *Neoclassical Realism, the State, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

about the strategic culture research that earlier scholars had done.[64] Johnston proposed an integrative generations framework in which there were different epistemic groups of theory-builders and research problems for strategic culture: each generation varied in their specific focus, their normative stance, and their solutions for policymakers. Johnston's *International Security* journal article was the first conceptualisation of patterns in the varied individual and comparative research programs of strategic culture scholarship: it subsequently became the most single cited journal article about strategic culture in the strategic studies literature.

For Johnston, first generation theorists responded primarily to policymaking shifts during the Nixon and Carter Administrations, primarily regarding war-fighting strategy for possible victory in a 'limited' nuclear war exchange. The theory-building strength of the first generation scholarship by Jack Snyder, Ken Booth, Colin Gray, and others was its cross-disciplinary integration of area studies, political studies, and strategic studies. The first generation succeeded in creating and formulating a new conceptual framework for strategic culture that could advise defence analysts, national security negotiators, and policymakers about the psychological mindset of adversaries and enemies.

Bradley S. Klein's research signified a second generation that broke decisively with the first through adopting critical theory as a post-positivist epistemology.[65] Klein disavowed what he perceived as the hegemonic status of strategic studies to justify the politico-military use of force: a viewpoint that anticipated critical security studies and the later emergence of (post-September 11) critical counterterrorism studies. Instead, Klein argued that strategic culture emerged as force power projection from a country's geopolitical status; from the diplomatic and economic decisions that reinforced this geopolitical status; and from the declarative

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[64] Johnston, "Strategic Culture," 32-64.

[65] Bradley S. Klein, "Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics," *Review of International Studies* 14, no. 2 (1988): 133-148; Bradley S. Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order: The Global Politics of Deterrence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

policy signalling and the war-fighting stance of its politico-military elites. However, the potential subfield link with economic statecraft theory-building from the same period—the nation-state's use of economic and financial institutions instead of just military force in order to project power—remained largely unexplored by Klein.[66] Its inclusion might have broadened and strengthened his critical analysis.

Klein had two major criticisms of the first generation's strategic culture scholarship. First, the United States interest in nuclear war fighting reflected an "action policy" about the probabilistic conditions under which nuclear weapons would actually be used.[67] Second, first generation theorists like the Hudson Institute's Colin Gray were civilian defence strategists based in a think tank subculture who were "part of the domestic political strategy of consensus building and the domestication of dissent."[68] The loci of United States force power projection were its military bases and the trans-national alliance structures which reinforced a hegemonic ideal, globally.[69] However, Klein largely omitted a discussion of strategic culture from his subsequent critical theory and postmodernist-informed analysis of United States national security doctrines.[70]

Alastair Iain Johnston's third generation partly reflected individual doctoral research programs that he integrated into an overarching whole. Although Johnston located political scientists like Elizabeth Kier and Jeffrey Legro within his third generation of strategic culture theory-building, the most significant and enduring contribution to it was his doctoral study conducted at The University of Michigan concerning Ming China's grand strategy, which Johnston found was dominated by a defensive realism. Johnston's analysis used a trinitarian

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[66] David Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).
[67] Klein, "Hegemony," 138.
[68] Klein, "Hegemony," 139.
[69] Klein, "Hegemony," 140.
[70] Klein, *Strategic Studies and World Order*.

approach: source, socialisation process, and the assumptions and values which decision-makers each or collectively held about the use of force.[71] Identifying these causal mechanisms of belief and social learning enabled Johnston's methodological approach about strategic culture theory-building to use Popperian hypothetico-deductive reasoning and falsification (formulating specific hypotheses and testing their validity using empirical data).

Johnston's doctoral research and his generations framework for the *International Security* journal remains perhaps the most significant and most-cited research about strategic culture, apart from Snyder's original RAND study in 1977. Johnston gave strategic culture a more robust coherence as a potential research agenda, and as an analytical construct or framework in strategic studies. However, several potential limitations can be raised about Johnston's generations framework. Johnston's first generation involved individual research programs from a loose network of scholars who each eventually grew to have different trajectories over time from eachother.

Many of the significant factors identified in later generations can actually be found in the more mature work of the first generation theorists as their respective individual research programs evolved. Johnston's second generation cites Bradley Klein as its major theorist and could be broadened to include other critical research from the same period. Johnston's third generation was really a collection of different research programs by individual scholars that focused primarily on meso-level politico-military institutions: articulating Jack Snyder's strategic subcultures concept in historical and institutional contexts. Subsequent political scientists such as Verlan Lewis have conducted parallel, longitudinal research that highlight

[71] Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995a), 46.

what the third generation might have evolved into, such as ideology's role in the coevolution of United States federal government institutions and the major political parties.[72]

A way to honour and integrate Johnston's research insights in a larger context is to consider theory-building in strategic culture as emerging from focused research programs. In this approach, strategists develop and may change their thinking over time. They are influenced by institutional factors such as think tank affiliation; epistemological stances develop further; theoretical constructs may become more refined; and individual research programs may progress. Rather than change between generations, there may be potential overlap and continuity in which earlier theorists update their research program to respond to the potential criticism of later theorists (this is explored further in Chapter 2). Instead of intergenerational rivalry a field effect emerges.

A Formal Definition of Strategic Subcultures in Terrorist Organisations

Bruce Hoffman—at the time of writing the Shelby Cullom and Kathryn W. Davis Senior Fellow for Counterterrorism and Homeland Security at the United States-based Council of Foreign Relations—has defined terrorism in the following way:

> Terrorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the term, is fundamentally and inherently political. It is also ineluctably about power: the pursuit of power, the acquisition of power, and the use of power to achieve political change. Terrorism is thus violence—or equally important, the threat of violence—used and directed in pursuit of, or in service of, a political aim.[73]

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[72] Verlan Lewis, *Ideas of Power: The Politics of American Party Ideological Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[73] Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (3rd ed.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), Loc 215 (Kindle edition).

A *formal definition* in this thesis of a terrorist organisation's strategic subculture is:

> The collective attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews (ideational factors) about the ranked ordered, strategic level preference for violence as a focused and prioritised means, that a terrorist group or organisation learns, uses doctrinally, is socialised into, culturally transmits, and mobilises, in order to achieve its *telos* or its overarching strategic goals and objectives, and that it believes will lead to victory. In contrast, a terrorist subculture may not be doctrinally strategic and *telos*-oriented in nature, capability building, or resource allocation decision-making.
>
> These ideational factors in terrorist organisations may arise from a broader epistemic, ideological, philosophical, political, religious, or metaphysical community that may be historically traceable, and that may also involve collective group, institutional, network, or organisational forms.

In this chapter and in Chapter 2's literature review, I discuss the concepts of subcultures, terrorist subcultures (from cultural criminology and terrorism studies), and the cultic milieu (from the sociology of religion), which I contrast and differentiate from my focus on possible strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations (what I call terrorist strategic subcultures).

Distinguishing Subcultures and (Terrorist) Strategic Subcultures

The term subculture emerged in the 1940s and the 1950s in anthropology and sociology with at least three distinct meanings. The first meaning was to describe the biopsychosocial roots of collective human culture and values. The second meaning was to describe how new norms arose in society at a group level in human values, religion, language, and the ideology of socio-economic and political systems. The third meaning was to describe a social-psychological tension between the subculture as a deviant sub-group, which may have distinct personality differences and antinomian values, and its relationship to mainstream society. These meanings were applied in post-war (Western) societies to understand the new

adolescent, youth, and delinquent subcultures that emerged in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe. They also reflected creative responses in the face of barriers to social mobility, the class structure and system, and social stratification.[74]

Anthropologists, criminologists, psychologists, and sociologists have focused on a range of subcultures: from early work on class, deviance and youth subcultures to music, religious and political expressions of subcultural identity.[75] Aesthetic and political subcultural identities can form around socio-political movements such as Elijah Muhammad's and Louis Farrakhan's leadership of the Nation of Islam in the United States.[76] The Nation of Islam and UFOlogy subcultures have each clustered around apocalyptic, Armageddon-like promises of transformational socio-economic, socio-political, and technological change.[77] In contrast, contemporary vampire subcultures may be socially deviant and based on culturally transmitted myths and symbols that influence mainstream culture and media.[78] Artistic subcultures may adopt creative and oppositional stances to macro-level socio-political phenomena—as the 1978-84 post-punk subculture did in response to the Thatcher-Reagan shift to neoliberal capitalism in the United Kingdom and the United States—which involves cultural transmission and social learning.[79] Subcultures like cyberpunk and hip-hop define creative, vanguard future horizons that may lead to socio-economic mobility and socio-political renewal.[80]

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[74] Yinger, J. Milton. "Contraculture and Subculture", *American Sociological Review* 25, no. 5 (1960): 626-627, 630-631, 634.
[75] Ken Gelder, ed., *The Subcultures Reader* (2nd ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2005).
[76] Mattias Gardell, *Countdown To Armageddon: Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996).
[77] Michael Lieb, *Children of Ezekiel: Aliens, UFOs, The Crisis of Race, and the Advent of End Time* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1998).
[78] Nick Groom, *The Vampire: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
[79] Simon Reynolds, *Rip It Up and Start Again: Postpunk 1978-1984* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).
[80] Roy Christopher, *Dead Precedents: How Hip-Hop Defines The Future* (London: Repeater Books, 2019).

Some elements of subcultures analysis inform this thesis. Terrorist organisations are often distinct from the mainstream society, which they seek to influence primarily through violence. Terrorist organisations espouse particular values and worldviews that can emerge from subcultural discourses about metaphysical, philosophical, political, and religious ideas. The chosen case study of Japan's Aum Shinrikyo examines a new religious movement that was apocalyptic and that focused on Armageddon. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 also explore in greater detail how Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system interacted with Japan's occult subculture. The strategic subcultures approach that I take has some important differences as well which are noted in the following and that are discussed further in Chapter 2.

Distinguishing Terrorist Subcultures and (Terrorist) Strategic Subcultures

Mark S. Hamm has advanced a cultural criminology theory of terrorist subcultures that he has applied to neo-Nazi, far right militia, and white supremacist networks. Hamm situates his cultural criminology theory of terrorist subcultures as a way to learn from other academic research disciplines and also to interrogate the cultural artefacts that may inspire and indoctrinate new terrorists. "The everyday culture of individuals and terrorist groups contains powerful dimensions of style and meaning that defines the landscape of religious and political violence."[81] Hamm locates a series of aesthetic, "subcultural products" such as underground-distributed literature and white power music in the subcultural milieu of terrorist groups and the broader communities of support that sustain them. In his original study, the convergence of Hamm's two neo-Nazi and far right case studies was on their celebrity.

[81] Mark S. Hamm, "Apocalyptic Violence: The Seduction of Terrorist Subcultures", *Theoretical Criminology* 8, no. 3 (2004): 337.

Hamm's cultural criminology theory of terrorist subcultures made sense given the growth in the United States of militia, paramilitary, and far right networks, which were themselves the subcultural manifestations of broader, parent cultures: right-wing anti-government agitators, white separatists, fringe patriotically oriented and/or anti-Semitic religious movements, and conspiracy theories. Other examples of parent cultures include: student politics, the New Left, anti-imperialism proponents, anti-Vietnam War protests, and anti-globalisation protests. A major flashpoint for Hamm was Timothy McVeigh's bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on 19th April 1995. In the shadows of McVeigh's bombing was a far right militia subculture that had grown out of the Vietnam War's psycho-political shocks on the United States, and that was strongly anti-government in sentiment. This far right militia subculture also wanted revenge for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's actions during the Ruby Ridge siege in Naples, Idaho, involving the Weaver family, between 21st and 31st August 1992, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms' face-off with the Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas that ended dramatically on 28th February 1993.[82] These far right paramilitary and terrorist subcultures enabled their proponents to carve out their own individual, small group, and networked identities.

Hamm's terrorist subcultures can be applied to historical and more recent forms of political, and religious extremism. Related to the militia, paramilitary, and far right extremists that interested Hamm was a much longer arc of a neo-Nazi diaspora and international network, ethnonationalist white supremacists, and a post-Cold War revival of fascism and ODESSA

[82] Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (New York: Regan Books, 2001); James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture In Post-Vietnam America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994); Mark S. Hamm, *In Bad Company: America's Terrorist Underground* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2002); Kenneth S. Stern, *A Force Upon The Plain: The American Militia Movement and the Politics of Hate* (Norman, OK: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Harvey W. Kushner, ed., *The Future of Terrorism: Violence in the New Millennium* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998); Jon Ronson, *Them: Adventures With Extremists* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2001), 55-68.

network conspiracy theories.[83] Timothy McVeigh's Oklahoma City bombing had crossovers with New World Order conspiracy theories that have also influenced the identity politics of the esoteric Nazi Occult subculture.[84] The scope and scale of a terrorist subculture can go beyond a specific terrorist group or an organisation to include self-radicalised individuals, small cells of terrorist operatives, or a broader community of support. What thus integrates a terrorist subculture are the cultural artefacts, norms, and practices that encodes a meta-ethical worldview or a moral calculus, which in turn justifies the use of terrorist violence against an adversary or enemy out-group. More recently, terrorist subculture schemas have been applied to understand the involuntary celibate internet subculture of 'Incels', and Alt-Right proponents who support and promote extremist violence.[85] Hamm's original insight about terrorist subcultures deserves further research, theory-building, and data-driven elaboration.

The scholar Jeffrey Kaplan has developed a parallel research program to Hamm's cultural criminology-informed analysis of terrorist subcultures. In contast, Kaplan has adopted an interpretivist and an interview, observational-based approach that also independently intuited the anthropologist Clifford Geertz's insights about culture's importance. Kaplan's

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[83] Martin A. Lee, *The Beast Awakens* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1997); Travis Morris, *Dark Ideas: How Neo-Nazi and Violent Jihadi Ideologues Shaped Modern Terrorism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017); Kathleen Belew, *Bring The War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[84] Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), 279-282.

[85] Allie Conti, "Learn to Decode the Secret Language of the Incel Subculture", *Vice*, 26th June 2018, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/7xmaze/learn-to-decode-the-secret-language-of-the-incel-subculture; Zack Beauchamp, "Our Incel Problem", *Vox*, 23rd April 2019, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/4/16/18287446/incel-definition-reddit; Michael Malice, *The New Right: A Journey to the Fringe of American Politics* (New York: All Points Books, 2019); Thomas J. Main, *The Rise of the Alt-Right* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2018); Andrew Marantz, *Antisocial: How Online Extremists Broke America* (New York: Picador, 2019); Alexandra Minna Stern, *Proud Boys and the White Ethnostate: How The Alt-Right Is Warping The American Imagination* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2019); Vegas Tenold, *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside The Rebirth of White Nationalism in America* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2018); Ronald Beiner, *Dangerous Minds: Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Laurie M. Johnson, *Ideological Possession and the Rise of the New Right: The Political Thought of Carl Jung* (New York: Routledge, 2019); and Julie Ebner, *Going Dark: The Secret Social Lives of Extremists* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).

contributions include reviving debate and case studies about the 'cultic milieu'; examining millennialist violence and its critiques; extending David C. Rapoport's terrorism waves framework to a fifth wave of tribalist-motivated terrorism; and considering religiously motivated terrorist groups and organisations.[86]

In contrast to Hamm and Kaplan, in this thesis, I use the framework for a terrorist strategic subculture in a much narrower, and a far more neo-institutional sense. In contrast to Hamm, my use of a terrorist strategic subculture refers to a terrorist group or organisation that has: (1) a coordinated and definable leadership sub-group (what I call a decision elite); (2) an historically traceable tradition of strategic and doctrinal thought (a strategic tradition); (3) long-term strategic objectives (a *telos*) that can only be achieved through a decision preference for violence rather than non-violent alternatives; and (4) that has developed the asymmetric, mobilisational counter-power capabilities to scale up terrorist attacks with potential 'mass casualty' consequences for victims. A broader radical or terrorist subculture can lead to a terrorist strategic subculture in a more focused, mature, neo-institutional or organisational form. This will have the adaptability and the agility to respond creatively to adversaries and to regenerate from setbacks such as the deaths of (charismatic) founders and leaders.

Terrorism Studies and Terrorist Organisations

Terrorism Studies developed as a subfield of national security and political science after the 1972 Munich Olympics, and a 1970s wave of airline hijackings. These terrorist events led a first generation of academic researchers to develop terrorism studies in order to understand the phenomenon and to advise policymakers on how best to deal with—and to deter—

[86] Jeffrey Kaplan, ed. *Millennial Violence: Past, Present and Future* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Jeffrey Kaplan, *Terrorist Groups and the New Tribalism: Terrorism's Fifth Wave* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion and Violence: Theory and Case Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

terrorists.[87] Interest in terrorist groups and organisations grew as the Irish Republican Army and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation grew offshore financing and propaganda capabilities. In the mid-to-late 1980s, the original cohort of terrorism studies scholars developed new conceptual and theoretical frameworks to study these now trans-national terrorist organisations. David C. Rapoport envisioned the growth and decline of terrorist organisations as a manifestation of long-wave cyclical patterns that concern particular political and religious ideologies, and their potential mobilisation for violence.[88] In contrast, Martha Crenshaw described terrorist organisation leadership as possessing a strategic rationality that involved means-ends calculations about the likely effectiveness of waging a terrorist campaign in order to achieve particular strategic objectives.[89]

Martha Crenshaw envisaged that terrorism has an "agenda-setting function" that seeks to "create revolutionary conditions" for politico-military and social change: this involves "terrorist calculation" to change the mindset and the ranked order preferences of adversaries.[90] Crenshaw's early research program recognised that terrorist leaders engage in strategic rationality as utility maximisers: decision theories could identify and specify their choices or decision preferences, possibly in advance. Crenshaw's insight later became known as the 'strategic model' in terrorism studies. Stanford University's postdoctoral fellow Max Abrahms noted in an *International Security* journal article that Crenshaw's 'strategic model' has limits: affective, emotional ties between terrorists were also important to sustainable in-group bonding.[91] Although strategic culture is a rival approach to rational choice theory the

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[87] Lisa R. Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented "Terrorism"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Lisa R. Stampnitzky, "Disciplining An Unruly Field: Terrorism Studies and the State, 1972-2001," (PhD diss., University of California, 2008).
[88] David C. Rapoport, ed, *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
[89] Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism," 7-24.
[90] Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism," 7, 18, 24.
[91] Max Abrahms, "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78-105.

latter does suggest that if a decision elite has strategic rationality its choices can be decomposed into preference sets and choices. Strategic culture in contrast can be understood as a weighting of more specific cultural-psychological factors in terrorist organisation decision-making.

Post-September 11 research into terrorist organisations pursued several different strands. Prior to Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001, John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt popularised the use of social network analysis to examine weak tie networks and nodes that were becoming evident in anti-globalisation activist and social movements.[92] Marc Sageman's 'bunch of guys' hypothesis suggested that jihadists and mujahideen used decentralised, network structures and self-initiated learning.[93] Historical archival research on the Red Army Faction (West Germany), the Weather Underground (the United States), and the Red Brigades (Italy) provided historical re-evaluations of past terrorist groups that had longevity, and the emergent, sometimes more volatile forms that attempted strategic subcultures can take.[94] Michael Burleigh has advanced a cultural history of terrorism that could inform strategic culture theory-building about the specific role that culture can play in terrorist decision-making, grievances, and the development of terrorist organisations.[95]

One significant in-depth study by Princeton University's Jacob N. Shapiro uses a principal-agent framework to distinguish between a terrorist organisation's decision elite cohort who formulate strategy and who make resource allocation decisions, and the tactical violence

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[92] John Arquila and David Ronfeldt, *Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001).
[93] Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).
[94] Jeremy Varon, *Bringing The War Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004); Alessandro Orsini, *Anatomy of the Red Brigades: The Religious Mind-Set of Modern Terrorists*, trans. Sarah J. Nodes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).
[95] Michael Burleigh, *Blood & Rage: A Cultural History of Terrorism* (London: HarperPress, 2008).

operatives who conduct the terrorist campaign of violence.[96] Growth-oriented terrorist organisations may use deception practices and not claim credit for attacks, in order to appear smaller than they really are, and thus not trigger a government counter-response. Despite the current interest in individual terrorists who are directly inspired by terrorist organisations—and loosely coordinated networks—the commitment escalation and incentives structure means that suicide bombings sponsored by terrorist organisations are often deadlier in terms of their casualties.[97]

New terrorist organisations such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant use sophisticated recruitment and operational strategies to wage successful terrorist campaigns against liberal-democratic nation-states, including Australia.[98] This new type of trans-national franchise and network structure requires a more long-term and sophisticated response from counterterrorism and national security policymakers. Al Qaeda's surviving core leadership has formed strategic alliances with franchise operations in Somalia, Yemen, Syria, India, and other countries. Islamic State pursued in 2014-17 the formation of a proto-nation-state in northern Iraq and Syria. Its internal strategic planning formulated the specific victory conditions to re-establish the Caliphate.[99] Its mujahideen developed a rich and varied repertoire of religious and social practices within Islamic State that highlights the under-theorised cultural dimensions of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.[100] Islamic State also uses a sophisticated campaign of *distal* ('at a distance') strategic

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[96] Shapiro, *The Terrorist's Dilemma*.
[97] Burcu Pinar Alakoc, "Competing to Kill: Terrorist Organizations Versus Lone Wolf Terrorists," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29, no. 3 (2015): 509-532
[98] Boaz Ganor, *Global Alert: The Rationality of Modern Islamist Terrorism and the Challenge to the Liberal Democratic World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Jessica Stern and J.M. Berger, *ISIS: The State of Terror* (New York: Ecco, 2015); Andrew Zammit, "Explaining a Turning Point in Australian Jihadism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 36, no. 9 (2013): 739-755.
[99] Brian Fishman, *The Master Plan: ISIS, al-Qaeda, and the Jihadi Strategy for Final Victory* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2017).
[100] Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihadi Culture: The Art and Social Practices of Militant Islamists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

communications to mobilise individuals and small groups in Western countries, in order to engage in violent extremism and to undertake terrorist attacks.

Terrorism seeks to coerce and to pressure other strategic actors via extremist, militant violence to enact the political, religious, and societal change, which the terrorist organisation leaders want to come into being. Terrorism may be regarded as a specific form of cyber, financial, information, and psychological warfare that is waged by non-state actors against nation-states, specific communities, and other, possibly rival non-state actors. Terrorism's intended long-term target can be a religious, socioeconomic, or a socio-political elite that the terrorists compel to change their normative and grand strategic preferences, or may seek to displace with a new order (an 'elite circulation' goal via displacement). A successful terrorist attack uses physical and psychological violence to create a rupture in the collective social reality.

Terrorism is thus far more than the shock immediacy of a successful terrorist attack, its death toll, its journalistic and media coverage, and its social media debates. Terrorism's long-term and macro-level consequences as a deliberate, intentional, and unfolding process may lead to transformational change in a nation-state or a society's collective horizon-building, values, and worldviews. For example, the United States was transformed psychologically after Al Qaeda's coordinated terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001.

Defining Common Elements of Terrorist Organisations

This thesis defines a terrorist organisation as one that consists of the following common elements:[101]

[101] These definitions and common elements grew out of a reflective attempt in 2011-12 to develop a decision theory of strategic culture research. My formative subculture experiences noted previously in Chapter 1 were

1. An adherence to political, religious, or subcultural motivated **Terrorism** as a specific form of psychological,special, or unconventional warfare that non-state actors wage deliberately using violence against public non-combatants, as a preferential and prioritised *means* to achieve extremist ideological, political, religious, or subcultural motivated *ends*. This involves extremist thought, which can evolve over time in opposition to a dominant culture or group.[102] This also includes either changing the decision-making of or overthrowing a nation-state's socio-political elites, political parties, and regime structure. Terrorist organisations that mature over a long time period may seek to establish *counter-elites* that will replace the existing, dominant or incumbent elite structures which presently exist in a nation-state or host society. This may involve the development of *mobilisational counter-power* as organisational capabilities to displace these dominant or incumbent elites.

2. A **Decision Elite** cohort that is the core or the nucleus of the terrorist organisation. It articulates its ideological worldview; a moral calculus which provides a normative or meta-ethical justification to engage in violence as a decision preference when compared with other non-violent alternatives;[103] and long-term strategic objectives or goals (its *telos* or its *ends*). This is in order to bring about a particular change in the international order or regime structure that the terrorist organisation strongly desires. The decision elite is authorised to decide on how a terrorist campaign is implemented (the *means*), including the target selection for attacks that the tactical violence operatives will carry out. The decision elite in such terrorist organisations can plan socio-political or religiously motivated violence on a much

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also important. Relevant literature used in the theory-building of these definitions and common elements are noted throughout this chapter.

[102] J.M. Berger, *Extremism* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2018), Loc 102-146 (Kindle edition).

[103] William T. Vollmann, *Rising Up and Rising Down: Some Thoughts on Violence, Freedom and Urgent Means*, 438-515.

larger scale (i.e., transnational or simultaneously against multiple targets) than smaller, clandestine terrorist groups or motivated individuals.

3. **Tactical Violence Operatives** who carry out a terrorist campaign (the *means*) against adversaries, enemies, and targets. This terrorist campaign scope may also include self-radicalised individuals and small groups that are recruited in a loose network structure (or through deception operations) and that differ from the terrorist organisation's founders, the decision elite, or the senior leadership. Such a weak tie network neither has decision rights that the founders, the decision elite, or the senior leadership may have, nor sufficient organisational coherence to coordinate and sustain a terrorist organisation over a longer time period.

4. **Mobilisational Resources** are used to fund a long-term terrorist campaign; the senior leadership or the decision elite controls them, and tactical violence operatives use them to implement terrorist attacks. Such mobilisational resources may be developed internally, acquired through asset acquisition, expropriation, and seizure from captured adversaries and communities, or which may be gained through significant capital accumulation such as access to fraud, black market trading, front companies, and covert financing opportunities.

5. **Organisational Processes** involve a process architecture related to planning, mobilising, and conducting a successful terrorist campaign. Specific processes may include fund-raising; strategic planning; the recruitment, radicalisation, indoctrination, and the training of tactical violence operatives; strategic communication and propaganda to a community of support or to diverse international audiences; target selection; terrorist attack execution; and leadership succession planning in the decision elite.

One observable dimension of these organisational processes is the cultural transmission of attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews. The importance of the last is

evident in the growing use of online social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, 4chan and 8chan to communicate recent extremist, militant, and terrorist ideas. These online social media platforms have been used to recruit and mobilise individuals to engage in micro-situational violence, shootings, hate speech, and terrorist attacks.[104]

Terrorist organisations with a viable strategic subculture have a range of *distal* (or 'at a distance') observable characteristics, which more sporadic, short-lived terrorist groups do not have:

1. *Relationship to a doctrinal or an ideological tradition*. The attitudes, behaviour, beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews that a terrorist organisation adopts can be traceable in part to historical, metaphysical, philosophical, religious, and socio-political doctrines and ideologies. The decision elite may develop, interpret, and communicate such doctrines and ideologies as part of developing a meso-level, viable strategic subculture functionally within the terrorist organisation. Cultural transmission may occur through cognitive schemas, in-group socialisation and social learning, and via interaction with other potential causal mechanisms (which may yet be identified and studied in future research).
2. *A choice set and preference for deploying violence as a prioritised means to achieve a terrorist organisation's chosen strategic objectives*. The terrorist organisation has a meta-ethical moral calculus that shapes its choice set and its preference for the prioritised use of violence as a means to achieve its long-term strategic objectives (in comparison to non-violent *alternatives*). Acting on this choice set and preference for violence creates a desired change in the existing international system. For a strategic subculture, this choice set will be weighted more towards collective, diachronic,

[104] Randall Collins, *Violence: A Micro-sociological Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

longitudinal, and culturally transmitted aspects. This may create potential path dependencies in operational decision-making when a terrorist organisation seeks to actualise it in the contemporary security environment. Argumentation from an ideological, metaphysical, philosophical, political, religious, or a subcultural tradition may inform the decision-making justification and the preference for violence: this may create a bias towards diachronic thinking. This strategic decision-making form can also be differentiated from synchronic (present time) decision-making: this may instead be more improvisational or situation-based, such as in response to specific combat experiences with enemies.

3. *Rapid organisational growth*. A terrorist organistion emerges, grows, and matures within an operational niche and in a complex, possibly adversarial strategic environment. The rapid organisational growth of a terrorist organisation can be modelled as a 'long gamma' strategy: a change in the rate of change of a phenomena that is under study (such as derivatives prices), as defined in financial options theory. This change in the rate of change is a way also to conceptualise the J-curve pattern of rapid growth: this can be found in other domains, such as corporate strategy for successful entrepreneurial venture capital, growth by mergers and acquisitions, and large hedge funds that are able to grow their assets under management. This 'long gamma'-like growth trajectory for terrorist organisations involves a greater clarity of strategic objectives (the *ends*) for that is aligned with the decision elite's beliefs, behaviour, norms, values, and worldviews (the ideational factors under analysis or study). An important indicator of this is the decision elite's ability to attract new recruits to the terrorist organisation: this can lead to a Matthew Effect or cascade dynamic in which the initial success at recruitment leads to further cumulative success

over time in a potential cohort (that may be susceptible to ideological appeals and bounded rationality).

4. *Activities scope*. Terrorist organisations with a viable strategic subculture are able to conduct a broader and more long-term terrorist campaign, than those who do not. Small, clandestine terrorist groups, and radicalised, motivated individuals are thus unable to achieve similar results, despite their ideological intent, moral calculus, and preference for violence. Instead, such small groups and individuals may exist as part of a broader terrorist subculture that articulates, endorses, and normalises the preference for violence. For larger and more mature terrorist organisations, this activities scope means that broader, more coordinated attacks against a larger range of potential targets can be undertaken, and are more likely to have higher casualties as a consequence.
5. *Escalation dominance*. A terrorist organisation seeks to dominate its operational niche. This may also involve successful Red Queen (constant adaptive) rivalry with other terrorist groups and organisations, for innovation pathways and for possible strategic alliances (due in part to environment, niche, and competition pressures).[105] Escalation dominance also increases the likelihood of a terrorist organisation's longitudinal survivability through organisational adaptation. An important aspect of this is to anticipate and deal with the deterrence counter-measures that counterterrorism and national security policymakers may take, such as to be able to regenerate after leadership decapitation or 'degrade, deter, deny, and destroy' operations.

I now consider the micro-foundations of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

[105] William P. Barnett, *The Red Queen Among Organizations: How Competitiveness Evolves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Micro-foundation 1: Jack Snyder's Definition of Strategic Subcultures

Jack Snyder's definition identified what a strategic subculture is and its cross-comparative importance in political and strategic bargaining on national security issues. However, Snyder's multi-level analysis of strategic subcultures involving politico-military institutions remained largely overlooked in the subsequent literature that developed from his original insights. In the following, I outline some further characteristics of strategic subcultures in the counterterrorism context of understanding terrorist organisations as international security threats:

1. *Distinct beliefs and attitudes on strategic issues*. Terrorist organisations adopt a specific vantage point on strategic issues that they seek to communicate to other strategic actors. They develop distinct beliefs about the justification for violence as a preferential strategy to achieve long-term strategic objectives and goals over non-violent alternatives. Whilst this involves a cognitive (and emotional) process of belief adoption it does not necessarily involve effective reality-testing: an implication explored further in the Aum Shinrikyo case study discussed in Chapters 4 to 6.[106] Terrorist organisation leaders have priorities and strategic preferences for target selection. They evaluate other strategic actors and try to anticipate their decisions. These distinct beliefs and attitudes can inform an in-group core ideology and the distinctions made about out-group members.[107]
2. *A distinct and historically traceable analytical tradition*. A terrorist organisation has a specific genesis in a complex, evolving combination of economic, material, religious, political, and social conditions, and internal group dynamics between the decision elite and tactical violence operatives, followers, and a community of support. A

[106] Nils J. Nilsson, *Understanding Beliefs* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2014).
[107] Muzafer Sherif, *The Psychology of Social Norms* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

terrorist organisation may have a traceable history, which can possibly be reconstructed by ethnographers, investigative journalists, and counterterrorism, intelligence, and national security analysts. The overarching analytical tradition may be part of a host nation-state's political discourse and history. Alternatively, terrorist leaders as norm entrepreneurs may develop a personal synthesis from broader political and religious ideologies. This personal synthesis may inform discrete, meso-level strategic subcultures that might coexist within a terrorist organisation: more than one may potentially exist. Different analytical traditions may be identified and compared across a range of historical contexts and time periods—suggestive of the posited causal mechanisms of cultural transmission and social learning (discussed in Chapter 3).

3. *Characteristic institutional associations*. Terrorism studies scholar Jacob N. Shapiro has noted that terrorist organisations have two sub-groups (which informs the definitional scope of this thesis): (1) a decision elite that provides leadership and overarching strategic direction; and (2) (tactical) violence operatives who may enact the terrorist violence. Shapiro's two sub-groups interact relationally to shape the decision-making pathway that enacts a successful terrorist campaign. The interaction of these two sub-groups may also distinguish a terrorist organisation from other institutional types that may have comparative strategic subcultures.
4. *Distinct patterns of socialisation to subcultural norms*. Jack Snyder's first generation definition of strategic culture combines social learning and early cognitive psychology. Terrorist organisations have affiliation, radicalisation, and screening processes that shape how people join the in-group and adopt the ontological identity of being a terrorist. Three examples of these processes are clandestine sub-groups, targeted sociological propaganda, and training camps. The screening process may

filter out people at different socialisation stages who do not fit the terrorist organisation. Adopting the subcultural norms is thus a step-wise active process of constructivist identity formation.

Micro-foundation 2: Martha Crenshaw's Strategic Rationality

Martha Crenshaw's significant early contribution to terrorism studies was to develop a "collectively rational strategic choice" framework to understand what motivates terrorist organisations.[108] This was a response in part to prevailing theories of idiosyncratic, individual, and psychological theories of terrorist decision-making. Using cost-benefit analysis enabled Crenshaw to examine the strategic calculus of terrorist organisations with new analytical precision.

For Crenshaw, terrorism has an "agenda-setting function" that transforms political debates to "create revolutionary conditions" for societal change.[109] Terrorist decision-making involves "strategic calculation" about means-ends, and how tactical violence operatives will enact terrorist campaigns.[110] Crenshaw framed terrorism as an intentional, wilful choice made by terrorist organisation leaders and violence operatives for socio-political reasons.

A strategic subculture theory of terrorist organisations modifies Crenshaw's crucial insight that the "group possesses collective preferences or values and selects terrorism as a course of action from a range of perceived alternatives."[111] From a strategic subculture theoretical framework the sum of collective preferences in a terrorist organisation may be shaped by the decision elite cohort and then promulgated in a hierarchical organisation structure or through influential network nodes. Alternatively, the tactical violence operatives may enact their

[108] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 9.
[109] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 17, 18.
[110] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 24.
[111] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 8.

interpretation of senior leadership directives based on shared experience or their own preferences. These preferences may emerge from cultural transmission and social learning experiences: they shape and internalise the terrorists' subjectivity and interpretation of socio-political realities.

Jack Snyder's original conceptual theory identified how strategic culture emerged in a nation-state's politico-military elite and in the cross-comparative context of détente negotiations. Snyder identified some of the potential causal mechanisms in strategic culture such as cultural transmission, and the collective shared experience in a nation-state or a society of geography, war, and existential challenges to ruling regimes. What Crenshaw contributed from terrorism studies was an explanation of terrorism as a calculated, strategic rationality that was "the outcome of a learning process."[112] Combining Snyder and Crenshaw's insights provides a possible and generalisable way to learn strategically from terrorist threats and crises.

However, smaller and more sporadic terrorist groups (as distinct from more established and potentially trans-national terrorist organisations) lack the mobilisational counter-power of broader activist and collective social movements: they are often minorities that may seek to challenge and to displace the ruling elites. This framing situates terrorist organisations in terms of an underlying oligarchical model of contemporary power politics and the international political economy of rentier wealth extraction.[113]

Crenshaw's research program on terrorist misperceptions has anticipated later work on cognitive biases in decision-making: she noted in particular that "fantastic assumptions", "time constraints", "the personalities of leaders, demands from followers, or competition

[112] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 11.
[113] Jeffrey A. Winters, *Oligarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

from rivals", and a sense of "felt urgency" all impacted on and set the delimits of terrorist decision-making.[114] These cognitive biases and decision heuristics may act as mediating variables on the ranked ordered preferences of terrorist leadership.

More recently, Crenshaw has collaborated with Gary LaFree—the Founding Director of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism based at the University of Maryland—on a cost-benefit analysis of the effectiveness of the United States counterterrorism strategies.[115] Crenshaw has also conducted the research project 'Mapping Militant Organizations' for the Center for International Security and Cooperation in Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, which has created genealogies, profiles, and visual maps of the evolutionary lifecycles and conflicts of extremist, militant, and terrorist organisations.[116] These research projects are gathering the relevant data and building the visualisation platforms that will enable the potential strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations to be identified and more closely studied in the future.

Micro-foundation 3: Combining Snyder and Crenshaw's Different Theories

Jack Snyder's multi-level analysis of strategic subcultures and Martha Crenshaw's strategic rationality have the potential to be combined in a new way to understand terrorist organisations. A terrorist organisation that has a viable strategic subculture will have greater long-term survivability. Its decision elite will share a culturally transmitted core ideology that provides the motivation to use violence to achieve *telos*-like strategic objectives. The decision elite will be able to share this core ideology through a social learning process to

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[114] Crenshaw, "Logic of Terrorism," 13.
[115] Martha Crenshaw and Gary LaFree, *Countering Terrorism: No Simple Solutions* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016).
[116] Martha Crenshaw, "Mapping Militant Organizations" (Stanford, CA: Center for International Security and Cooperation, Freeman Splogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, 2009), accessed 1st August 2019, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/research/mapping_militant_organizations.

recruit, train, and equip violence operatives. A strategic subculture thus acts as a control mechanism to ensure the decision elite's overarching, cybernetic-like guidance and shaping of a terrorist campaign. Expanded to the oligarchical scope of a society it becomes a potential control system that is the strategic subculture of a ruling elite.

A strategic subculture has organisational and symbolic elements. Collective cultural processes may shape the decision elite's combined preference for violence. The symbolic element potentially enables the terrorist organisation to connect and to engage with a broader community of support. This can inform propaganda and other strategic communication. Snyder's analytical tradition enables the core ideological worldview to be traced to cultural, metaphysical, philosophical, political, and religious ideas, and to sub-group norms that tactical violence operatives are socialised to adopt. Terrorist organisations may be strategically rational in Martha Crenshaw's terms, and their core ideological worldview may be synthesised from a wider cultic, religious or socio-political milieu.

Combining Crenshaw and Snyder's work suggests a new and focused way to study terrorist organisations.

1. Identify the distinct beliefs and attitudes that a senior leadership (and tactical violence operatives) may have.
2. Identify the analytical tradition from which these beliefs and attitudes are derived, such as a cultural, metaphysical, philosophical, political, or religious worldview.
3. Identify the characteristic institutional associations that bind the members of terrorist organisations together and that form the sustained basis of their affiliation.
4. Identify the in-group norms and socialisation processes within the terrorist organisation, as specific examples of the causal mechanisms of cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore (discussed further in Chapter 3).

This analytical process tracing requires an understanding of: (1) the environmental and sociological sources of distinct beliefs and attitudes as opposed to intrapsychic or personality factors (or where there may be unique interaction effects); (2) the long-term, culturally transmitted traditions to which a terrorist organisation might belong, or alternatively on which it might draw in order to develop and to promulgate a coherent and persuasive core ideology; (3) how the terrorist organisation is internally structured, including its decision elite and tactical violence operative relationships; and (4) the affective, intellectual and intersubjective norms that bind the terrorist organisation together, and organisational specific social learning and folklore.

A theoretical framework for strategic subcultures thus suggests that terrorist organisations evolve in specific and possibly foreseeable, predictable ways. Leaders go through intense and personal experiences of identifying and then adopting a worldview: this may be through cultural transmission of beliefs, in-group socialisation in another group, possible schism, or shared collective experiences which can take a folklore form. Leaders and the decision elites that form around them create a personal synthesis that then attracts potential tactical violence operatives. These two sub-groups then collaborate to build the mobilisational counter-power capabilities that a terrorist organisation needs: the decision elite's preferences inform a terrorist campaign that the tactical violence operatives then carry out on their behalf.

The Limits of Strategic Culture Frameworks to Understand Terrorist Organisations

However, there are limitations to using strategic culture and strategic subculture frameworks to understand terrorist organisations. These limitations can include the following issues:

1. *Public Sources*. It is difficult to reconstruct the specific decision preferences of a terrorist organisation's senior leadership in the absence of public sources or

intelligence information. Contemporary terrorist organisations (like Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), and smaller facets such as short-lived terrorist groups, terrorist cells, and motivated individuals have used social media platforms such as 4chan, 8chan, Telegram, and YouTube to communicate their messages to a broader potential audience. This is particularly if there is a loosely affiliative terrorist subculture that surrounds the terrorist organisation (such as around neo-Nazi, militia, far right, and white supremacist subcultures), and that promulgates its artefacts and symbols. New information about the terrorist organisation and its senior leadership's preferences may become available in the future that may prompt analysts and researchers to revise their estimative conclusions: a Bayesian-informed epistemology as discussed further in Chapters 3 and 7 that may enable the regular updating of beliefs and institutional knowledge bases.

2. *Organisational Lifespan*. Terrorist groups that exist for a relatively short-time period will not meet the strategic subculture threshold criteria of cultural transmission occurring over a longer-term time period. Rather, they will be more episodic, fleeting, and short lived in nature—being the evolutionary equivalent of a terrorist group sub-species that is mis-matched with its operational and strategic environment. In contrast, a loosely affiliative terrorist subculture may persist around a terrorist group or an organisation, and its lifespan may be far longer—particularly in online, internet-based forms.

3. *Structural Maturity*. Some terrorist groups do not develop mature institutional or organisational forms. One example of this is a more episodic or sporadic approach to allocating resources and to target selection. Another example is a terrorist group with an episodic or situational-based moral calculus that does not develop coherent, long-term strategic objectives and goals. In contrast, post-organisational forms may emerge

that ideational factors still drive but that do not develop long-term oriented, purposeful behaviour.

4. *Distinctive Culture*. Terrorist organisations with a viable strategic subculture need to have an observably distinct culture (which includes being distinct from a parent culture) that operationalises their ideational factors or which articulates their core ideology. The posited causal mechanism of folklore is one way to achieve this outcome, and is explored in Chapters 3 to 6. Terrorist groups that do not have this will remain more incoherent and indistinct in terms of their attempts to articulate a deeper in-group identity.
5. *Terrorist Organisation Disintegration*. A terrorist organisation has several potential 'failure modes' for not effectively operationalising a viable strategic subculture. The disintegration of the core nucleus or founders; the decapitation or ending of the decision elite; and competing sub-groups in the terrorist organisation may render it operationally and strategically ineffective. These possible and plausible 'failure modes' can also directly affect the efficiency and the effectiveness of resource allocations decisions made whilst waging a terrorist campaign.
6. *Research Program Theory-Building*. The research programs and their respective frameworks in strategic studies and terrorism studies may provide different explanations to the new strategic subcultures framework that this chapter advances. A potential risk of this is 'theory capture': the cognitive dominance of a conceptual, theoretical framework over competing insights (which can emerge from alternative theory-building and theory-testing), and operational realities. The possible future research agenda outlined in Chapter 7 discusses new opportunities for cross-comparative theory-building and the potential Popperian falsification of specific theoretical frameworks.

Conclusion

This chapter has achieved two primary aims. First, it has critically re-evaluated the first three generations of theory-building in strategic culture as a set of distinct, individual research programs that emerged from think tank and war college contexts. I contend that the first generation theorists independently co-discovered different aspects of strategic culture in variations which shaped their respective, subsequent, parallel research programs. Their initial contexts of use—military war colleges and think tank strategy—have subtly affected the definitional scope, the types of policy dilemmas, and the specific politico-military problems to which strategic culture has been applied. Many of the strategic studies theorists who initially formulated and wrote about strategic culture have since pivoted later in their academic research and policymaking careers to develop broader research programs in areas such as political decision-making (Jack Snyder), strategic history (Colin S. Gray), world security (Ken Booth), and Chinese political identity and cultural history (Alastair Iain Johnston).

Second, this chapter has proposed a new theory-building framework to integrate the strategic culture frameworks and the terrorism studies analysis of terrorist groups and organisations. This will also build the subfield links between strategic studies and terrorism studies. To do so, I have reinterpreted Jack Snyder's and Martha Crenshaw's respective early research programs in order to formulate and define the plausible, possible existence of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. Jacob N. Shapiro's principal-agent modelling of terrorist organisation decision-making represents a contemporary research program that also specifies some of the elements that a strategic subculture might take. I further proposed definitional, structural, and observational aspects that a strategic subculture might become in a terrorist organisation. I also outlined some of the limits of what a strategic subculture might be.

Chapter 2 uses this theory-building framework to conduct an analytical, thematic literature review that integrates a range of subfield insights about strategic subcultures and terrorist organisations. This research base informs the selected case study in Chapters 4 to 6 on Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, and Chapter 7's discussion of a new research agenda. It provides the basis for greater subfield dialogue and the co-integration between strategic studies and terrorism studies.

In particular, I propose in Chapter 2 what I call the fourth generation cycle of theory-building in strategic culture which has emerged and grown since 2002, and which provides a close link to national security policymaking and threat salience in a volatile, multipolar world where geopolitics and grand strategy are in flux. I discus further how Jack Snyder's insights on strategic culture and Martha Crenshaw's rational choice framework for understanding the strategic rationality of terrorists provide part of the basis for integrating data and insights from new religious movement, cross-comparative religious studies, and the post-September 11 terrorism studies. I then consider how these different theory-building strands can inform developing a new research agenda on the varied roles that strategic subcultures can play in terrorist organisations.

Chapter 2: Perspectives on Strategic Subcultures and Terrorism

Introduction

Chapter 1 outlined a new history of strategic culture as an analytical framework from strategic studies that emerged from civilian think tanks and war college debates. It also posited a new midrange theory of the possible and plausible development of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. This chapter builds on that initial historical analysis to consider the recent and relevant theory-building and theory-testing contributions from a range of discipline subfields. This provides insights particularly into the shared knowledge base of strategic culture frameworks and terrorism studies that will help to build a new midrange theory of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. Chapter 3 then discusses the methodological approach of process tracing and the new tests I propose to use in the selected case study of Aum Shinrikyo.

What are the relevant disciplinary subfield knowledge bases that could be used to further develop a new analytical, midrange theory of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations? In this chapter, I critically examine and integrate key insights and relevant research findings from the following subfield literatures to inform my subsequent case study analysis of Aum Shinrikyo, which is undertaken in Chapters 4, 5, and 6: (1) the distinction of strategic subcultures as a framework from strategy, culture, and the sociological study of subcultures; (2) what I define as the fourth generation of strategic culture scholarship which has emerged since 2002 to deal with complex, significant national security threats in a volatile, multipolar world; (3) the growth and maturation of post-September 11 research on terrorist organisations which reflect the on-going security threats of Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and others; (4) relevant perspectives from new religious

movement and cross-comparative religious studies that inform my analysis of the selected case study of Aum Shinrikyo; and (5) combining these insights into a more Lakatosian research program for examining strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. Each of these discipline subfields provide new ways to analyse and to understand Aum Shinrikyo in a contemporary way.

Perspective 1—Strategy and Culture: The Micro-foundations of Strategic Culture

Defining Strategy and Culture

Strategy and culture are the micro-foundations of the strategic culture frameworks outlined in Chapter 1. Reflecting on the military theoretician Carl von Clausewitz, the historian and strategist Peter Paret has defined strategy as "the use of armed force to achieve the military objectives, and, by extension, the political purpose of the war."[117] In his later work after his contributions to the first generation of strategic culture outlined in Chapter 1, the strategist scholar Colin S. Gray developed a dilemma-based approach to politico-military strategy issues on deterrence, decisive victory, strategic surprise, irregular warfare, and other topics in strategic studies.[118] Gray has also noted: "Strategy is about threatening or applying force purposefully for the ends set by policy."[119] Thus, strategic culture and strategic subcultures exist amidst rich historical traditions of strategic discourses and frameworks.[120] It is also distinguishable from tactics, which are the operational ways to achieve victory in specific battles.[121]

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[117] Peter Paret, "Introduction," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 3.
[118] Colin S. Gray, *National Security Dilemmas: Challenges & Opportunities* (Washington DC: Potomac Books, 2009).
[119] Colin S. Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005), 364.
[120] Beatrice Heuser, *The Evolution of Strategy: Thinking War from Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[121] B.A. Friedman, *On Tactics: A Theory of Victory in Battle* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017).

Culture remains a highly contested concept in anthropology with a range of definitions.[122] The anthropologist Clifford Geertz noted that culture functioned as "systems or complexes of symbols" that were "extrinsic sources of information" to individuals, were inheritable, and that could be transmitted inter-generationally, over time.[123] This anthropological and informational definition of culture provides a micro-foundation for the three posited causal mechanisms that are defined in Chapter 3: cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore. The strategic culture literature outlined in Chapter 1 thus also exists in a larger context of more diachronic, longitudinal symbol systems.

Revisiting Strategic Subcultures and Sociological Subcultures

How do strategic subcultures differ from sociological subcultures? A broader sociological subculture may not fulfil all of the necessary and sufficient criteria to be a strategic subculture. Rather than a cohesive and focused sub-group, a sociological subculture is more likely to have looser affiliative ties and social bonds. Its tradition of thought may be more emic or idiosyncratic rather than strategic: at its extremes it may reflect conspiracy theory narratives or delusional beliefs. Some subcultures may have narratives about imagined or stylised violence—goth, punk, and vampire, for example—that reflect culturally transmitted symbols, and socially learned behaviour and norms about social deviance, but that are not violent in the same way or extent that a terrorist organisation is.

What sociological subcultures are is highly generative in terms of cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore. They may form around charismatic, historical, and magnetised individuals who essentially function as subcultural norm entrepreneurs: the magus Aleister Crowley inspired the occult subculture of Thelema (True Will) from the 1960s onwards;[124]

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[122] Adam Kuper, *Culture—The Anthropologists' Account* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[123] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 92.
[124] Lawrence Sutin, *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2000).

and the late conspiracy theorist William Cooper, who inspired far right militias and hip-hop artists with his warnings about the perceived elite social control and stratification of mass society.[125] Over time, the respective practices of these subcultural norm entrepreneurs have crystallised into subcultural practices and even new religious movements. Artistic expressions in art, film, music, and literature may arise that influence receptive individuals but that may also differ from the emic understandings of specific subcultural and new religious practices.[126]

Such sociological subcultures can involve socio-political activism or protest but not necessarily escalate like terrorist violence often does. For example, in the early-to-late 1970s a wave of left-wing terrorism occurred alongside punk music and extreme art.[127] Over time, the aesthetic and sociological subcultures each matured and became more distinct from the terrorist agitprop imagery that had initially achieved media prominence. In contrast, strategic subcultures provide individuals with resources and a potential philosophy of life to shape their preference for violence as problem-solving.

Strategic subcultures are primarily institution or organisation-centric. They differ from sociological subcultures in several ways. Strategic subcultures have a cohesive sub-group such as a decision elite that is able through charisma, resource allocation, and other means to impose its preference for violence on others. A strategic subculture will have a traceable history of strategic thought or doctrines about the use of force and the preference for violence which has matured beyond being idiosyncratic to having a deeper perspective on the world and the kinds of change that are desired to be achieved. Finally, it will be able to escalate and

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[125] Mark Jacobsen, *Pale Horse Rider: William Cooper, the Rise of Conspiracy, and the Fall of Trust in America* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2018).
[126] Nikolas Schreck, *The Satanic Screen* (London: Creation Books, 2001).
[127] Michael Selzer, *Terrorist Chic: An Exploration of Violence in the Seventies* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1979).

to mobilise its preference for violence into sustained action. These different aspects are discussed in terms of Aum Shinrikyo's pathway into terrorist violence (Chapter 4), its possible counterfactuals (Chapter 5), and its initiatory, religious sub-system (Chapter 6).

One criterion that distinguishes strategic subcultures from sociological subcultures is that the latter are often also vectors for socio-political ideas where there are insights but that are not a doctrinal tradition of strategic thought, or a targeted moral calculus. This means that politico-military strategic subcultures can use sociological subcultures for pragmatic reasons: the contemporary paranoia about UFOlogy and aliens, for example, arose in part due to a successful disinformation campaign by the Kirtland Army Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico against the researcher Paul Bennewitz.[128] This politico-military complexity—and the emergence of possible strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations—has foreshadowed the emergence of the fourth generation of strategic culture.

Perspective 2: Conceptualising the Fourth Generation of Strategic Culture

I contend that the fourth generation of strategic culture began with College of Wooster's Jeffrey S. Lantis' 2002 article in the *International Studies Review* on the links between strategic culture as a research program, and its growing role in United States national security policymaking.[129] This ground-breaking article reflected a significant theoretical reconceptualisation and renewal of strategic culture's research agenda in strategic studies. Lantis specifically addressed the enduring policy relevance of strategic culture in the wake of Al Qaeda's coordinated terrorist attacks against the United States on 11th September 2001 and the domestic build-up to the 2003 Iraq War. He also responded to the third generation's

[128] Greg Bishop, *Project Beta: The Story of Paul Bennewitz, National Security, and the Creation of a Modern UFO Myth* (New York: Paraview Pocket Books, 2005).
[129] Jeffrey S. Lantis, "Strategic Culture and National Security Policymaking," *International Studies Review* 4, no. 3 (2002): 87-113.

theory-building debate about constructivism's potential role in strengthening the research agenda for strategic culture-informed policy analysis.

Jeffrey Lantis also coordinated and contributed to an important collection of research papers—on how strategic culture might contribute to the analytical understanding of new security threats faced by the United States—that the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) sponsored in 2006. The DTRA's engagement with this evolving research agenda reflected Lantis's strong emphasis on discipline-building and direct policymaker engagement. This research papers collection was a significant sign of institutional support in the United States defence and national security community for the urgent need to understand adversaries' national ways of war and how non-state actors might be deterred. Collectively, the research papers offered new insights on how United States strategic culture could be strengthened to deal with new and emerging security threats, with great and rising power contestation in the international system, and how strategic culture could be more effectively operationalised in counterterrorism and intelligence analysis.[130]

The fourth generation of strategic culture has several important aspects that distinguish it from Alastair Iain Johnston's previous three generations (discussed in Chapter 1).

First, the fourth generation occurs in a multipolar world of renewed great power contestation between the United States of America and Russia. This contestation also involves rising powers like China who challenge the Asia-Pacific's hegemonic balance of power. This multipolar contestation also re-establishes the principle of hierarchy and status competition (at the macro-foundation, global macro, or the international system level of analysis) in world politics. In this more competitive and uncertain geopolitical environment, it becomes crucial

[130] Defense Threat Reduction Agency, "Strategic Culture Studies," (2006), accessed 1st August 2019, https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/index.html.

for national security policymakers to better understand the politico-military mindset of, and the deeper cultural influences on, potential adversaries and strategic rivals. Strategic culture awareness can thus play an early warning role in counter-deception operations against strategic surprise: a significant outcome in the current multipolar world.[131] An example of this is an essays collection that Jeffrey S. Lantis arranged for and edited a 2015 edited collection—originally published in the academic journal *Contemporary Security Policy* in 2014—about Asia-Pacific strategic cultures and security policy that foresaw the developing security issues involving China, the Indo-Pacific, and Asia-Pacific economic and political development.[132]

Second, the fourth generation has a much closer link to national security as a discipline-based subfield, and to the intelligence practice of emerging threat analysis and scenarios than previous generations of strategic culture analysis. The fourth generation differs from the first generation's emphasis on strategic bargaining in détente negotiations and nuclear war-fighting, the second generation's focus on hegemonic trans-national alliances, or the third generation's study of historical grand strategy and the meso-level development of politico-military institutions (as previously discussed in Chapter 1).

This evolution is evident in Jeffrey Lantis' research program on nuclear strategy; Vipin Narang's discussion of strategic culture as a rival hypothesis in his study of nuclear rivalry and competition;[133] and in Beatrice Heuser's historical study of strategic culture as national ways of war.[134] Each of these studies made original and substantive contributions to their

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[131] Robert Mandel, *Global Data Shock: Strategic Ambiguity, Deception, and Surprise in an Age of Information Overload* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019).
[132] Jeffrey S. Lantis, ed., *Strategic Cultures and Security Policies in the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Routledge, 2015).
[133] Vipin Narang, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).
[134] Beatrice Heuser, *Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies: National Styles and Strategic Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

relevant subfield literature. The theory-testing perspective in fourth generation strategic culture is also more critical in nature such as Patrick Porter's analysis of politico-military discourses on adversaries and their influence on counterinsurgency thinking in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts—adopting and rearticulating some aspects of Ken Booth and Bradley Klein's respective research agendas in the earlier, first and second generations of strategic culture theory-building.[135]

Fourth Generation Theory-Building: The New Geopolitical Context

The fourth generation occurred in a geopolitical context that coincided with the George W. Bush Administration's grand strategy of the Global War on Terror. This was also a period of China's emergence as a rising power in geopolitics, economic statecraft, and international relations. An example of this dynamic synthesis is scholar Andrew Kennedy's cross-comparative study of the complex technological innovation relationship between the United States, China, and India, which builds significantly on his earlier doctoral research with his PhD supervisor, third generation scholar Alastair Iain Johnston.[136] Another is area studies and defence expert Gregory Raymond's empirical analysis of Thailand's dominant national strategic culture as emerging out of the meso-level interplay of the Thai military culture and the ideological role of royal nationalism, which resulted in a more accommodative security policy in the Asia-Pacific region.[137] A third is nuclear deterrence strategist Michael Cohen's use of process tracing (a qualitative research methodology discussed further in Chapter 3) to identify the availability heuristic's important psychological role in political leader decision-making about when to use nuclear coercion, and under what specific conditions they may

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[135] Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Patrick Porter, *Blunder: Britain's War in Iraq* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[136] Andrew Kennedy, *The Conflicted Superpower: America's Collaboration with China and India in Global Innovation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).
[137] Gregory Vincent Raymond, *Thai Military Power: A Culture of Strategic Accommodation* (Copenhagen, Denmark: NIAS Press, 2018).

learn from foreign policy crises and adopt more cautious policymaking stances.[138] A fourth is Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko's comparative use of a social identity theory framework and process tracing methodology to comparatively examine 500 years of Chinese and Russian foreign policy.[139] Each of these respective scholars have made original contributions to theory-building, methodological, and empirical case studies that could inform a strategic culture research program.

The fourth generation's conceptual foundations thus reflect this changing operational environment via a broader combination of areas studies, policy expertise, and a securitisation focus on new and emerging security threats. Collectively, the fourth generation focused on expanding the case study universe of strategic culture literature to also consider the growth in non-military threats such as information warfare and cyber-warfare. The topics explored in fourth generation strategic culture adapt according to the nature of the security environment, and to the advice needs of national security policymakers.

As it evolved, the fourth generation was thus a decisive conceptual break from Alastair Iain Johnston's previous three generations of strategic culture theory-building. The fourth generation is more upfront than these previous generations about conceptual and theory-building issues in developing applied, policy-relevant strategic culture frameworks that address real world problems. The first generation focused on comparative national culture, institutional elites, and factors related to longitudinal cultural transmission in designated, target countries of nuclear détente negotiator and foreign policymaker interest. The second generation focused on declarative policy versus operational uses that both protected the dominant, hegemonic status of powerful countries like the United States. The third generation

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[138] Michael D. Cohen, *When Proliferation Causes Peace: The Psychology of Nuclear Crises* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017).
[139] Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, *Quest For Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

was a mixture of neopositivist research design, meso-level institutional analysis, and historical grand strategy.

In contrast, the fourth generation has developed a more comparative approach to national cultures, an event studies approach to emerging and current national security threats that informs its selected case studies, and an emphasis on the renewed utility of strategic culture frameworks for national security policymakers to navigate the strategic uncertainty and volatility that they face. Recent examples of the geopolitical challenges that fourth generation strategists face include China's grand strategy of the Belt and Road Initiative, and the regional tensions between Russia and nearby nation-states about their respective strategic cultures.[140]

The Fourth Generation's Contribution to Theory-Building about Strategic Culture

The fourth generation literature has resolved key issues from earlier theory-building generations about strategic culture frameworks. For example, its strategic actors are both encultured and are able to engage in cultural transmission and social learning—two causal mechanisms explored further in Chapter 3's discussion of methodology and research design. These strategic actors may be extra-state entities like the European Union, or they may be non-state actors like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Whilst comparative analysis of the United States and Russia remains the case study baseline for strategic culture literature, it is now carried out with greater awareness of area studies contexts and political economy dimensions. This comparative analysis has now also been expanded in the fourth generation to include other countries.

[140] Tim Winters, *Geocultural Power: China's Quest To Revive The Silk Roads for the Twenty-First Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2019); Katalin Miklossy and Hanna Smith, eds., *Strategic Culture in Russia's Neighbourhood: Change and Continuity In An In-Between Space* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019).

Perhaps the most significant conceptual shift in the fourth generation is its emphasis on synchronic rather than more diachronic and longitudinal factors in its case studies and event studies informed analysis. Combat learning between insurgents and military forces, and new forms of terrorist organisation innovation are influential examples in the fourth generation literature.[141] The fourth generation also recognises the importance of event-based exogenous shocks; rapidly changing war conditions; and policymaker-oriented advice as three plausible reasons for the recent theory-building shift from diachronic to more synchronic-based analytical factors.[142] This also becomes clear when this emerging fourth generation literature is compared to international relations studies that take a more diachronic, longitudinal informed analysis, such as on the evolution of transnational networks over time in the international system.[143]

This significant shift in temporality from a diachronic outlook to a more synchronic emphasis reflects the social learning that has occurred in United States politico-military institutions regarding the 11th September 2001 terrorist attacks, the 2003 Iraq War, the 2001 to present counterinsurgency campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's metamorphosis from a small jihadist group to an open insurgency in Iraq and Syria.[144] These terrorist groups, organisations, and open insurgencies pose a unique challenge for government policymakers: conventional deterrence, negotiation, deception operations, state-based coalition networks, and the security culture of nation-states can all fail

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[141] Patrick Porter, *Military Orientalism: Eastern War Through Western Eyes*; Michael C. Horowitz, *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[142] John W. Dower, *Cultures of War: Pearl Harbor, Hiroshima, 9-11, Iraq* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).
[143] John M. Owens IV, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[144] Patrick Porter, *Blunder: Britain's War in Iraq*.

to defeat their adversaries.[145] Each of these threats required adaptability in national security policymakers in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries.

Surveying the growth in fourth generation literature Tamir Libel acknowledges Alan Bloomfield's important scholarship in highlighting the importance of strategic subcultures. Tamir contends the insight may be situated in terms of the new institutionalism, that the exploration of strategic subcultures in the strategic culture literature is often about hegemonic structures, and that computational social science methods may provide a way forward for new scholars.[146] In this thesis I answer Libel's question about the causal mechanisms involved in the particular context of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. To do so the insights about strategic subcultures need to be combined with the subfield of terrorism studies.

Perspective 3: Terrorism Studies

This section discusses the relevant research findings from several independent and individual research programs in terrorism studies. Religiously motivated violence and the sociology of terrorist organisations emerge as two key theory-building contributions of terrorism studies which can further inform Chapter 1's initial conceptualisation of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

As Marc Sageman has noted, terrorism studies as an international security subfield has undergone rapid growth in research outputs, engagement, and impact since Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001.[147] This rapid growth has affected the overall quality

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[145] Samir Puri, *Fighting and Negotiating With Armed Groups: The Difficulty of Securing Strategic Outcomes* (Milton Park, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016).
[146] Tamir Libel, 'Rethinking Strategic Culture: A Computational (Social Science) Discursive-Institutionalist Approach,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* (Online First), 2018, 8, 9, 15, accessed 5th August 2019, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01402390.2018.1545645.
[147] Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Marc Sageman, "The Stagnation in Terrorism Research," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 4 (2014): 565-580.

of terrorism studies research. Consequently, one way to understand terrorism studies is to distil its diverse research agendas into differing theoretical stances and research programs. Some specific examples of research programs that are directly relevant to understanding strategic subcultures include rational choice theory (Martha Crenshaw), principal-agent theory (Jacob N. Shapiro), the cross-cultural sociology of religiously motivated terrorism (Mark Juergensmeyer), and the Foucauldian-influenced analysis of how policymaker expertise develops in the subfields and disciplines of terrorism studies and risk management (Lisa Stampnitzky).

The theory-building approach that this thesis adopts is to identify relevant causal factors in the emergence, growth, maturation, and the possible, later demise of terrorist organisations. Central to the survivability of a terrorist organisation is its development and use of what I call *mobilisational counter-power capabilities*: the ability to cast a shadow that challenges other strategic actors who may have power dominance, and to effectively mobilise tactical violence operatives in order to effectively and efficiently achieve particular strategic objectives. This is one of the functional outcomes of possessing a viable strategic subculture. My conceptualisation and discussion of mobilisational counter-power has similarities to Jacques Bidet's synthesis of Marxist class and Foucauldian knowledge-power theories; to the metis (cunning intelligence)-like opportunism of buy side traders in fragmented, global financial markets; and to the emergence of cyber-crime, hybrid warfare, information warfare, and social media platform actors in the early 21st century.[148]

Benedict Wilkinson summed up the specific dilemma that terrorist organisations face in developing a viable strategic subculture: "how to achieve hugely ambitious goals when one

[148] Jacques Bidet, *Foucault with Marx*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Zed Books, 2016); Carl Miller, *The Death of the Gods: The New Global Power Grab* (London: William Heinemann, 2018). Walter Mattli, *Darkness By Design: The Hidden Power in Global Capital Markets* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019a).

has very little power."[149] Rather than the strategic subculture approach that this thesis takes Wilkinson instead focused on a series of "scripts" or "strategies of terrorism" that "violent Islamist groups" used: "power play, mobilisation, provocation, de-legitimisation, attrition, co-operation, and de-mobilisation."[150] Wilkinson's insight suggests that terrorist organisations develop a viable strategic subculture as a way to efficiently and effectively allocate resources in order to gain greater power – what I call mobilisational counter-power capabilities. The terrorist organisations do so under conditions of relative weakness compared to other strategic actors, and in decision-making conditions of threat and uncertainty. Wilkinson's focus on scripts or strategies is a parallel research program to that outlined in Chapter 7 for advancing the study of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Ervin Staub has extended Ken Booth's insight from Chapter 1 about the danger of ethnocentrism in politico-military strategic culture to consider that ingroup bonds can facilitate outgroup devaluation.[151] A terrorist strategic subculture is the meso-level organisational structure to facilitate these ingroup bonds – through culturally transmitted knowledge, socially learned norms, and folklore rituals – and as such can distinguish the ingroup from the outgroup that it proceeds to devalue.[152] One of the implications of this is that Staub has articulated a moral psychology of good and evil that can be expanded beyond terrorist organisations to other phenomena such as genocide and other forms of group and mass violence. Further research is urgently needed.

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[149] Benedict Wilkinson, *Scripts of Terror: The Stories Terrorists Tell Themselves* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), Loc 89-94 (Kindle edition).
[150] Benedict Wilkinson, *Scripts of Terror*, Loc 104 (Kindle edition).
[151] Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 59-61.
[152] Ervin Staub, *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

An important aspect of developing mobilisational counter-power capabilities is the critical role of social learning: one of Chapter 3's posited causal mechanisms. After the 11th September 2001 attacks by Al Qaeda, terrorism studies scholars focused more on social learning at strategic and tactical levels to understand militant jihadists and other terrorist organisations.[153] The think tank the RAND Corporation—the environment in which Jack Snyder had originally conceptualised strategic culture—published a two-volume report on the dimensions of organisational learning in terrorist organisations.[154] As will be discussed further in Chapters 4 to 6, Aum Shinrikyo can thus be considered as an important precursor to the significant innovations by terrorist organisations that have shaped the post-September 11 discourse in terrorism studies.[155] The emergence and growth of terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has led counterterrorism analyst Seth G. Jones to systematically analyse the strategic use of insurgency warfare.[156] The potentially coercive dimensions of social learning is also illustrated in Mia Bloom and John Horgan's research on how terrorist organisations use children.[157]

A related subfield literature is the criminological study of specific organisations in the crime-terrorism nexus. James Cockayne—the Director of the Centre for Policy Research at the United Nations University—has a strategic theory of organised crime that focuses on

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[153] James J.F. Forest, *Teaching Terror: Strategic and Tactical Learning in the Terrorist World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006).
[154] Brian A. Jackson, John C. Baker, Peter Chaik, Kim Cragin, John V. Parachini, and Horacio R. Trujillo, *Aptitude For Destruction Volume 1: Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combatting Terrorism* (MG-331-NIJ) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), accessed 10th November 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG331.html; Brian A. Jackson, John C. Baker, Peter Chaik, Kim Cragin, John V. Parachini, and Horacio R. Trujillo, *Aptitude For Destruction Volume 2: Case Studies of Organizational Learning in Five Terrorist Groups* (MG-332-NIJ) (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), accessed 10th November 2019, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG332.html.
[155] Magnus Ranstorp and Magnus Normark, eds., *Understanding Terrorism Innovation and Learning: Al-Qaeda and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Audrey Kurth Cronin, *Power To The People: How Open Technological Innovation Is Arming Tomorrow's Terrorists* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2019).
[156] Seth G. Jones, *Waging Insurgent Warfare: Lessons from the Vietcong to the Islamic State* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2016).
[157] Bloom, Mia with John Horgan, *Small Arms: Children and Terrorism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).

capabilities development, criminal strategy, positioning the criminogenic organisation for growth and innovation, and the development of distinct criminal statecraft.[158] Marizio Catino's study of mafias in Italy, Japan, Russia, Hong Kong, and the United States articulates a new research agenda for using organisational studies frameworks and insights to study issues of organisational structure and control, governance, rules, and common organisational dilemmas.[159] Another emerging approach is to situate terrorist groups in the broader psycho-political context of affective, emotional politics in a nation-state, such as for the alternative left's evolution between 1968 and 1984 as an evolving subcultural milieu for West Germany's Red Army Faction and its support network.[160]

Perspective 4: The 'Cultic Milieu' and New Religious Movements

Defining The 'Cultic Milieu'

The sociologist Colin Campbell defined the 'cultic milieu' in 1972 to describe the surrounding social environment that functions as "the cultural underground of society" which "is continually giving birth to new cults, absorbing the debris of the dead ones and creating new generations of cult prone individuals to maintain the high levels of membership turnover."[161] The cultic milieu relied on "deviant … heterodox … receptive and syncretistic" ideas, an epistemological model of experiential seekers, and an information revelation process of culturally transmitting esoteric secrets via often short-lived, improvisatory, and syncretic groups.[162] In particular, Campbell warned of the emergence "of a society centered

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[158] James Cockayne, *Hidden Power: The Strategic Logic of Organized Crime* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[159] Maurizio Catino, *Mafia Organizations: The Visible Hand of Criminal Enterprise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2019).
[160] Joachim C. Häberlin. *The Emotional Politics of the Alternative Left: West Germany, 1968—1984* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[161] Colin Campbell, "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization," in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures In An Age of Globalization*, eds. Jeffrey Kaplan and Helene Loow (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 14.
[162] Campbell, "The Cult" 14, 15, 18, 19.

on a blend of mysticism, magic and pseudo-science": a world that fourth generation scholars of strategic culture now face of fake news, post-truth, and hybrid, information, and political forms of war.[163]

In Campbell's 'cultic milieu' framework, the individual cultic group and its charismatic leader is often a relatively short-lived vehicle for the cultural transmission of deviant or occult beliefs—as compared to the more institutional and longer-lived mesocosm of the religious sect or institution. The new religious movement literature detailed in the following explores this distinction between cultic groups, religious sects, and religious institutions in greater detail. Campbell's 'cultic milieu' insight suggests that non-mainstream religious groups can have their own teaching lineages and forms of cultural transmission.

Campbell's 'cultic milieu' can help us to understand the 'Aum question' or the 'Aum problem' in terms of the sociology of religion and youth. Aum Shinrikyo's path dependent transition into terrorist violence (discussed in Chapter 4) is distinct from sociological deviance and moral panics. Aum Shinrikyo positioned itself as a religiously framed solution to renunciates, members, or followers who faced family pressures, concerns with education, and who desired a different religious, initiatory experience to existing and more established traditions.

Many of the low-level and mid-level renunciates in Aum Shinrikyo passed through the 'cultic milieu' before joining Aum Shinrikyo (discussed further in Chapters 4 to 6). Thus, the 'cultic milieu' can be considered as an antecedent or pre-conditioning environment that may have helped to shape the affiliation decisions of renunciates. Aum Shinrikyo blended aspects of

[163] Campbell, "The Cult" 24.

Campbell's religious mysticism and his fringe science categories for the 'cultic milieu'—thus combining them in one orientation.

Although Campbell conceived of the 'cultic milieu' during a climate of psycho-political strain, his theory-building analysis occurred before personal computers and the internet became publicly available in a widespread way, and thus could not overtly consider the cultural transmission role of computer networks and modern communications. The internet has enabled charismatic leaders, subcultural norm entrepreneurs, and seekers after truth in the 'cultic milieu' to classify, debate, and begin to classify this subterranean information into the beginnings of what may be a more Lakatosian research program. Blogs, social media platforms, videos, and streaming data each accelerate the subterranean knowledge creation process in the 'cultic milieu'—and means that it may become more visible to contemporary mainstream society.

Nor does Campbell discuss abnormal psychology in his 'cultic milieu' original article. However, the criteria he uses to define the 'cultic milieu' overlaps potentially with some of the diagnostic criteria for the schizotypal personality disorder: ideas of reference, strange and unconventional beliefs, paranoia, and perceptual changes. Schizotypal ideas in the 'cultic milieu' may be a mixture of highly creative but also delusional thoughts and subjective frames of reference. Reality-testing failures in schizotypal thinking may be one reason why cultic groups in the 'cultic milieu' are often fragmentary and short-lived. However, what is important to the 'cultic milieu' is the improvisational cross-fertilisation of a range of ideas from what are often syncretic sources.

Perspectives on the 'Cultic Milieu' and Aum Shinrikyo

The 'cultic milieu' and Aum Shinrikyo have been interpreted in several different ways. For example, after the fallout from Aum Shinrikyo's terrorist attacks in 1995 (discussed in

Chapter 4), the psychiatrist and psychohistorian Robert Jay Lifton did a paired comparison of its leader Shoko Asahara and the Heaven's Gate leader Marshall Applewhite from a psychiatric-informed perspective.[164] Lifton concluded that both groups shared a fascination with the transformative and transcendental liminality of apocalyptic violence. In recent analysis, Lifton has expanded this focus on apocalyptic violence to understand more broadly the mindset of political and religious zealotry.[165]

Anticult proponents emerged in the 1970s to lobby against groups which emerged from the 'cultic milieu' that were perceived to be authoritarian, controlling, and led by charismatic leaders. Steve Hassan summarised this anticult perspective regarding Aum Shinrikyo during a United States *60 Minutes* television interview originally broadcast in 1995: he contended that Shoko Asahara was an authoritarian leader, and that Aum Shinrikyo convinced its renunciates, members, and followers to give up their jobs, and donate all of their money and resources to the religious corporation.[166] Chico State University emeritus professor and sociologist Janja Lalich has a more nuanced and sophisticated view that such dynamics illustrated close social bonds and 'bounded choices' in decision-making that occur in group contexts.[167]

The anticult network's stance grew from psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton's influential study of 'totalistic' environments and 'thought reform' in China.[168] During the same period, Edgar Schein conceptualised a model of leadership in organisations that would also become

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[164] Lynne Lamberg, "Psychiatrist Explores Apocalyptic Violence in Heaven's Gate and Aum Shinrikyo Cults," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 278, no. 3 (1997), 191-193.
[165] Robert Jay Lifton, *Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism, and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry* (New York: The New Press, 2019).
[166] Steve Hassan, "Aum Shinrikyo – 60 Minutes Interview With Steve Hassan," *60 Minutes* (1995), accessed 11th March 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zW4UCORXVs.
[167] Janja Lalich, *Bounded Choice – True Believers and Charismatic Cults* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).
[168] Robert Jay Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of "Brainwashing" in China* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1961).

influential in organisational psychology.[169] However, the later application of Lifton's 'thought reform' and 'totalistic' frameworks to deprogramming and brainwashing controversies was an over-reach for many new religious groups, and has now largely been discredited in United States lawsuits. By the late 1990s, a countercultural view also emerged that coercive and undue influence strategies could be found throughout mainstream society—often to facilitate predatory financial profits.[170] This was a challenge to the sociological imagination of new religious movement scholarship: could its insights be generalised to other social structures?

Such negative views of Aum Shinrikyo also continue to influence how the media view and interact with more recent 'cultic milieu' groups. One recent example is Keith Rainiere's Nxivm lifestyle and personal development group. Raniere has been charged and prosecuted for "racketeering conspiracy, identity theft, extortion, forced labor, money laundering, wire fraud, and sex trafficking."[171] *The New Yorker*'s journalist Tom Bissell observed that groups like Nxivm rely on a "cult of personality" that lies outside "the parameters of a complex intellectual tradition" that more established, institutional religions embody.[172] This same observation could be applied to Aum Shinrikyo and to its founder Shoko Asahara, who was not part of an established initiatory tradition or lineage-transmission.

One of the reasons also for the different media narratives is due to changes in how 'cultic milieu' groups have interacted with academic researchers and the media. In the 1970s, sociologists such as William Sims Bainbridge were able to conduct sympathetic, emic-

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[169] Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (4th ed.) (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010).
[170] Douglas Rushkoff, *Coercion: Why We Listen To What "They" Say* (New York: Riverhead, 1999).
[171] Edward Helmore, "Nxivm trial hears of debauchery and cruelty within alleged 'sex cult'," *The Guardian,* May 18, 2019, accessed 12th August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/may/18/nxivm-trial-keith-raniere-sex-cult.
[172] Tom Bissell, "How Cults Made America," *The New Yorker*, April 24, 2019, accessed 12th August 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/how-cults-corrected-america.

oriented studies of deviant psychotherapeutic groups like the Process Church of the Final Judgment.[173] However, by the time that the veteran investigative journalist and *The New Yorker* magazine writer Lawrence Wright decided to profile the Church of Scientology, he had to deal with extensive fact-checking and litigation threats.[174] The Church of Scientology also has successfully fought several lawsuits on copyright infringement in the United States jurisdiction against internet service providers to prevent its internal, senior level, religious doctrines and practices from being publicly released.[175] These legal developments posed challenges for scholars who studied new religious movements.

New Religious Movements

New religious movements have emerged since the 19th century; have aspirational, charismatic, and transformational leaders; and often have improvisatory and syncretic religious teachings.[176] Aum Shinrikyo was a new Japanese religious corporation (a legal entity defined under Japanese corporate and tax laws) that can also be considered as a new religious movement. The academic study of new religious movements combine aspects of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and religious studies emerged for academic researchers to study high profile and controversial groups and movements. These evolved from New Age groups (the 1960s and 1970s) and quasi-religious corporations (the 1980s) to millenarian and apocalyptic groups (the 1990s), and internet-based trans-national networks (the early 2000s to the present).

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[173] William Sims Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult* (Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press. 1978).

[174] Lawrence Wright, *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood and the Prison of Belief* (New York: Vintage, 2013); Lawrence Wright, "The Apostate: Paul Haggis vs. the Church of Scientology," *The New Yorker*, February 14, 2011, accessed 12th August 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-apostate-lawrence-wright.

[175] Andrew Ventimiglia, *Copyrighting God: Ownership of the Sacred in American Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[176] Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying The World To Save It: Aum Shinrikyo, Apocalyptic Violence, and the New Global Terrorism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2000), 18.

The scholarship on new religious movements faced a challenging religious and sociological environment of creative, non-secular horizon-building. New religious movements such as the Church of Scientology, Transcendental Meditation, and cultic groups embraced a spectrum of non-traditional beliefs, reasons and motivations for affiliative membership, and also could serve as a proxy for upward social mobility.[177] This scholarship situated the emergence, growth, and collapse of individual new religious movements in a broader sociological context.

Aum Shinrikyo's attempted cross-border expansion into Australia, Russia, South Korea and the United States can be considered as an example of an offshoring structure during an early period of globalisation.[178] There is a strategic logic to some beliefs and practices in new religious movements that becomes more evident with closer, empathetic study.

The new religious movement literature has expanded its research scope and methodologies to include cross-cultural analysis of religious corporations and groups. Aum Shinrikyo continues to be a significant case for several reasons. It illustrates charismatic leader and follower dynamics in a teacher-student context. Its organisational lifecycle included interactions with the cultic milieu and with Japanese youth subcultures; this led to protests from parent groups and lawyers who drew on the United States anticult literature for inspiration. It illustrates a kind of event studies, and has particular lessons on why some new religious movements can turn violent or pose broader security threats to government and national security policymakers.

This became a significant issue for United States and Canadian law enforcement in the mid-to-late 1990s when Aum Shinrikyo's terrorist attacks in the Japanese cities of Matsumoto and

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[177] Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985).
[178] John Urry, *Offshoring* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).

Tokyo created fear of more widespread apocalyptic-fuelled violence. The Federal Bureau of Investigation launched Project Megiddo in which Aum Shinrikyo's apocalyptic beliefs were presented as a desire to create Armageddon.[179] That the attacks came from a peaceful Japan created cognitive dissonance for the FBI and other Western analysts—it was only later that other causative factors such as a failed political campaign in 1990 (discussed in Chapter 4) were taken into account.[180] Aum Shinrikyo's hierarchical structure intensified a focus on Shoko Asahara as its founder and leader, and on interpretations of the dangers of charismatic leadership to persuade or to unduly influence receptive followers.[181]

The FBI's Project Megiddo reflected millennialist fears in law enforcement in the mid-late 1990s about violence in extremists and new religious movements. The University of Waterloo's professor Lorne Dawson posited a more complex and nuanced framework in his study of what terrorism studies scholars could learn from new religious movement researchers. In particular, Dawson highlighted that fears about apocalyptic beliefs were really about ideology; that charismatic authority and leadership is at its core rooted in a religious experience or worldview; that new religious movements need to be understood in terms of different sociological patterns of individual and group affiliation, the interaction between charismatic leaders and worldviews; and for more cross-comparative scholarship.[182] The strategic subcultures framework advanced in this thesis addresses some of Dawson's important research agenda.

Aum Shinrikyo was always more complex that its simplistic media image as a religious doomsday organisation. Prior to its terrorist attacks, Aum Shinrikyo interacted with both the

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[179] Ian Reader, "Spectres and Shadows: Aum Shinrikyo and the Road to Megiddo," in *Millennial Violence: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Jeffrey Kaplan (London: Frank Cass, 2002b), 149, 177.
[180] Reader, "Spectres and Shadows" 153, 166.
[181] Reader, "Spectres and Shadows" 174.
[182] Lorne L. Dawson, "The Study of New Religious Movements and the Radicalization of Home-Grown Terrorists: Opening a Dialogue," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 1 (2009): 12, 15, 17-18.

cultic milieu and with broader media and youth subcultures in Japan.[183] Interacting with youth subcultures was an important expansion strategy for Japanese new religious movements engaged in competitive outbidding with each other. In Aum Shinrikyo's case, this engagement with youth subcultures was also done in order to achieve the rapid growth objectives that Shoko Asahara had set for the period 1984-1990. However, since many renunciates were young, this was also why Aum Shinrikyo faced intense criticism from the anticult lobby, and from oppositional parent and legal groups.

Within Aum Shinrikyo, two key discourses emerged that relate to the new religious movement literature itself. The first discourse was Aum Shinrikyo's public face as a Tantric Buddhist Vajrayana-influenced religious corporation that sought to rapidly grow in Japan's religious marketplace, and that attempted to create an initiatory, religious sub-system for its renunciates (discussed in Chapter 6). To do so, Aum Shinrikyo interacted directly with Japanese and United States scholars in the new religious movements literature such as J. Gordon Melton, and gave preferential, negotiated access to key decision-makers like founder Shoko Asahara. The second discourse was a more private, hidden, and secretive discourse about acquiring and developing chemical and biological weapons (discussed in Chapter 4). This second discourse highlights that there is potential, under some circumstances, for academic researchers to misjudge a new religious movement that is in fact pursuing clandestine objectives.

Moral Panics and New Religious Movements

New religious movements can face sociological moral panics—public concerns about deviant or subcultural norms that are perceived to threaten the parent culture or the broader, conventional society. In such conditions several different viewpoints can emerge: the anticult

[183] Daniel Alfred Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo and Japanese Youth* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999).

perspective held by some police and law enforcement which views the new religious movement as fundamentally coercive or that involves dependency relationships; a countercult perspective that reinforces the values and worldview of dominant, traditional religious institutions; and the attempts by academic scholars to understand the new religious movement as a sociological form of religiously motivated cultural transmission.

As researchers found during the Satanic Ritual Abuse moral panic of the late 1980s and the early 1990s these anticult, countercult, and academic views can differ greatly on the specific phenomena being studied—and can often be incommensurable in values and worldviews.[184] Anticult and countercult narratives reinforce a stigma involved in affiliating with new religious movements.

Consequently, one of the complications with Aum Shinrikyo is that the moral panic surrounding this new religious movement turned out to be fundamentally correct. Aum Shinrikyo did evolve into a path dependent trajectory of embracing terrorist violence (discussed further in Chapter 4). Its senior leadership did use its organisational architecture to create dependency relationships with renunciates, members, and followers who provided a low-cost labour force as a kind of capital accumulation or threat finance capability.

Hence, an important distinction for assessing moral panics is the distinction between sociological or subcultural deviance and the greater scale of a cohesive sub-group developing mobilisational counter-power capabilities. The strategic subcultures framework that this thesis defines and advances may help counterterrorism and intelligence analysts in particular to better assess such risks, particularly where information asymmetries may exist. This will

[184] Larry Kahaner, *Cults That Kill: Probing The Underworld of Occult Crime*. New York: Warner Books, 1988. Richard Beck, *We Believe The Children: A Moral Panic of the 1980s*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2015.

enable analysts and policymakers to distinguish between individuals, groups, and movements that are violent threats, and deviant but non-violent new religious movements.

Perspective 5: Cross-Comparative Religious Studies

The University of California Santa Barbara professor Ann Taves' research used process tracing to identify the impact of religious illumination experiences for the founders of new religions. Her research focused particularly on the small group dynamics that surround their group or movement's genesis, and their period of initial growth into a decision elite cohort.[185] Although conducted on non-terrorist groups and organisations, Taves' original contribution illustrates a parallel research program from cross-comparative religious studies that has made important methodological and theoretical contributions that inform my case study analysis in Chapters 4 to 6. It also highlights for the posited causal mechanism of social learning discussed in Chapter 3: cohort-based exchange can be very important for the transition from a small group's initial, foundational period to the development of a senior leadership or a decision elite that oversees a rapidly growing and scalable organisation that executes its strategic vision. Ann Taves' insights suggest a more complex dynamic to Aum Shinrikyo's internalised worldview than that proposed initially by new religious studies scholars like J. Gordon Melton (who mistakenly believed that Aum Shinrikyo was not responsible for the sarin gas attack on Tokyo's subway system on 20th March 1995), and suggests a developmental pre-history (discussed in Chapter 4) to the confrontation stance that the new religious movement took in Japan.[186] These dynamics and issues clearly need further exploration.

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[185] Ann Taves, *Revelatory Events: Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

[186] David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, eds, *Cults, Religion and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Ian Reader, "Dramatic Confrontation: Aum Shinrikyo Against The World," in David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, eds, *Cults, Religion and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002a), 189-208.

Both Robert Jay Lifton and Ian Reader have noted Aum Shinrikyo's religious practice of '*poa'* or killing an enemy to erase their karmic debt (discussed further in Chapter 4, and contrasted with Tibetan Buddhist Phowa practices, which do not have this focus on killing others). However, both of these scholars did not examine in-depth the adaptation of this practice from Buddhist Phowa practices about consciously dying and the associated ritual practices.[187] This aspect is discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6 about Phowa, 'to poa', and Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system.

Likewise, although religious studies scholar Ian Reader's analysis identified specific Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism influences on Shoko Asahara's later period from 1989-90 onwards (in which he embraced a more apocalyptic worldview and an explicit, violence-oriented moral calculus as a justification for terrorist violence), a comparative analysis of Asahara's adaptations compared to Vajrayana's esoteric doctrines and practices is yet to be undertaken on Aum Shinrikyo. This is also noted but is beyond the specific scope of this thesis.

In contrast to Lifton and Reader's respective analyses, the religious studies scholar Frederick M. Smith identified in Hindu Tantra cosmology the cross-comparative importance of possession experiences in a South Asian religious context.[188] This anthropological and cross-cultural research provides a deeper context for understanding the Hindu roots of Aum Shinrikyo and particularly Shoko Asahara's deity yoga experiences: his projective identification with the Hindu deity Shiva in 1985 (discussed further in Chapters 4 to 6). Although the psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton and the religious studies scholar Ian Reader both briefly comment on Asahara's deity yoga experiences during the initial period of Aum

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[187] Chagdud Khadro, *P'howa Commentary: Instructions for the Practice of Consciousness Transference as Revealed by Rigdzin Longsal Nyingpo* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Pilgrims Publishing, 2004).
[188] Frederick M. Smith, *The Self Possessed: Deity and Spirit Possession in South Asian Literature and Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).

Shinrikyo's founding and growth (during when, as Reader notes, Aum was focused on worldly liberation), they did not explore further the implications of this in their respective monographs. I give greater emphasis to these deity yoga experiences in Chapter 4's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo, and then consider some of the organisational implications of Asahara's deity yoga experience in Chapters 5 and 6.

Perspective 6: The Meta-View of Lakatosian Research Programs and the Theory-Building Spectrum to Classify Strategic Culture Literature

Chapter 1 notes that Alastair Iain Johnston's generations model is the dominant conceptual framework used in the strategic culture literature to organise what are in reality distinct epistemological stances and different, sometimes competing, research agendas. Johnston's first generation evolved from détente strategic bargaining and nuclear war-fighting to consider comparative national strategic subcultures in a late Cold War context. Johnston's second generation remained relatively under-theorised and considered the role of critical theory and the declaratory power of hegemonic, trans-national security alliances. Johnston's original contributions in his third generation included historical grand strategy analysis; a neopositivist theory-building framework that coherently organised the strategic culture literature; and the identification of parallel research programs by other researchers that focused on politico-military institutions.

This chapter's thematic literature review has identified, defined, and conceptualised a fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building. I contend that the posited fourth generation has grown in its analytical scope since Jeffrey Lantis first conceptualised its national security roots in 2002. The posited fourth generation also parallels theory-building growth in constructivism, neoclassical realism, and with the 'affective' and 'practice' turns that are now influential in international relations theory. I adopt the fourth generation approach in

subsequent case study chapters to examine process tracing (Chapter 3) and the chosen case study of Aum Shinrikyo (Chapters 4 to 6), before assessing the 'lessons learned' and a future research agenda (Chapter 7).

It is possible to develop different approaches to categorising and synthesising the strategic culture literature beyond Johnston's influential generations categorisation. A Lakatosian-influenced approach, in which strategic culture writers are considered to advance individual research programs, may be based on the careful consideration of definitional issues, methodological choices, and ontological stances.[189] A more constructivist informed version of this approach would situate the strategic culture writers as norm entrepreneurs who advance claims about the construct in order to contribute to specific foreign policy, national security, and politico-military debates. Case-based reasoning methodology could extend strategic culture analysis into foreign policy, geopolitical crisis, and defence and national security policymaking contexts.[190] These innovations would transform the strategic culture literature into more of an observational and real-time approach—with greater relevance to estimative intelligence, national security, and crisis decision-making in foreign policy.

A Lakatosian approach—building on Imre Lakatos's insights about regenerative, focused research programs—also enables the expansion of a core knowledge base about what strategic culture and strategic subcultures are. The possible existence of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations relate to existing constructivist debates on non-state actors in the international system; to the use of computational social science for studying national security problems; and to explaining the historical existence and the contemporary influence of 'national ways of war' on defence forces and war-fighters. A Lakatosian approach could also

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[189] Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, *Progress in International Relations Theory: Appraising the Field* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2003).
[190] Michael M. Richter and Rosina O. Weber, *Case-Based Reasoning: A Textbook* (Berlin and Heidelberg, Germany: Springer-Verlag, 2013).

draw on relevant scientific insights from forensic criminology, cultural and evolutionary psychology, and the international political economy of volatility-seeking, meso-level financial institutions (such as asset management firms, hedge funds, private equity firms, reinsurance firms, and sovereign wealth funds). These opportunities for greater subfield integration and theory-building are further explored in Chapter 7's discussion of a future research agenda.

As the strategic culture literature has matured into its fourth generation it has also become more self-reflexive about its theory-building stance and its explicit status as a subfield framework in strategic studies. An example is Alan Bloomfield's doctoral thesis on the continued relevance of strategic culture to Australian defence policymakers.[191] Bloomfield has emerged as one of the fourth generation's most important thinkers in a series of articles with his doctoral supervisor, Kim Richard Nossal (Queens University), and mentor Mark Beeson (The University of Western Australia) on the comparative analysis of Australian, Canadian, and the United States national strategic cultures, and the possibilities for new research agendas that go beyond divisive inter-paradigmatic debates.[192] Bloomfield has deftly situated the policymaker utility of strategic culture frameworks in the context of foreign policy crises and challenges in the evolving international system. Such important and debate-defining contributions counter the dominant perception that strategic culture is a Lakatosian degenerative research program or that it simply fills midrange gaps in more mature research programs, such as structural neorealism (which concerns power's role in the international

[191] Alan Bloomfield, "Australia's Strategic Culture: An Investigation of the Concept of Strategic Culture and Its Application to the Australia Case," (PhD Diss., Queens University, Canada, 2011).
[192] Alan Bloomfield, "Time To Move On: Reconceptualizing The Strategic Culture Debate," *Contemporary Security Policy* 33 no. 3 (2012), 437-461; Alan Bloomfield and Kim R. Nossal, "Towards An Explicative Understanding of Strategic Culture: The Cases of Australia and Canada," *Contemporary Security Policy* 28, no. 2 (2007), 286-307; Mark Beeson and Alan Bloomfield, "The Trump Effect Downunder: U.S. Allies, Australian Strategic Culture, and the Politics of Path Dependence," *Contemporary Security Policy* 40, no. 3 (2019), 335-361.

system) or democratic peace theory (which claims normatively that democracies are cautious about initiating and going to war with other democracies).

Such theory-building reflexivity is necessary to overcome the strategic culture literature's pseudo-debates that are really due to different epistemological and ontological stances. A more meta-theoretical and programmatic viewpoint can be taken in future scholarship rather than in the sporadic, individual research programs conducted to date. This can also be a positive step towards overcoming the barriers that path dependencies and past theory-building choices may play in how strategic culture literature evolves. Consequently, it will support a stronger, more coordinated epistemic community of analysts and researchers in strategic studies and terrorism studies.

Such a theory-building spectrum framework clarifies past debates and suggests how strategic culture might mature into a more mature, Lakatosian research program. Inter-paradigmatic debates in different ontological and theory-building stances provide the template for further conceptualising, theory-building, theory-testing, and methodological advancement. As discussed in Chapter 7, this will over time enable the more systematic study of possible strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Conclusion

This chapter has conducted an analytical, thematic literature review that informs the methodological chapter's discussion of theory-building process tracing (Chapter 3), and the subsequent case study chapters on Aum Shinrikyo (Chapters 4 to 6). The fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building that I posit in this chapter provides an overarching conceptual framework of the contemporary debates in strategic studies and terrorism studies, in which to consider Aum Shinrikyo's attempted development of a viable strategic

subculture. The terrorism studies literature considers Aum Shinrikyo primarily as a case of religiously motivated terrorism and also as a non-state actor that attempted to acquire chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons. This is now the dominant public interpretation of Aum Shinrikyo's purpose and legacy.

In contrast, the literature on new religious movements and cross-comparative religious studies provides different viewpoints from established epistemic communities that have developed discourses and interpretative frames to understand and to evaluate Aum Shinrikyo. Each of these respective subfield literatures considers aspects of Aum Shinrikyo that underpin the organisation's transition from an initial, utopian spiritual community to a compartmentalised terrorist organisation, but that remain under-appreciated in the dominant public interpretation. I draw on these subfield literatures to further explore in Chapters 4 and 5 its Shambhala Plan to overthrow the Japanese government and judiciary, in a path dependent effort to establish itself as Japan's rulers, and the potential indoctrinability of Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates and followers. In Chapter 6, I consider Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system as a specific organisational development.

This thesis advances a fourth generation interpretation of strategic culture and strategic subcultures. However, a theory-building spectrum-based approach to the subfield's literature—based on a Lakatosian research program of renewal and regeneration—is also provisionally outlined, and deserves further exploration. This second approach (which needs further development) has the potential to resolve the current and past inter-paradigmatic debates in the strategic culture literature through a more meta-theoretical understanding. This is discussed further in Chapters 4 to 6 on Aum Shinrikyo, and in Chapter 7 on a new, possible future research agenda.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

What specific causal mechanisms could help to identify a viable strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation? This chapter outlines the methodological approach (the theory-building form of process tracing) and the chosen case study (Japan's new religious movement turned terrorist organisation Aum Shinrikyo) discussed in the remainder of this thesis. In particular, I outline a range of new tests and confirmation levels regarding the interconnected existence of three posited causal mechanisms: (1) *Cultural Transmission* (CM1) primarily of beliefs and ideologies but also of behaviour, norms, values, and worldviews; (2) *Social Learning* (CM2) such as in small group cohorts; (3) and *Folklore* (CM3) or the specific information structure of human legends, myths, narratives, and symbol systems.

These new tests go beyond the current literature on process tracing to advance a cultural strategic understanding of how mature terrorist organisations function. I also discuss the implications and lessons that process tracing as a qualitative research methodology has for evaluating and understanding strategic culture frameworks (discussed in Chapter 1's historical analysis, and Chapter 2's literature review) and, in particular, how they might resolve particular inter-paradigmatic debates in strategic culture, such as the Gray-Johnston debate referred to below. I contend that this combination of process tracing and the posited causal mechanisms can help to build a larger case universe for future research. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Defining Process Tracing

The political scientist Alexander George conceptualised process tracing in 1979 as a qualitative methodology to examine the possible existence of causal mechanisms in political

and social phenomena. George drew from an earlier use of process tracing in medical differential diagnosis, and also deductive investigative processes for assessing and evaluating evidence. He was, like the RAND Corporation's Jack Snyder, also influenced by concurrent research in cognitive psychology. George also made significant contributions over his academic research career to related methodological areas like psychobiography, political psychology, foreign policy analysis, the use of operational codes to psychologically profile political leaders and elites, coercive diplomacy, and the use of qualitative case studies as a significant research methodology in political science, as well as in the broader social sciences.[193]

Process tracing uses within-case comparison to examine and to evaluate the existence of causal mechanisms for developing explanations. This is usually done in a single, in-depth case, although much of the broader process tracing literature has also looked at varied cases, which has created methodological confusion, until recently. Process tracing has been applied beyond political science studies to other areas such as differential diagnosis in medicine and to the pre-trial preparations and evaluation of available evidence in legal cases and in litigation. The scholars Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen (both based at Aarhus University) liken process tracing to investigative detective work, or to a legal prosecutor gathering and testing the admissibility and the persuasive likelihood of evidence in a court case.[194]

Beach and Pedersen identify three different kinds of process tracing approaches: *theory-building*, *theory-testing*, and *outcome explanation*. This is a significant advancement in the process tracing literature that provides methodological clarification and greater precision.

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[193] Dan Caldwell, ed., *Alexander L. George: A Pioneer in Political and Social Sciences* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2019).
[194] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines* (2nd ed.). (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2019).

Theory-building is used to develop new plausible conceptual and explanatory theories to classify and understand political and sociological phenomena. Theory-testing can be used to compare and contrast rival theories or hypotheses to see if all necessary and sufficient conditions exist for a particular theory's plausible explanation. Outcome explanation is used to reason from a significant event or incident to identify its causal genesis, trajectory, and unfolding. I use the theory-building approach in this thesis to explore and test for the possible existence of strategic culture in terrorist organisations (as discussed in Chapters 4 to 6). Later, I use the theory-testing form of process tracing to consider possible and plausible alternative explanations (as discussed in Chapter 7).

As noted in Chapter 2's literature review there is an existing body of work from scholars such as Martha Crenshaw (rational choice theory), Benedikt Wilkinson (scripts or strategies of terrorism), and Jacob N. Shapiro (principal-agent theory) about how a strategic subculture may develop in a terrorist organisation. I thus use Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen's theory-building approach in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 to process trace Aum Shinrikyo's violence trajectory from a religious to a terrorist organisation (Chapter 4), and to consider its possible 'minimal rewrite', apocalyptic, and 'maximal rewrite' counterfactuals (Chapter 5). I then use process tracing to consider Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system and its impact on renunciates (Chapter 6). These case study chapters test the strategic culture construct defined and outlined in Chapter 1, whilst providing contemporary research on the new religious movement, comparative religious studies, and terrorism studies theories cited in Chapter 2's analytical, thematic literature review.

Research Methodologies: Process Tracing and Qualitative Coding

As discussed, Alexander L. George first conceptualised process tracing in 1979 as a cognitive science-influenced and diachronic-oriented methodology for understanding causal processes

and decision-making. Yet despite George's roots in operational code research, Jack Snyder, Colin S. Gray, Ken Booth, and other first generation scholars noted in Chapter 1 did not use process tracing as a primary research methodology. Instead, the first generation of strategic culture research and think tank strategist advice developed as a parallel methodological-oriented research program. The first generation of strategic culture theory-building was more cognitive in its psychological and its methodological outlook.

To date much of the process tracing literature has dealt with macro-micro linkages. These are about how the objective world interacts with individual subjectivity as an unfolding process. In contrast, I use process tracing primarily in this thesis to look at two specific phenomena in the context of terrorist organisations: (1) *macro-meso links*—how the cultural, political, and socio-economic environment can shape terrorist organisations and create the potential preconditions for 'bounded' decision-making; and (2) *meso-micro links*—how terrorist organisations influence and shape affiliated mid-level and low-level individuals, which can potentially include coercive, covert, and undue influence processes which can affect identity, emotional and intellectual cognitions, and decision-making (a major concern of the new religious movement literature noted in Chapter 2).

At least two different and influential ontologies exist in the social sciences methodological literature for process tracing as causal logics: (1) Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen's mechanism approach in which process tracing examines the 'intervening events' between X and Y; and (2) Andrew Bennett's probabilistic approach that uses Bayesian logics and set theory. In this thesis I focus primarily on Beach and Pedersen's mechanism approach to process tracing. I also discuss in this chapter in greater detail the Bayesian roots of process tracing to acknowledge that Bennett's alternative, probabilistic approach could inform the

epistemological use of Chapter 1's strategic subcultures framework, and Chapter 2's fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building.

Political scientists and political sociologists use process tracing primarily for within-case comparison in small-N, and often in detailed, single case studies. Process tracing either uses mechanisms or sets to identify causal processes between an observed phenomenon (such as an event in an outcome explanation form) and how it unfolded. Process tracing is suitable for theory development (in both its theory-building and its theory-testing forms) in circumstances where case studies are incomplete, or where deviant case studies exist that may challenge the explanations provided by dominant and prevailing theories.[195] Process tracing can thus be used to advance a theoretical stance on a subfield knowledge base, such as in strategic studies and terrorism studies explored in Chapters 1 and 2.

For example, counterterrorism and intelligence analysts may observe that a terrorist group or a more mature terrorist organisation has grown rapidly via recruitment, online propaganda, and the acquisition of significant material resources (X1, X2, and X3 phenomena, respectively). From these combined observable phenomena, the counterterrorism and intelligence analysts can use causal logics, counterfactuals, scenario planning, and similar causality and strategic foresight tools to consider the range of plausible and possible outcomes that the terrorist organisation may experience in the near-term future. This is the expectancy horizon that the analyst seeks to intuit and to understand. Process tracing seeks to identify the causal mechanisms and processes that explicitly link the X1 phenomena (a terrorist organisation exists and is growing rapidly), and its Y1 and Y2 outcomes (Y1: it is able to survive over a significant time period and, Y2: it is able to continue to carry out successful terrorist campaigns).

[195] George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 216.

Its growth trajectory may mean that a terrorist organisation is now able to survive over a significant period of time (Y1). It may now have the material capability—from online radicalisation to chemical and biological weapons acquisition—to carry out more successful campaigns of terrorist violence (Y2). Counterterrorism and intelligence analysts may have their own preferential outcomes in mind, such as early detection and disruption of potential terrorist operations (Y3), the capture and successful prosecution of terrorists (Y4), or leadership decapitation as part of a degrade and denial strategy (Y5).

Process tracing involves the tracing of how ideational factors (such as attitudes, beliefs, norms, ideologies, values, and worldviews) are enacted from the decision elite or leadership into decision preferences that inform target selection and attacks. Strategic culture is thus conceptualised as a set or mechanism of ideational factors that inform goal-driven expectancies about the posited long-term success of a terrorist campaign. Process tracing of potential strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations means theorising at the midrange/meso-level of organisations, rather than at the macro-foundation level of aggregate event data on terrorist attacks, or the micro-foundation level of individual terrorists.[196] As discussed in Chapter 2, Jacob Shapiro's principal-agent model of terrorist organisations identifies the different actors—senior leadership, followers, and violence operatives—that my process tracing maps for Aum Shinrikyo in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Other studies of non-state actors such as business incorporation consultants for shell companies[197] or the Al Qaeda terrorist network and historical pirates may build the potential case universe for midrange theory-building of meso-level groups and organisations.[198]

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[196] Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 16, 42.
[197] Michael G. Findley, Daniel L. Nielson, and Jason C. Sharman, *Global Shell Games: Experiments in Transnational Relations, Crime, and Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[198] William Brenner, *Confounding Powers: Anarchy and International Society from the Assassins to Al Qaeda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); William Brenner, "In Search of Monsters: Realism and Progress in International Relations Theory After September 11," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3 (2006): 496-528.

This thesis uses process tracing to construct an historical narrative of Aum Shinrikyo, primarily in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Each historical narrative involves the qualitative analysis of stories about the senior leadership and violence operatives from different sources, and the identification of an unfolding process of causal beliefs, decision-making, and subjective mental models from the secondary data analysed.[199] This analysis surfaces a causal process of decision-making and events in which the observable traces of hypothesised causal mechanisms may be evident in the historical narrative. A confirmatory check against the coding is conducted for further verification.[200] However, confirmation bias (where prior or previously held beliefs are erroneously confirmed as results) is still a risk for this case study, particularly given the black box, or hidden, non-public nature of Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership being studied.

Recent methodological research in process tracing has clarified how process tracing might be used in the evaluation of ideational theories such as game theory, rational choice, and strategic subcultures. Such ideational theories posit a link between the ideas and cognitions that strategic actors hold and their subsequent visible decision-making. In the case of terrorist organisations, the private world of senior leadership decision-makers is often made visible through communiques, social media, and sociological propaganda. What is often not publicly evident are private discussions about terrorist attack methods particularly if they involve cases of terrorist innovation, target selection, or counterintelligence, deception, and other counter-measures that a clandestine violent organisation needs to undertake in order to survive.

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[199] Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2nd ed.) (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2012), 131, 163.
[200] Greg Guest, Kathleen MacQueen and Emily Namey, *Applied Thematic Analysis* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 38.

Process tracing of elites often relies on identifying ideational effects in private communication.[201] For terrorist organisations, this private communication may only become available in a fragmented form through ex-members, via strategic leaks, or through acquisition of internal records by counterterrorism policymakers and intelligence analysts. A possible exception to this may be public social media communication by low-level followers. Alternatively it may be inferred using Bayesian methods of intelligence analysis or Bayesian nets, in which terrorist beliefs are posited and then revised or updated on the basis of new or updated evidence.[202] Thus the claims that process tracing makes about the causal mechanisms of terrorist organisations is often provisional: it could be subject to future revision or potential discarding if counter-evidence emerges on the public record.

Beach and Pedersen present a variation on the following general equation for doing process tracing: $A \rightarrow X \rightarrow [\ (N_1 \rightarrow\ ) * (N_2 \rightarrow\ ) * N_3 \rightarrow\ )\ ]\ Y$.[203] X is the *condition* that transmits *causality* (→) via posited *causal mechanisms* (N_1, N_2 and N_3); * is the logical operator *and*; and Y is the *outcome*. For this thesis, X is the terrorist organisation's existence and its growth trajectory; N_1 is cultural transmission; N_2 is social learning; and N_3 is folklore as a cultural unit of information; and Y is the terrorist organisation's cumulative, longitudinal persistence. N_1, N_2 and N_3 are posited as three possible causal mechanisms that may underpin viable strategic subcultures.[204] To Brun and Pedersen's equation, I add A → X to describe the link between *antecedent factors* and the *causal conditions* that are necessary and sufficient for the posited mechanism to work.

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[201] Alan M. Jacobs, "Process-tracing the Effects of Ideas." In *Process Tracing: From Metaphor to Analytic Tool*, eds. Andrew Bennett and Jeffrey T. Checkel (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 41-73.
[202] Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).
[203] Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 30.
[204] Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 53.

Process Tracing and Moving Strategic Culture Beyond the Gray-Johnston Debate

The strategic culture literature often focuses on the so-called Gray-Johnston debate: an exchange between first generation scholar Colin S. Gray and third generation scholar Alastair Iain Johnston that occurred in 1999, which was commented on by subsequent researchers, and that ultimately led to Johnston abandoning his research agenda on strategic culture to focus more on contemporary China.[205] This heated exchange is often cited in strategic culture scholarship as an inter-paradigmatic challenge, whereas it was in fact really a series of theory-testing rejoinders from Gray and Johnston's different conceptual and theoretical stances. Rather than further build strategic culture frameworks, the Gray-Johnston debate led to a rupture that continues to be a psychological anchor on new and subsequent researchers. It holds strategic culture back from maturing in its fourth generation into a more influential policymaking framework.

To understand this it is helpful to explore the roots of the Gray-Johnston debate. In his 1993 doctoral dissertation at The University of Michigan, Johnston criticised Gray's first generation model of strategic culture as deterministic.[206] Johnston extended this criticism of "vulgar determinism" to also include Carnes Lord and Richard Pipe's parallel use of strategic culture to understand the political dynamics of the United States and Russia. Gray, Lord, and Pipes each created an influential body of work in the early strategic culture literature that

[205] Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Culture As Context: The First Generation of Theory Strikes Back," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 1 (1999): 49-69; Alastair Iain Johnston, "Strategic Cultures Revisited: Reply to Colin Gray," *Review of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1999): 519-523; Stuart Poore, "What Is The Context? A Reply to the Gray-Johnston Debate on Strategic Culture," *Review of International Studies* 29, no. 2 (2003): 279-284. Edward Lock, "Refining Strategic Culture: Return of the Second Generation," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 685-708.

[206] Alastair Iain Johnston, "An Inquiry Into Strategic Culture: Chinese Strategic Thought, The Parabellum Paradigm, and Grand Strategic Choice In Ming China," (Phd diss., The University of Michigan, 1993), 11-12.

foreshadowed the later, neoconservative embrace during George H.W. Bush Administration's of unipolar-oriented grand strategic thinking: the so-called 'New World Order'.[207]

For Johnston, a significant limitation of such work was the belief that only "one set of consistent strategic choices" existed in Soviet strategic culture during the late Cold War era, and which could be historically traceable to earlier historical periods in Russia's history.[208] The mechanisms posited in this methodological chapter potentially address some of the ideational foundations of strategic culture that enable sets of strategic choices to be traced analytically over time. In particular, decision elites may reconstruct politico-military beliefs via cultural transmission from earlier historical, religious, political, and philosophical sources. These decision elites may use social learning and folklore to engage followers' attention and thus gain hegemonic power over them: a functional control system.

Possible illustrations of this control system include the elite, oligarchical network surrounding the Putin Administration in Russia;[209] Russian sociological propaganda in response to domestic instability, war, and oil shocks;[210] Vladimir Putin's operational codes as Russia's political leader and its economic statecraft influence; [211] and the Koch Brothers' use of tax-exempt vehicles for oligarchical political lobbying in the United States.[212] Whilst the examples differ in both Russia and the United States, the overall effect is the same: oligarchical entrenchment of wealth accumulation.

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[207] Johnston, "Inquiry Into Strategic Culture," 14.
[208] Johnston, "Inquiry Into Strategic Culture," 14.
[209] Karen Dawisha, *Putin's Kleptocracy: Who Owns Russia?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014).
[210] Peter Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True And Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2016).
[211] Brian D. Taylor, *The Code of Putinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[212] Jane Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Radical Right* (New York: Anchor, 2017).

Process tracing provides a middle ground between Gray and Johnston's respective theory-building. Gray's inductive emphasis on strategic history that uses analogical reasoning can provide facts and data sources to examine if there is evidence of posited causal mechanisms. Johnston's deductive emphasis on neopositivist research design and defining variables provides potential empirical tests for the posited causal mechanisms. Process tracing combines historical analysis of an event sequence (Gray) and a within-case analysis of hypothesised and predefined causal mechanisms (Johnston). Rather than an intervening variable or a moderating variable a mechanism-based approach to strategic culture enables the pathway from means to ends to be causally traced more precisely.[213]

Process tracing thus offers a way beyond the Gray-Johnston debate in the strategic culture literature. Theory-building oriented process tracing can involve an inductive process to identify relevant causal processes versus alternative and competing explanations. Event data can be an input to inductive theory generation. Theory-testing can test the posited causal mechanisms which are evident, versus the counterfactual possibilities (including 'minimal rewrite' outcomes) which may provide alternative or different causal explanations.[214] These counterfactuals are explored further in Chapter 5 regarding Aum Shinrikyo's decisions and possible alternative paths that might have occurred.

How Process Tracing Addresses Concerns in the Strategic Culture Literature

Chapter 1 discussed a range of views and potential criticisms of strategic culture as a comparative framework and research program on elite decision-making. The first generation of strategic culture theory-building arose at a similar time to Alexander George's original formulation of process tracing based on insights from cognitive psychology, operational

[213] Beach and Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods*, 37.
[214] Richard Ned Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

codes, and within-case generalisation. Recent advances in process tracing methodology address some of the potential criticisms discussed in Chapter 1 about strategic culture.

Process tracing enable the possible identification and the testing of causal mechanisms that lead to particular outcomes through careful observation and testing. This may involve if-then conditional reasoning and the structuring of ideational factors as decision preferences. The strategic culture literature discussed in Chapter 1's historical overview has at times struggled to identify ideational factors as independent variables for study. Like constructivism, strategic culture is interested in agency and processes, although from a more diachronic and longitudinal perspective. Alan M. Jacobs describes three ways to do this via process tracing: (1) identify principal agent incentives; (2) identify the causal logics at the intrapersonal level of individuals (or micro-foundations); and (3) outline the causal logics that isolate the ideational factors from the material factors.[215]

Jacobs' insight about principal-agent relationships suggests a way to integrate the rational choice micro-foundations discussed in Chapter 2 (particularly Martha Crenshaw and Jacob N. Shapiro's respective research) with process tracing. Terrorist organisation leaders select followers who affiliate or join—and may do so via focused indoctrination—to become tactical violence operatives who are prepared to carry out religious and political violence. Proto-kinship dynamics may exist within terrorist groups that grow and survive over a prolonged time period. Marc Sageman's recent analysis of how terrorism emerged during the French Revolution, in pre-revolutionary Russia, and late 19th and early 20th century anarchist movements is the most important recent study that uses process tracing to understand how

[215] Jacobs, "Process-tracing the Effects of Ideas".

this genesis of political violence actually unfolded.[216] Sageman's historical research suggests a greater future role for process tracing in terrorism case studies.

Bayesian Logics of Process Tracing

Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen locate their interpretation of process tracing methodology within a Bayesian epistemology of knowledge. This framing means that process tracing is more like a prosecution's role in a court case to gather necessary and sufficient evidence for an outcome. It differs from Gary King, Robert Keohane, and Sidney Verba's influential, methodological emphasis on frequentist statistics and also on probabilistic reasoning in political science.[217] Bayesian logic relies on Bayes' Rule formulated originally by the philosopher Thomas Bayes, and later adopted in a diverse range of contexts including being used by the United States military to hunt for covert Russian submarines.[218] As the world has become more multipolar in geopolitical structure and also more volatile (as discussed in Chapter 2), Bayesian-influenced probabilistic analysis has become more influential in foreign policy.[219]

In recent years, Bayesian logic and insights have played a greater role in areas such as election and opinion poll analysis, political psychology, and counter-hegemonic critiques of how socio-political elites influence financial markets, contagion risks, and crashes. The United States statistician Nate Silver has also popularised a Bayesian approach to political

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[216] Marc Sageman, *Turning To Political Violence: The Emergence of Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
[217] Gary King, Robert Keohane and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
[218] Sharon Bertsch McGrayne, *The Theory That Would Not Die: How Bayes' Rule Cracked the Enigma Code, Hunted Down Russian Submarines, and Emerged Triumphant from Two Centuries of Controversy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).
[219] Jeffrey A. Friedman, *War and Chance: Assessing Uncertainty in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press USA. 2019).

and social phenomena via his book and his popular website FiveThirtyEight.[220] The author and investment manager James Rickard has also used a Bayesian approach to detail the hegemonic role that economic elites have over global financial markets and the contagion risks of financial crashes.[221]

A Bayesian approach considers a range of possible and relevant factors including prior evidence (suggested by previous theory-building cycles and empirical research); alternative theories and explanations (some suggested in Chapter 2's literature review and discussed later in Chapters 5 to 6); and what we might expect to find if the specific hypotheses defined in this chapter are wrong. Another important factor is the confidence or conviction level that a researcher has in their own beliefs about the hypotheses: these are specified in advance and can be revised (called 'Bayesian updating') as new evidence is uncovered. Thus, Bayesian interpretation can be provisional and is subject to future revision: beliefs can be updated.

Specific Research Hypotheses

The following are the specific research hypotheses that I will explore further and test in the selected case study of Aum Shinrikyo. This will be done analytically in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 regarding Aum Shinrikyo's pathway into terrorist violence, its Shambhala Plan, and its initiatory, religious sub-system.

Cultural Transmission Hypothesis: Strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations involve the cultural transmission of beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews about the mobilisational counter-power use of violence as a strategic preference (means) in order to achieve the strategic vision, objectives and goals (ends). This hypothesis states that the cultural

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[220] Nate Silver, *The Signal and The Noise: The Art and Science of Prediction* (New York: Penguin, 2012).
[221] James Rickard, *The Road to Ruin: The Global Elites' Secret Plan for the Next Financial Crisis* (New York: Penguin, 2016).

transmission will involve long-term influences such as political and religious-derived core ideologies that influence the terrorist organisation's founders, decision elite, and tactical violence operatives. Individuals and small clandestine groups who are recruited and mobilised using a loose network form may be unaware or unfamiliar with the culturally transmitted information to the same degree that the senior leadership is in a more established and mature terrorist organisation.

Organisational Coherence Hypothesis: Strategic subcultures require a terrorist organisation to continue, persist, and survive over a significant time period. The exact length of this significant time period still needs to be defined: it may require a minimum of 7 to 10 years existence and possibly longer. This hypothesis states that a growth lifecycle makes the terrorist organisation distinctive in terms of its senior leadership's survivability; resource-allocative processes; and the broader scope of its terrorist campaign and scale of violence. A terrorist organisation may develop a political wing that participates in a nation-state's political elections as a major regional party, such as Sinn Fein ('We, Ourselves') or the separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna ('Basque Homeland and Freedom').[222] It may involve philanthropic and social services delivered to followers. It can also involve sophisticated internet, media, and strategic communications capabilities. The latter may mobilise individuals and small clandestine groups in countries other than where the senior leadership and the tactical violence operatives operate in. Its organisational coherence will make the terrorist organisation also more distinct when compared with terrorist groups that have failed to develop this sophistication, or that have had their capabilities degraded through successful attempts to end terrorist campaigns.

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[222] Brian Feeney, *Sinn Fein: A Hundred Turbulent Years* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). Rafael Leonisio, Fernando Molina, and Diego Muro, eds., *ETA's Terrorist Campaign: From Violence to Politics, 1968-2015* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

State Emulation Hypothesis: Strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations might emulate the administrative structures and resource-allocative processes of host nation-states. For example, the terrorist organisation might attempt to develop a 'shadow government' that would seize control of a nation-state—or control a significant geographic area—if a terrorist campaign is successful: a possible victory condition. Alternatively, the terrorist organisation may articulate as an aim in its strategic vision that it will establish a new nation-state within an existing geographic area. Two other strategies are attempts to acquire military force projection capabilities and to build a resilient, potentially international community of support. This hypothesis states also that state emulation will be evident in how the senior leadership communicates its decision preferences and strategic vision to tactical violence operatives.

Collectively, these hypotheses situate this thesis strongly in psychologist Albert Bandura's cognitive learning and social-psychological approach to moral disengagement.[223] In particular, Bandura has noted that in moral disengagement the "self-regulatory mechanisms" that prevent violence can be bypassed or can fail, whilst inhumane behaviour is "cognitively restructured" in order to be ethically and morally justifiable.[224] As previously noted in Chapter 1, Jack Snyder's original conceptualisation of strategic culture also located it in the emerging literatures on cognitive psychology and cultural psychology (which is suggestive also of cultural transmission's potential role). In Chapters 4 and 5, I briefly consider relevant insights from the related subfield of evolutionary psychiatry, where there are insights relevant to Aum Shinrikyo. A strategic subculture provides terrorist leaders with a meso-level construct that facilitates the harnessing of personal vulnerabilities and socio-cognitive indoctrinability (rather than a 'terrorist personality' or an underlying trait) that shapes tactical

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[223] Albert Bandura, *Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live With* Themselves (New York: W.H. Freeman & Co Ltd, 2016); Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1977).
[224] Albert Bandura, "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3, no. 3 (1999), 196-200.

violence operatives to wilfully carry out a terrorist campaign, as the behavioural consequence of the mesocosm. A strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation context provides the meso-level structure that helps to facilitate Adam Lankford's six strategies of systematic indoctrination: recruitment, training, authorisation, bureaucracy, isolation, and dehumanisation.[225]

However, according to the major study of Aum Shinrikyo's imprisoned decision elite conducted by Richard Danzig, Marc Sageman, and their colleagues at the security think tank the Center for a New American Century, some expressed regret for ordering the Tokyo subway attack using sarin that occurred on 20th March 1995.[226] Further research is required to test the possible hypothesis that a viable strategic subculture facilitates the psychological conditioning and priming for dehumanising and killing other people; although, Lankford's awareness of previous relevant research conducted by Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo, Dave Grossman, and others is suggestive. Socio-cognitive and social learning aspects of this may be generalisable in a modified form to other domains, such as coercive control's role in the antecedent, precursor conditions for domestic violence, intimate partner violence, family violence, and school shootings.[227] It is also potentially relevant to the social movement coalition that is fighting the global organised crime of human trafficking.[228] However, this is highly speculative, and researchers with expertise in these areas, and in gender-based

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[225] Adam Lankford, *Human Killing Machines: Systematic Indoctrination in Iran, Nazi Germany, Al Qaeda, and Abu Ghraib* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 16-27.
[226] Richard Danzig, Marc Sageman, Terrance Leighton, Lloyd Hough, Hidemi Yuki, Rui Kotani, and Zachary M. Hosford, *Aum Shinrikyo: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Century, 2011).
[227] Evan Stark, *Coercive Control: The Entrapment of Women in Personal Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Jess Hill, *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse* (Carlton, Australia: Black Inc Books, 2019).
[228] Amanda Clark, *Framing The Fight Against Human Trafficking* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2019).

approaches are far better placed to test and evaluate this potential generalisability and its implications for effective tactics, strategies, and counter-measures.

Case Study and Research Design

Case Study Design. This thesis uses a small-N (single) case study approach to examine the development of potential strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. This approach involves an inductive process of theory-building which integrates the insights of strategic culture and terrorism studies scholars discussed in Chapter 1's historical discussion and Chapter 2's thematic literature review, and then examines Aum Shinrikyo as an extremist case (of terrorist organisations) in which novel insights may exist.[229] This approach enables scoping of a theory of strategic subcultures (which Chapter 1 provisionally outlined) and beginning the identification of relevant causal mechanisms for how such a theory might actually work in a terrorist organisation context (discussed in this chapter).

This thesis adopts a 'heuristic' approach in case study analysis to achieve this theory development goal.[230] Explanations from the existing literature in terrorism studies about Aum Shinrikyo are critically examined and contrasted with what explanations a strategic subcultures approach might emphasise. However, the type of terrorist organisation examined in this thesis involves dynamics that existing theories in counterterrorism studies did not anticipate, and that were revised after the 20th March 1995 sarin gas attack. The heuristic approach supports the identification of relevant causal mechanisms for which either the new, proposed theory of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations (defined in Chapter 1) can

[229] George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 111; Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4th ed.) (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009).
[230] George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 75.

be revised, or alternative, new conceptual and explanatory theories can be devised instead (as discussed in Chapter 2 concerning Lakatosian research programs).

Case Study Selection. The potential case universe for the chosen case study explored in this thesis could include many potential terrorist organisations. I have chosen Japan's Aum Shinrikyo, which illustrates a spectrum of a deviant case[231] compared with typical terrorist groups prior to the September 11 attacks, and with the co-emergence in the late 1990s of a 'new terrorism' or an 'apocalyptic terrorism' discourse (discussed in Chapter 2). This development was a terrorism studies reaction to Aum Shinrikyo's interest in acquiring and developing chemical and biological weapons. Aum Shinrikyo has had a senior leadership; have their strategic vision on the public record; and have made significant terrorist attacks that continue to have significant psychosocial impacts in Japanese society.

This selected case study illustrates the potential variance in which a terrorist group or organisation may have a viable strategic culture or where the attempt to create one has failed. The outcome of strategic subculture failure enables the confirmatory and dis-confirmatory tests which are defined and discussed below. This thesis addresses Aum Shinrikyo in a more systematic manner and relies on divergent analysis rather than 'curve-fitting' the possible existence of strategic subcultures to terrorist organisations, or selecting a chosen case study on the dependent variable.

Aum Shinrikyo is a *deviant* case: a Japanese 'new new religion' that compartmentalised a chemical and biological weapons research development program. Existing academic research on Aum Shinrikyo uses new religious movement, comparative religion, and political psychology perspectives, as Chapter 4 has noted. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I advance a

[231] John Gerring, *Social Science Methodology: A Unified Framework* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52.

different interpretative perspective: an emphasis on Aum Shinrikyo leader Shoko Asahara's deity yoga experience as formative in his decision-making preferences, and the subsequent organisational development of an initiatory, religious sub-system based on Hindu Tantra, Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism, and Evangelical Christian sources. Aum Shinrikyo can be understood in terms of Japanese culture and history, and also in relation to the contemporary manifestation of beliefs and ideas from historical, violent periods of early Tibetan Buddhism and Hindu Tantra. My different interpretative perspective emphasises cultural transmission and in-group socialisation of the senior leadership who orchestrated the 20th March 1995 sarin gas attack on Tokyo's subway system. I also conduct an analysis at a micro-foundations level in Chapter 4 of novelist Haruki Murakami's interviews with Aum Shinrikyo's mid-level, low-level, and former members.

Analytical Variables

The dependent variable of this thesis case study is that the selected terrorist organisation has a viable strategic subculture. The following independent variables will be analysed:

IV1 Terrorist organisational beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews that are operationalised coherently to pursue the articulated, long-term strategic intent, purpose or goals of IV3.

IV2 Terrorist organisation emergence, survival, continuity, and cultural transmission of beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews over time.

IV3 An articulated strategic vision, objective or goal (the Shambhala Plan discussed further in Chapter 5) that is long-term in nature; ranks and orders the terrorist organisation's decision preferences; provides a meta-ethical justification for conducting a terrorist campaign; and is articulated by the senior leadership to the terrorist organisation's membership and its support base.

IV4 Terrorist organisation interaction with other strategic actors such as a host nation-state's politico-military elites, forces, and meso-level institutions; with a nation-state's defence and national security forces, judiciary, and media; and with other extremist, militant, and terrorist groups or organisations.

Data collection and source analysis on terrorist organisations can involve: (1) understanding the terrorist organisation's genesis including its historical context; relevant socio-political or religious ideologies; and relevant material conditions; (2) the decision elite or senior leadership and its relationship to followers/violence operatives who carry out terrorist campaigns; (3) declarative statements or symbolic viewpoints articulated internally and on the public record such as in communiques, media interviews, and social media campaigns; (4) evidence of strategic formulation processes and their effect on decision preferences; and (5) any dialogue with violence operatives, followers, and ex-members.

Causal Frameworks for Case Study

Positing a causal model for terrorist organisations enables the thesis to better integrate different strands of theory-building from the respective literatures on strategic culture frameworks and the terrorism studies subfield (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2).

Terrorist organisations have a ranked ordered preference for using religious and socio-political motivated violence in a terrorist campaign (X1). This ranked ordered preference imposes an order at the meso-level of the terrorist organisation, which shapes the relationship between the senior leadership or the decision elite and its tactical violence operatives, followers, and support base. It involves core values and worldviews, beliefs about enemies, and the meta-ethical context and justification of the targeted use of force and violence as a preferential solution.

Chapters 1 and 2 outlined a new midrange theory of some terrorist organisations that persist over time due to developing a viable strategic subculture. Some observable characteristics of a viable strategic subculture for a terrorist organisation would include: (1) the growth of the terrorist group into a more mature terrorist organisation over a sustained period of time; (2) the recruitment and the radicalisation of followers as tactical violence operatives who are indoctrinated and socialised into carrying out terrorist attacks; (3) the survivability of the senior leadership, decision elite or the core nucleus of the terrorist organisation; (4) a goal-seeking strategic vision or *telos* that shapes the terrorist group and that can be process traced to culturally transmitted and possibly longitudinal ideational factors; and (5) greater logistical sophistication and scale of terrorist attacks that are undertaken, and the acquisition or development of complex structures for resource allocation such as state emulation. A viable strategic subculture can also be understood as a process of mobilisational counter-power accumulation by non-state actors that challenges existing elite or hegemonic powers in nation-states.

Terrorist groups and organisations have a ranked ordered preference (X1) to exist in order to carry out a terrorist campaign that will achieve their goals—in contrast to other possibly unobserved strategies (X2, X3 … Xn). They also articulate a strategic vision (X2). In the chosen case study these X2 outcome variables are surviving a Japan-United States war to found utopian Lotus Villages and implement the Shambhala Plan (Aum Shinrikyo)—a long-term strategic objective discussed further in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. One way that pursuit of such long-term strategic visions has been framed is in terms of strategic dilemmas that are resolved either through strategic continuity or change; although, adaptive coevolution may be a third option.

Terrorist organisations with a viable strategic culture have several characteristics: they are coherent in organisational structure (although this structure may adapt to different conditions); they have a senior leadership or decision elite that survives and continues to articulate a goal-seeking strategic vision (X2); and they can potentially emulate nation-states. Each of these characteristics are potential Y2, Y3, and Y4 outcome variables as possible counterfactuals that can be observed in—and can be generalised across—different terrorist organisations, which each might have viable strategic subcultures.

In contrast, terrorist groups and organisations that do not have these Y2, Y3, and Y4 outcome variables may have some but not all of the necessary and sufficient characteristics to have a viable strategic subculture. Identifying these characteristics can assist the classification of terrorist groups and organisations as either having viable strategic subcultures or not.

There are several potential barriers to this causal model of possible strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. First, a *conditioning factor* such as Z might exist that disrupts or changes the posited causal relationship between X and Y.[232] Second, there may be *confounding variables* that correlate with both X and Y, and that influences their posited causal relationship.[233]

Causal Pathway Analysis for Strategic Subcultures

Causal pathway analysis identifies the causal steps between an observed variable (X1) and the end-goal in a small-N case study.[234] For the thesis, X1 is the terrorist organisation's preference to carry out a terrorist campaign of religious or socio-political violence and Y1 is the particular strategic goal. The X1/Y1 relationship is thus the terrorist organisation's ability

[232] Gerring, *Social Science Methodology*, 290.
[233] Gerring, *Social Science Methodology*, 294-299.
[234] Nicholas Weller and Jeb Barnes, *Finding Pathways: Mixed-Method Research for Studying Causal Mechanisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

to enact its strategic vision through a successful terrorist campaign including attacks on selected targets. A viable strategic subculture is the posited observable mechanism (M1) that enables the terrorist organisation to conduct the X1/Y1 relationship—to achieve its strategic vision via a terrorist campaign—compared with terrorist groups and organisations that do not have a strategic subculture.

In contrast, the different elements of a nation-state's national security community address different aspects of a terrorist organisation's X1/Y1 relationship. Intelligence operations seek to uncover X1 terrorist operations before they are successful through collections, processing, and analysis functions. Counterterrorism strategy uses deter, denial, and degrade strategies to target the causal mechanisms that underpin a terrorist organisation such as leadership decapitation, follower amnesty, and violence operative trial and imprisonment strategies. Thus, it is possible to use causal pathway analysis and the related method of causal tracing to inductively work back from a terrorist organisation's strategic vision (Y1) to its dominant strategic preferences (X1) and then to work out the resource-allocative mechanisms that a successful attack might require.

Possible Causal Mechanisms for Strategic Subcultures

This thesis posits three potential **causal mechanisms** (CM1, CM2, and CM3) to test for the possible existence of a viable strategic subculture in Aum Shinrikyo (M1):

CM1: Cultural Transmission

The diachronic *cultural transmission* of attitudes, beliefs, lay theories, norms, values and worldviews is a posited causal mechanism that deals with the cross-cultural, developmental, and evolutionary form of "intersubjective knowledge" in groups, organisations, and

societies.[235] Cultural transmission also involves the Darwinian-influenced cultural evolution of intersubjective frames of reference.[236]

Alastair Iain Johnston has asked an important and overlooked question that has anticipated cultural transmission's role: "How is strategic culture transmitted through time? Does it change appreciably through its transmission?"[237] Greater attention to the role of cultural transmission as a causal mechanism will provide new answers to Johnston's specific research questions in his influential doctoral dissertation. As noted in Chapter 1 the majority of strategic culture literature uses a synchronic (present or recent time with a brief lookback window) rather than a diachronic, longitudinal focus. It also does not adequately link to the sociological literature on elite formation, circulation, and decline. The process tracing in the chosen case study of Aum Shinrikyo (Chapters 4 to 6) attempt to address this under-developed theorising, albeit in a terrorism studies context.

This posited causal mechanism can fail in several ways: (1) the mode of transmission does not occur between a decision elite, core nucleus or senior leadership and tactical violence operatives or followers; (2) the terrorist group or organisation does not survive over a longer period of time that is enough to establish independently that cultural transmission has occurred in a diachronic sense (however, a challenge to this causal mechanism is that more synchronic transmission can occur at a social network level using social media and other contemporary media); (3) the required information may be publicly unverifiable or may be a sociological rumour; and (4) the ideational factors may change in terms of the information

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[235] Ute Schonpflug, ed. *Cultural Transmission*; Angela K.Y. Leung, Chi-Yue Chiu and Ying Yi Hong, eds., *Cultural Processes*.
[236] Giovanni Bennardo and Victor de Munck, *Cultural Models: Genesis, Methods, and Experiences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Kevin Laland, *Darwin's Unfinished Symphony: How Culture Made the Human Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[237] Johnston, "Inquiry Into Strategic Culture," 30.

structure and content, or the encoding-decoding process between sender and recipient if using a cybernetics-influenced communication model.

CM2: Social Learning

Social learning is a posited causal mechanism that is acquired or imitated through the social interaction of individuals (or their artefacts and products). It may involve a conversion-like process or the development, articulation, and elaboration of a personal synthesis (in terms of articulated values and worldviews).

The posited causal mechanism of social learning has two aspects: (1) it involves the socialisation process by which recruits to the terrorist group or organisation learn to successfully act as terrorists in a terrorist campaign using political and/or religious violence; and (2) the process by which recruits and mid-level members learn from the core nucleus, the decision elite, or the senior leadership of the terrorist group or organisation, thus enabling it to persist over time. Social learning creates an in-group bonding and logic.

Social learning has two aspects that this thesis examines in greater detail: (1) the specific role of in-group socialisation between a senior leadership or decision elite and tactical violence operatives or followers that forms an on-going continuity; and (2) the learning process by which followers are indoctrinated to become tactical violence operatives who wage a terrorist campaign. This process of becoming may also involve a belief adoption process of radicalisation. Social learning establishes a transmission chain that extends from the leader or decision elite to tactical violence operatives and followers who may copy the founder or senior leader's behaviour in mandating a terrorist violence campaign.[238] The transmission

[238] Hoppitt and Laland, *Social Learning*, 45.

chain imposes a group or population level structure (as a choice architecture) that may be stronger in certain circumstances than individual decision-making or preference formation.

Social learning may also extend to post-organisational forms in which a terrorist organisation creates the conditions for non-organisational members to undergo self-directed learning. For instance, this may occur using connectionist and social development types of learning theories. This post-organisational strategy may have implications for 'lone wolves', distal ('at a distance') radicalisation of small groups and individuals, and decentralised and weak tie networks (in which individuals may be loosely affiliated or connected).

Social learning can fail as a causal mechanism in several ways: (1) new recruits can leave the terrorist group without becoming effective violence operatives; (2) new recruits do not successfully learn how to carry out a terrorist attack or are pre-empted in doing so; (3) the new recruit deviates from the terrorist group's campaign and carries out a subjective campaign; (4) the new recruit renounces the terrorist group or leaves during an amnesty period; (5) new recruits and mid-level managers do not learn from the decision elite, leadership or nucleus; and (6) the terrorist group is disrupted or degraded and does not persist over time (a momentum-like quality noted in Chapter 2).

CM3: Folklore

Folklore is a posited causal mechanism that is an anthropological, cross-cultural information structure about group or social knowledge. Folklore may be encoded as myths, narratives, rituals, stories, symbols, and traditions.[239] Strategic culture may exist at the level of myth[240] so it may have folklore aspects that individuals and groups can understand. Folklore in terrorist organisations often concerns the founder(s), leaders, and their origins: the particular

[239] Bendix and Hasan-Rokem, eds., *Companion to Folklore*.
[240] Johnston, "Inquiry Into Strategic Culture," 19.

circumstances of the organisation's founding and early history, their 'formative' or significant combat experiences (actual and/or attributed), and their adoption of specific beliefs or moral worldviews that actively embrace and promote violence. Folklore thus provides a legitimation framing for the terrorist organisation leaders that may aid the recruitment of new followers and tactical violence operatives. It can also be understood in the context of a broader, cognitive evolution framework in which initiatory, religious sub-system practices create folklore that has an enduring, culturally transmitted meaning within Aum Shinrikyo.[241]

Folklore specifies the particular cultural unit of information (such as ideas from philosophical, political and religious sources; beliefs; symbol systems; and normative values) that may survive via cultural transmission. This survivability means that earlier folklore may be revived in a contemporary context that is very different to its initial historical time period or its past geographic area. Folklore reconnects the strategic culture literature discussed in Chapter 1 (in particular, the first generation of Jack Snyder, Ken Booth, and Colin S. Gray) with the cultural anthropology roots of Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, Gregory Bateson, and others in which these areas were studied during World War II by Allied forces in order to understand and to defeat the Axis forces of Hitler's Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Hirohito's Japan.[242] The Grimm and Herder traditions dealt with how folklore narratives could help to create the image of a past community which could be recreated in the future via a nation-state.[243]

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[241] Emanuel Adler, *World Ordering: A Social Theory of Cognitive Evolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[242] Dorothy Noyes, "The Social Basis of Folklore," in Regina F. Bendix & Galit Hasan-Rokem, eds., *A Companion to Folklore* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 21.
[243] Noyes, "Social Basis of Folklore," 20.

Folklore often encodes the past (such as origin myths about organisational founders, legends about leaders and decision elites, metaphors, rituals, and symbol systems) that leaders may utilise for in-group integration and to enhance organisational cohesiveness. Folklore may be embedded in multi-level communication (such as sociological propaganda) that leaders use to influence and to indoctrinate followers and tactical violence operatives.[244] This multi-level communication may involve semi-conscious or unconscious cognitive processing because the folklore information exists at the level of a deeper cognitive or psychological schema. Folklore establishes some of the boundary conditions for effective social learning to occur. However, the black box nature of many terrorist organisations means that whilst folklore can be identified, it may still be unclear what direct influence it has on the specific decision preferences to wage terrorist violence. Whilst process tracing of folklore can indicate some of the necessary conditions for undue influence these may not be totally sufficient. Anthropological or emic data may be needed for further confirmation.

Conspiracy theories are a form of proto-folklore that involves beliefs about covert, clandestine, or elite networks and organisations that enact power, control mechanisms, and social stratification in society.[245] Conspiracy theories and underground subcultures illustrate one possible source of ideational factors which can inform the later development of possible strategic subcultures in terrorist groups. Examples include Mahdi beliefs in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and Shoko Asahara's beliefs about United States-Japan security and the possibility of a future nuclear war between the two countries (to be discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6).

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[244] Jason Stanley, *How Propaganda Works* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).
[245] Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (2nd ed.) (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 2013); Jamie Bartlett, *The Power of Unreason* (London: Demos, 2013), accessed 2nd November 2019, https://demos.co.uk/project/the-power-of-unreason/.

Folklore as a causal mechanism may fail in the following ways: (1) if it is not applied in the terrorist organisation to facilitate social learning and in-group bonding; (2) if cultural transmission fails over a specific time period or testable time window; (3) if the mid-level members, followers, or new recruits of a terrorist group do not learn from or culturally transmit the folklore; (4) if the folklore narratives of myths and legends are either altered or countered effectively by counter-narratives from other strategic actors, such as in cyber-warfare, information warfare, or psychological operations campaigns; and (5) if the folklore interferes with the terrorist organisation's planning and resource allocative processes. In the last case, an emphasis on folklore may mean that a terrorist organisation does not cultivate the correct kind of knowledge base in order to successfully attain strategic goals and objectives (that require the cognitive understanding and the successful implementation of administrative or complex scientific knowledge for success). This emphasis is revisited in Chapter 4's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo as a 'failed' strategic subculture, and again in Chapter 7's conclusions about strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Combining and Tracing the Causal Mechanisms

These posited causal mechanisms can work serially or in a more combinatorial, parallel fashion. Cultural transmission enables the terrorist organisation's beliefs and core ideology to persist with fidelity over time. Social learning enables group growth via the indoctrination and the socialisation by senior leadership of followers, tactical violence operatives, and a possible support community. Folklore involves core myths, stories, and narratives that have deep emotional salience for their (intended) recipients.[246] Cross-coordination of these posited causal mechanisms using process tracing suggests a meta-pattern: (a) the recruitment of new followers via folklore, propaganda, and rumours; (b) the transformation of new followers into

[246] Hoppitt and Laland, *Social Learning*, 226.

tactical violence operatives via indoctrination and social learning (either in small group cohorts or individually); and (c) the growth and persistence of the terrorist organisation's beliefs and norms via longitudinal cultural transmission, including the possible influence on new and future terrorist groups and organisations. Another possible combination is that a terrorist organisation may survive longitudinally through the cultural transmission of folklore in a certain target population (of potential followers and tactical violence operatives) in order to recruit and facilitate the social learning that is required to successfully carry out a terrorist campaign. This latter example may provide a bridge between a mature terrorist organisation and the social learning resources that self-radicalised terrorists may access: an impelling to violence as a kind of fate control.

Each of these posited causal mechanisms work together to enable a terrorist organisation to persist and to potentially renew itself in the face of 'deter and denial' attacks that might degrade its organisational capabilities. One unexplored implication of these causal mechanisms is that such 'deter and denial' strategies may fail if a terrorist organisation is able to persist in despite of them, such as having the ability to regenerate into new forms and decision elites. An example of such regeneration is the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant's rapid growth in jihadist mujahideen after its participation in Syria's on-going civil war, and its transition to becoming an open insurgency.

If the posited causal mechanisms work successfully then this will lead to two potential causal outcomes: (1) a successful terrorist campaign is waged (Y1 at a tactical level), and (2) the terrorist organisation survives over a longer time period (Y2 at a strategic level). The three posited causal mechanisms achieve this through specific information that may create a *telos*-like goal or strategic vision (folklore); interaction effects between terrorist organisation leaders, followers, and tactical violence operatives (social learning); and the group survival

and organisational coherence over a period of time (cultural transmission). This creates a momentum-like quality: the terrorist organisation can persist despite the actions of other strategic actors such as counterterrorism, intelligence, and national security elites to thwart its growth trajectory.

Terrorist groups and organisations without these causal mechanisms have the following observable effects: (1) They are more episodic or have a much shorter timeframe than those groups and organisations that have effective cultural transmission. (2) Their impact may be more localised to a particular nation-state, region, or community of practice—even with internet use—rather than having a large-scale or broader geographic impact. (3) The terrorist group or organisation does not scale up in terms of the number and potential geographic dispersion of followers/violence operatives due to the lack of effective social learning and cultural transmission. (4) The senior leadership is discredited or rendered ineffective and does not have decision elite survivability or a core myth/ideology that enables it to regenerate from sustained losses. (5) The terrorist group ends when its organisational capabilities have been degraded and its senior leadership has either been killed, imprisoned, or dispersed. Its core ideology does not persist due to folklore, social learning, or cultural transmission. Examples of such groups include Italy's Red Brigades, Germany's Red Army Faction, and the United States' Symbionese Liberation Army and the Weather Underground.

If, as noted, a posited causal mechanism fails then this has several implications. It can mean the process tracing of a viable strategic subculture in the terrorist organisation also fails to yield a confirmatory response. Identifying these potential failure conditions advances a more testable, mechanistic understanding of process tracing. It also addresses the potential criticisms of confirmation bias and recency bias (remembering recent or salient data rather than past observations) in the case study selection. Specifying the conditions under which a

posited causal mechanism fails can help to identify potential variant cases where some but not all of the necessary and sufficient conditions may have existed for a particular terrorist group to have a viable strategic subculture—but it did not. This specificity of conditions may also thus deal with the potential criticism of survivorship bias in terrorist organisations that are able to successfully persist over time, versus the failed cases that did not. Being aware of these issues may help to identify a larger potential case universe for a possible large-N study to be discussed in Chapter 7 on future research.

Possible Tests for Strategic Culture and Strategic Subcultures

To date there are no specific process tracing tests for identifying, categorising, and evaluating the possible existence of strategic culture and strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. In the following, I suggest several possible tests that inform the case study in Chapters 4 to 6. Using the possible tests might strengthen the fourth generation study of strategic subcultures and could also contribute to construct validity. The possible tests that this thesis uses include the following:

Test 1: The Persistence of Decision-making Preferences Through Time. The decision-making preferences that emerge from a set of shared experiences (forming a potential strategic subculture) within the decision elite, senior leadership or the core nucleus that are able to persist through time. The decision-making preferences are able to do so despite aleatory, combat and stochastic shocks; the possibility of episodic decision-making due to 'bounded rationality'; the existence of synchronic crises; or of particular cognitive biases and decision heuristics (which would be potential rival explanations). Alastair Iain Johnston has suggested religious-like forms as an information model of this diachronic persistence.[247] This test fails if

[247] Johnston, *Cultural Realism*, 36.

the decision-making preferences fail to persist through time, such as if they are changed by synchronic factors, or if potential rival explanations turn out to be more correct given the analysed evidence base.

Test 2: The Posited Strategic Subculture Demonstrably Shapes a Terrorist Organisation's Decision-Making. An effective strategic subculture provides encultured preferences that enable a terrorist organisation to make decisions about the use of force and violence that are made specifically in order to achieve strategic objectives or long-term goals (its victory conditions). This link between encultured preferences and decisions may be evident under specific circumstances such as rapid growth in a terrorist organisation's complexity, the acquisition and development of material resources, and mobilisational counter-power capabilities that enable force projection. The posited strategic subculture might also set the boundary conditions for a terrorist organisation's learning and adaptiveness over time, and should contribute to greater organisational coherence. This test fails if there are other parallel sources of decision-making that influence a terrorist organisation's senior leadership and itstactical violence operatives and followers.

Test 3: Case Study Selection Allows Evaluation of Confirmatory and Dis-confirmatory Cases. This thesis posits strategic subcultures as an organisational complexity that enable terrorist organisations to carry out terrorist campaigns (X1) in order to achieve their strategic vision or their specific victory conditions (Y1). This organisational complexity should be testable in terms of case study selection so that there can be confirmatory and dis-confirmatory cases. This can inform future theory-building development and contribute to construct validity testing.

Process Tracing Tests

Stephen Van Evera has defined common tests for process tracing. The four common tests used in the process tracing literature are: the *Hoop* Test (necessary to prove the hypothesis but not sufficient); the *Straw In The Wind* Test (insufficient to prove the hypothesis but may weaken competing hypotheses); the *Doubly Decisive* Test (necessary and sufficient to prove the hypothesis); and the *Smoking Gun* Test (sufficient to prove the hypothesis and to disprove competing hypotheses).[248] Each of these tests considers a combination of necessary and sufficient evidence to prove the existence of the three causal mechanisms posited in this chapter: cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore.

Japan's execution of Shoko Asahara and other senior members in 2018 was an outcome that changed how Aum Shinrikyo could be understood, and thus also affected the data collection strategies which Evera's common tests use for process tracing analysis. If there was documentary evidence that Asahara gave direct orders to carry out the Tokyo subway attacks then this would be an example of Evera's Smoking Gun Test. Instead of this stronger test the thesis uses a combination of different common tests. Chapter 4's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo's pathway into terrorist violence relies on a Hoop Test discussion of major findings and causal process observations in the Aum Shinrikyo literature to date: this reconstructs Aum's organisational lifecycle and the major decisions of its senior leadership. Chapter 5 examines Aum Shinrikyo's counterfactuals (as defined earlier in this chapter) in what might be considered as a Straw In The Wind Test variant: why it made certain decisions and what other alternative possibilities did not occur. Chapter 6's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system considers more context and potential evidence for process

[248] Stephen Van Evera, *Guide To Methods For Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), Loc 333-346 (Kindle edition).

tracing that builds on both tests. In the following, I discuss new process tracing tests that this thesis adopts to carry out further analysis.

Confirmation Levels of Possible Strategic Subcultures in Terrorist Organisations

This thesis considers four possible confirmation levels for identifying if a terrorist organisation has a strategic subculture. Each confirmation level is treated as a *midrange* or *meso-level* construct. The four possible confirmation levels are:

The *strong form* of a strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation means that the criteria suggested by strategic culture theorists in Chapters 1 and 2 are met: (a) long-term organisational survival and coherence; (b) diachronic and possibly longitudinal cultural transmission via vertical, horizontal, and/or oblique forms; and (c) the achievement of, or significant steps towards, strategic goals and objectives (or the underlying *telos* of the terrorist organisation).

The *semi-strong form* of a strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation means that the necessary and sufficient conditions for long-term organisational survival and cultural transmission are met, but that organisational coherence and strategic intent, goals, and purpose might vary. This depends on the various factors suggested by the literature on terrorist organisations discussed in Chapter 2's literature review. These possible mediating or moderating variables might include organisational lifecycle; the terrorist recruitment, radicalisation and attrition of tactical violence operatives (which particularly involves the causal mechanism of social learning); and the effects of macro-foundation level changes, such as a changing socio-economic environment (discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5).

The *weak form* of a strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation means cultural transmission may occur over several terrorist splinter groups or different organisational forms (where the

strong form criterion of organisational coherence is not met). This usually means a failure of the senior leadership, decision elite, or core nucleus to culturally transmit its ideology effectively throughout the terrorist organisation. It likely means that cohort and peer-based social learning fails amongst the tactical violence operatives, followers, and support community. The weak form also can mean that folklore exists that attracts subcultural attention but where there is a more fluid organisational structure that will persist and grow over time. This may be more like a decentralised network model.

The *false positive form* of a strategic subculture in a terrorist organisation means that the dependent variable may be rejected. This outcome means that the terrorist organisation does not have a strategic culture or strategic subcultures. Its initial selection from the possible case universe was a 'false positive' that may also have been based on flawed, initial data collection. This is a self-check on possible Type II errors: the failure to reject a false null hypothesis or dependent variable.

Thesis Research Design Limitations

This thesis has several known limitations in its research design and methodology:

(1) **Small-N Study**: This thesis is a small-N study of possible, viable strategic subcultures in one terrorist organisation. It identifies several possible theory-building and empirical tests for a future study of terrorist organisations that would be based on a larger case universe. A larger, more comparative study would enable analytical, causal and explanatory variables to be tested—possibly using a computational social science approach or a mixed methods methodology. This thesis is also envisaged as the first step in a more long-term research program about strategic subcultures in

terrorist organisations. The limitations of this thesis will inform subsequent research designs.

(2) **Re-evaluation of Preliminary Findings Based on New Evidence**: This thesis contains preliminary findings, and it advances a new theoretical framework (terrorist organisations as strategic subcultures) that may be re-evaluated on the basis of new evidence. Civilian, university-affiliated researchers must rely on either information that is available on the public record (including social media data streams), or that is obtainable from institutional Freedom of Information requests and, possibly, from strategic leaks or via knowledge discovery. Such restrictions create a 'shadow effect' in which the publicly available data are only part of a subset of what counterterrorism, intelligence and national security agencies may know or may publicly release in the future about a terrorist attack or a terrorist organisation. One reason for this is that public disclosure of this known information can potentially lead to operational mistakes, if widely known by the general public. It is furthermore restricted by potential cognitive biases and sociological propaganda that can affect researcher inferences. Public information can thus be partially discounted in counterterrorism analysis. This thesis advocates a Bayesian-informed process tracing approach to estimative inference as one possible way to critically evaluate and weight information and sources, in both its public and non-public forms. The chosen case study of Aum Shinrikyo has noted gaps in knowledge that new information and primary sources could address. Chapter 7 also outlines future research that could potentially address such knowledge gaps.

(3) **Information Biases and Case Study Selection**: The chosen case study imposes several potential information biases on the research conducted and the thesis findings. The case study's selected terrorist organisation is geographically located: Aum

Shinrikyo in Japan, although it also attempted to create offshoots in Russia, South Korea, and the United States. This geographic locale also shapes the public data sources used for this thesis: Aum Shinrikyo failed to grow significantly in the United States, but it grew in Russia and South Korea due to receptiveness to Asahara's spiritual message, Aum Shinrikyo media campaigns, and socio-economic uncertainties. The thesis's author understands basic Japanese only so there are linguistic constraints that a collaborative team approach with this linguistic expertise could address in the future. Other terrorist organisations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Irish Republican Army, Hamas, Hezbollah, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionares de Colombia—Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP) could have been selected as potential case studies in order to explore the possible strong and semi-strong forms of strategic subcultures. Initial research was conducted on FARC-EP and ISIL during the formative phase of this doctoral research but was discarded due to time and resource constraints. The national strategic culture frameworks discussed in Chapter 1 could also apply more strongly to comparative strategic studies of contemporary Australia, China, Russia, India, Pakistan, and the United States. This is particularly relevant given the emergence of a multipolar world, and the possible great and rising power contestation between China and the United States in the Asia-Pacific region. It could also be expanded along the spectrum of offensive politico-military strategies to include cyber, hybrid, information warfare, and psychological operations.

(4) **Dependent Variable Selection, Cognitive Biases and Case Study Evaluation**: The thesis's dependent variable is that a terrorist organisation has growth and power accumulation patterns over its lifecycle that suggests it possesses a viable strategic subculture. I specifically conceptualise these patterns as a growth in projecting

mobilisational counter-power. However, this lifecycle (and the decision pathway that initiates it) introduces potential anchoring (focusing on the first or most visible information received about a terrorist organisation), confirmation and disposition (focusing on a terrorist organisation that appears to have grown or scaled up quickly) cognitive biases into the thesis research. The chosen case study highlights a range and variance of strategic subculture emergence, growth, and considers multiple reasons for failure. However, others may evaluate the chosen case study—on the basis of different evidence or vantage points—as having some but not all of the necessary and sufficient aspects of a strategic subculture, or that Aum Shinrikyo did not have a strategic subculture at all. These possible outcomes could affect the applicability and generalisability of the thesis findings. There may also be other relevant dependent and mediating variables which have not yet been identified. Finally, different normative and epistemological stances, or different subfield vantage points may lead to very different interpretations and conclusions than those that Chapter 7 advances.

(5) **Decision Elite or Senior Leadership Focus**: In this thesis I focus primarily on Aum Shinrikyo's leader and founder Shoko Asahara. I also refer to the decision elite or the senior leadership around him. I suggest a top-down, hegemonic relationship between this decision elite and Aum Shinrikyo's followers and renunciates. This is a stylised portrayal of Aum Shinrikyo's internal dynamics for the purpose of exploring, testing, and validating whether or not a viable strategic culture existed in the terrorist organisation. As noted specifically in Chapters 2 to 6, Aum Shinrikyo's history, lifecycle, and internal dynamics are more complex than this stylised portrayal, and can be understood from a range of different vantage points. Terrorist organisations are also more complex: tactical violence operatives can seize control (particularly in the vacuum created by leadership decapitation operations); decision elites or senior

leadership cohorts can have in-fighting; terrorist groups and organisations can schism or merge; and they can also be competitive in terms of undertaking more violent terrorist attacks in order to maintain escalation control. Chapters 4 to 6 note some aspects of these dynamics where relevant.

(6) **Data Collection Limitations**: The thesis draws on selected English language, public secondary sources in order to conduct theory-building about terrorist organisations that might have viable strategic subcultures. However, there are primary source gaps in the chosen case study that pose difficulties in reconstructing decision-maker preferences in the senior leadership or decision elite and providing internal, historical evidence. These gaps in data collection limit the potential validity and generalisability of research findings on the chosen case study. The thesis also draws largely on English language sources for Chapters 4 to 6 on Aum Shinrikyo. Different language sources such as in Japanese may provide further insights or new evidence that could alter the process tracing observations discussed and the conclusions reached in this thesis.

(7) **Short timeframe for strategic subcultures sampling**: Decision elites create strategic subcultures to ensure the long-term organisational coherence and survivability. However, the case study discussed in Chapters 4 to 6 (Aum Shinrikyo, counterfactuals, and its initiatory, religious sub-system) involve relatively short timeframes. There may be different antecedent factors (A), conditions (X), and causal mechanisms (CM) that are necessary and sufficient for a viable strategic subculture to exist, but that are unobservable in these short timeframes or from the available secondary data.

(8) **Culture and unobserved exogenous factors**: As discussed in Chapter 1, culture as a traceable unit still remains under-theorised in the strategic culture literature, at least

compared to the more advanced theory-building in anthropology, sociology, and other fields. The cultural transmission literature mentioned in this chapter provides a possible way to theorise further, and to address the limitation of many current studies that focus on synchronic, present factors instead of a more longitudinal analysis. The existence of a viable strategic subculture imposes a pattern as a series of preferences or ranked choices that decision elites or senior leaders make in terrorist organisations to justify the pathway into and mobilisation of violence. Culture may involve unobserved exogenous factors that shape decision preferences, and the formation and stability of a viable strategic subculture in extremist, militant, and terrorist organisations.

(9) **Alternative explanations and process tracing**: Alternative explanations may exist to the causal mechanisms posited in this chapter (and in Chapters 4 to 6) for the existence of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. Such alternative explanations may involve different causal mechanisms or variances in causal pathways. Chapter 7 discusses how in future research meta-theoretical awareness can inform research designs for the theory-building form of process tracing. In particular, future literature in the areas of strategic culture frameworks (Chapter 1) and terrorism studies (Chapter 2) may identify new possible and plausible alternative explanations that remain either unidentified or unexplored in this thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced process tracing as a qualitative research methodology to examine the possible existence of viable strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. I posit the possible existence of three causal mechanisms in Aum Shinrikyo's case: the *cultural transmission* of historical religious beliefs and practices (CM1); *social learning* between

Aum's decision elite and its followers (CM2); and the propagation *folklore* or legends, myths, narratives, and symbol systems that bind decision elites and followers together, and that provide a justification for a violence-oriented moral calculus (CM3). I discussed how each of the three posited causal mechanisms could be explored, and proposed new tests and confirmation levels that help to establish a more longitudinal approach to the process tracing of terrorist organisations.

I also considered the implications that process tracing as a qualitative research methodology has for developing new strategic culture frameworks. In particular, the theory-building and theory-testing forms of process tracing can provide new insights to resolve inter-paradigmatic issues such as the often-referenced but short-lived debate in strategic culture between Colin S. Gray and Alastair Iain Johnston. Finally, I outlined some of the known limitations that this thesis has in terms of research design and methodology issues like case study selection, data collection, dependent variable selection, and possible alternative explanations (some that will be explored further in Chapters 4 to 6).

The next three chapters examine the selected case study of Aum Shinrikyo. Chapter 4 discusses its pathway into terrorist violence as an illustrative case of how attempts to develop a viable strategic subculture can fail in a terrorist organisation. This surprising and unexpected major finding from the case study analysis informs Chapter 5's discussion of counterfactuals, and Chapter 6's examination of Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system. Together, these three chapters use process tracing to advance a new, contemporary understanding, and reinterpretation of Aum Shinrikyo's enduring impact and significance.

Chapter 4: Aum Shinrikyo: When a Strategic Subculture Fails

Introduction

On 20th March 1995, the Japanese new religious movement Aum Shinrikyo initiated and implemented a coordinated surprise terrorist attack using sarin gas on Tokyo's subway system. The surprise terrorist attack killed 13 people and injured several thousand others. Aum Shinrikyo's purported goal was to deflect attention from an in-progress Japanese police investigation that was about to uncover its covert research program to develop and use chemical and biological weapons. Counterterrorism experts in Japan and the United States interpreted and reacted to the Tokyo subway attack as a significant, new, and unexpected development of a non-state actor using these chemical and biological weapons against civilians.

This chapter advances a new interpretation of this terrorist attack event and its genesis: Aum Shinrikyo's core organisational existence from 1984 to 1995 as a 'failed' neo-institutional attempt to develop a viable strategic subculture, which saw it transform from a rapidly growing new religious movement into a compartmentalised and secretive terrorist organisation. Aum Shinrikyo developed a collection of nested organisational sub-systems that enabled it to engage in the cultural transmission of religious beliefs through structured initiatory experiences; to accumulate and to expropriate the capital of its members and their families; and to attempt to emulate the Japanese 'continuity of government' structure of senior decision-makers. However, Aum Shinrikyo failed to develop organisational coherence and it devolved into a small religious group once leader Shoko Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership were arrested and tried for the 20th March 1995 attack.

Aum Shinrikyo

Founding

Shoko Asahara was born as Chizuo Matsumoto in 1955 to poor parents who weaved tatami mats. Asahara had congenital blindness in his left eye and partial sight in his right eye. His parents enrolled him in a special needs school for the blind where he bullied students and aspired to leadership roles. After failing to get into Tokyo University he founded an acupuncture clinic, married, parented six children, and became interested in Japan's cultic milieu. In 1982 he was arrested for a health scam and this coincided with more intensive practices as a member of the Japanese neo-Buddhist religious group Agonshu.[249]

Shoko Asahara founded the yoga group and publishing house Aum Shinsen no-kai in 1984 after leaving Agonshu.[250] Aum Shinsen no-kai became Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) in 1987. It gained tax exempt status from the Japanese government in August 1989 as a religious corporation: this tax ruling assisted Aum Shinrikyo to rapidly accumulate financial assets, which also then encouraged the senior leadership to engage in exploitative rent-seeking and wealth extraction behaviours within the organisation. Aum Shinrikyo subsequently developed a commercial, entrepreneurial sub-system to fund its research activities. This sub-system included a growing network of computer and electronics stores, private and fee-paying hospitals, and restaurants.

The Council on Foreign Relations estimated that at its peak in the early 1990s, Aum Shinrikyo had 40,000 to 60,000 members, including 30,000 members based in Russia and South Korea; and that the post-Aum Shinrikyo group Aleph has 1500 members.[251] Aum

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[249] David Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult At The End Of The World: The Incredible Story of Aum Doomsday Cult, from the Subways of Tokyo to the Nuclear Arsenals of Russia* (London: Hutchinson, 1996). 8-10.
[250] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 19-20.
[251] Holly Fletcher, "Aum Shinrikyo," Council on Foreign Relations (2012), accessed 24th February 2019, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/aum-shinrikyo.

Shinrikyo's recruitment strategy was less successful in the West: it "had only a few dozen followers in the New York City area" in the early 1990s.[252]

Decision Elite and Senior Leadership

Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership and decision elite emerged from Japan's domestic context of communitarian capitalism in which key technology firms controlled domestic Japanese markets and access to key technologies.[253] Shoko Asahara recruited scientists such as Hideo Murai and Yoshihiro Inoue "from biology, chemistry, engineering, medical, and physics departments" at Japanese universities.[254] Aum Shinrikyo's scientists targeted Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, NEC, and the United States naval base at Yokosuka for classified information and military secrets.[255] Aum Shinrikyo thus attempted to access Japan's politico-military institutions and its civilian information technology firms in order to emulate and strengthen its own research knowledge base.

In 1990, Aum Shinrikyo attempted to reintegrate into Japanese society via a political campaign as a micro party for the Japanese Diet (parliament). However, Shoko Asahara's political campaign failed as few Japanese voted for his candidates or for him, and his political platform of focusing on preventing apocalypse and ensuring Japan's salvation also failed to resonate. Consequently, Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership including Seiichi Endo and Hideo Murai retreated to focus on manufacturing biological weapons, which included botulism and the Ebola virus. This manufacturing attempt also failed. In 1993, Aum Shinrikyo decided to manufacture sarin gas, which it tested successfully in Matsumoto, Japan, in 1994.[256]

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[252] Rex Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist And Why: The 1999 Government Report on Profiling Terrorists*. Guilford (CT: The Lyons Press, 2002), 197.
[253] Marie Anchordoguy, *Reprogramming Japan: The High Tech Crisis Under Communitarian Capitalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[254] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist*, 195.
[255] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist*, 198.
[256] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 39.

In 1994, Asahara organised Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership into 15 ministries, 4 agencies, and a secretariat modelled on the senior leadership cadre in Japan's government.[257] This organisational structure reflected Asahara's childhood dream to become Japan's prime minister. It appears to have been modelled on 'continuity of government' protocols. It reflected a strategy of mimesis: copying what Aum Shinrikyo's enemy the Japanese Government had structured their leadership and operations.[258] Aum Shinrikyo's decision elite thus became a shadow proto-government in order to directly emulate Japan's senior government arrangements with the long-term goal of overthrowing it.

After the sarin gas attack on 20th March 1995, Western counterterrorism analysts closely studied Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership, who were arrested and imprisoned by Japanese authorities. Rex Hudson and colleagues at the Federal Research Division of the United States Library of Congress compiled detailed research dossiers on Aum Shinrikyo's major leaders: their biographical details, their responsibilities within the new religious movement, and observations of their psychological dynamics during the subsequent trials.[259] Jerrold M. Post also used political psychology techniques developed for the Central Intelligence Agency to evaluate Shoko Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership.[260] Robert Jay Lifton summed up Asahara in his psychiatric case notes as having "functional megalomania" in which a grandiose self encompasses the world.[261] Hudson's, Post's, and Lifton's respective psychiatric, psychological, and sociological research creates the basis for using strategic subculture frameworks to better understand terrorist leaders.

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[257] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist*, 199-200.
[258] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1977).
[259] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist*, 201-214.
[260] Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist*
[261] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 165.

Explanations of Aum Shinrikyo

Cultic Studies & Journalist Media Explanations

Western journalists initially interpreted Aum Shinrikyo as an end-times, millenarian, doomsday new religious movement.[262] Some Japanese analysts like Rei Kimura focused on the lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto and his family, who Aum Shinrikyo had murdered before the Tokyo subway attack.[263] This event-driven, journalistic approach built on an existing sociological narrative (discussed in Chapter 2's literature review section on new religious movements) about the existence of coercive, exploitative sub-groups that authoritarian, charismatic leaders control, and whose magnetised personalities attracts naïve spiritual seekers (who may have experienced psychosocial stressors that make them vulnerable to undue influence).

Popular media narratives about new religious movements that often focus on authoritarian, charismatic leaders ignore the moderating role of macro-level factors such as rapid socio-economic change, which Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami noted to historian David Pilling was a factor for the recruitment and socialisation of some Aum Shinrikyo renunciates.[264] The portrayal of Shoko Asahara as an ambitious leader revived aspects of the Yellow Peril imagery in Sax Rohmer's orientalist Fu Manchu stories.[265] Finally, Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack on 20th March 1995 had a temporal and curve-fitting with other high-profile new religious movement events like the Branch Davidian siege in Waco, Texas; the Solar Temple murders in France; and the Heaven's Gate group suicide.[266] Aum Shinrikyo's decisions fit a

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[262] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End Of The World*; D.W. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo* (New York: Weatherhill, 1996).
[263] Rei Kimura, *Aum Shinrikyo: Japan's Unholy Sect* (North Charleston, SC: GreatUnpublished.com, 2002).
[264] David Pilling, *Bending Adversity: Japan and the Art of Survival* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 109.
[265] Christopher Frayling, *The Yellow Peril: Dr. Fu Manchu and the Rise of Chinaphobia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2014).
[266] Benjamin E. Zeller and Robert W. Balch, *Heaven's Gate: America's UFO Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); George C. Chryssides, *Heaven's Gate: Postmodernity and Popular Culture in a Suicide Group* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Kenneth G.C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of An Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); James R. Lewis, ed., *The Order of the Solar Temple: The Temple of Death* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

perception of rapid growth in premillennialist religious violence, in the period prior to Al Qaeda's successful terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001.

Religious Studies Explanations

After the initial wave of cultic explanations, religious scholars developed a more nuanced understanding of Aum Shinrikyo. Ian Reader situated Aum Shinrikyo within the religious and sociological context of Japanese new religions, and the controversies involving foreign cultic movements such as the Baghwan Shree Rajneesh's Oregon compound.[267] He believed that the Tokyo subway attack was a defensive reaction to Japanese police raids that Aum Shinrikyo had been tipped off about.[268] Mark Juergensmeyer interpreted Shoko Asahara's charismatic leadership and Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory sub-system in cosmological terms: religiously motivated terrorism as "*performative* violence" [italics original] against an evil, corrupt host society that would purify Aum's renunciates and usher in an apocalyptic transition to a new era.[269]

Religious studies explanations emphasised Aum Shinrikyo's growing role in Japanese society, and Asahara's use of cultural and religious traditions. They address Ken Booth's concerns discussed in Chapter 1 about the possible ethnocentrism which can occur in cross-cultural analysis of strategic culture and strategic subcultures.

'New Terrorism' Explanations

Walter Laqueur and Bruce Hoffman

New Terrorism emerged in the post-Cold War interregnum as a conceptual and classification framework to understand terrorist groups and organisations as non-state actors who sought to

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[267] Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).
[268] Reader, "Spectres and Shadows," 168.
[269] Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror In The Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (4th ed.) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2018), 153-157.

acquire chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons. Walter Laqueur and Bruce Hoffman each articulated a New Terrorism framework based on the observable trends in terrorist violence, and the probable likelihood outcome of mass casualty attacks.[270] They distinguished this new form of terrorism from earlier terrorism in the Cold War era that was primarily state-based, involved insurgent or political movements, could be negotiated with, and that usually took credit for their attacks. Laqueur distinguished between two different temporal forms of terrorist groups: (1) 'old terrorism' that was national-based, had politico-military objectives, and could be negotiated with; and (2) 'new terrorism' that were more apocalyptic and cosmological in outlook, and that are often religiously motivated.

Aum Shinrikyo interested the New Terrorism proponents for several reasons. Aum Shinrikyo's use of sarin gas in its Tokyo subway attack on 20th March 1995 crossed the threshold into a CBRN-like terrorist event, using strategic surprise. The terrorist attack also occurred during the Clinton Administration's foreign policy concerns about chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons proliferation.[271] Culturally, the mid-1990s witnessed rumour panics concerning pandemics and viruses, and fears of premillennialist violence. These range of cultural and psychosocial factors, foreign policy concerns and surprise attack fears gave New Terrorism theorists like Hoffman and Laqueur greater visibility to the public and to policymakers. Thus, the New Terrorism exemplified a translational research strategy that was more effective in reshaping the terrorism studies discourse about new and emerging security threats. However, the new paradigm was not universally accepted.[272]

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[270] Walter Laqueur, *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*.
[271] Richard Preston, *The Hot Zone* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).
[272] Isabelle Duyvestan, "How New Is The New Terrorism?," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 5 (2004): 439-454; Ersun N. Kurtulus, "The "New Terrorism" and Its Critics," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34, no. 6 (2011): 476-500.

A strategic subcultures analysis suggests that Aum Shinrikyo was a transitional terrorist organisation between Laqueur's 'old' and 'new' designations of terrorism. Laqueur's 'old terrorism' groups often existed within a host nation-state and in opposition to a dominant national strategic culture. In contrast, Laqueur's 'new terrorism' groups were more divergent and were linked to culturally transmitted beliefs. A variation on this insight was a parallel and then a later debate using David C. Rapoport's waves theory to consider the growth arcs of religious and tribalist motivated terrorism.[273] However, from the vantage point of strategic culture, Laqueur's 'old' and 'new' distinction can be potentially reframed from a sequential transition to a more dynamic classification model along two axes: (1) the group's relationship to the dominant, national strategic culture, which in Japan's case was an historical, militarist way of war just before World War II and a pacifist orientation after it; and (2) the group's strength of self-coherence in order to develop a divergent strategic subculture to the dominant, national strategic culture that its host society had.

Re-evaluating Robert Jay Lifton's Apocalyptic Terrorism

Robert Jay Lifton's book *Destroying the World to Save It* (1999) is a summation of his past research program and interests. Lifton used his diagnostic skills as a cross-cultural psychiatrist and as a psychohistorian (who uses psychiatry and psychology to understand history and historical figures) to write-up a case formulation of Asahara as suffering from paranoid delusions and grandiose plans for gaining power. Just as Shinto had influenced the Japanese emperor Hirohito and the Japanese military during the lead-up to World War II,

[273] Mark Sedgwick, "Inspiration and the Origins of Global Waves of Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30, no. 2 (2007): 97-112; Tom Parker and Nick Sitter, "The Four Horsemen of Terrorism: It's Not Waves, It's Strains," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (2016): 197-216; David C. Rapoport, "It Is Waves, Not Strains," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (2016): 217-224; Jeffrey Kaplan, "A Strained Critique of Wave Theory," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 28, no. 2 (2016): 228-235.

Asahara's paranoia was also influenced and shaped by contemporary sociological propaganda, media imagery, and psychosocial anxieties.[274]

Lifton's analysis synthesised two influential narratives on threat securitisation into a more sophisticated form. The first was the cultic narrative about small, clandestine groups that could threaten a host society. The second was the terrorism studies narrative which clustered together a range of recent terrorist attacks and events in order to suggest the possibility of a global subculture of religiously motivated violence. Lifton's vision of potential non-state actors involved in an apocalyptic war relied on trend analysis that meant that individual events were clustered together.

Lifton distinguished between two types of narratives which influenced and shaped Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership:

(1) The *charismatic guru narrative* involved a leadership psychology in which folklore and legends were cultivated to give Asahara greater legitimacy.[275] This legend-making was a group level process or meso-foundation that supported the positioning of Asahara as a new, charismatic spiritual leader in Japan's new religions marketplace. Asahara as a guru also enabled Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership to gain preferential access to organisational resources—an elite-focused strategy discussed further in Chapter 5's analysis of rent-seeking and wealth extraction dynamics which did not benefit the mid- and low-level members.

(2) The *apocalyptic narrative* of Asahara's 1990 Armageddon seminar synthesised religious beliefs and Japan's politico-military past into a moral calculus to justify terrorist activity: a threat escalation salience that Lifton describes as 'forcing the end'

[274] Lifton, *Destroying The World*. 250-254.
[275] Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 16.

(Armageddon).[276] Asahara's interest in a potential World War III also reflected socio-cultural anxieties in the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and Australia in the early 1980s about nuclear weapons, due in part to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Able Archer intelligence exercise in 1983 (a simulation drill which led to nuclear war scares in Europe, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and Australia), and the Reagan Administration's support for the Strategic Defense Initiative (a research program into space-based anti-missile defence that also functioned as a form of psychological warfare to influence the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).[277] Aum Shinrikyo also anticipated Christian evangelical and Pentecostalist fears about End Times eschatology. These apocalyptic beliefs would underpin Aum Shinrikyo's subsequent embrace of terrorisr violence.

Organisational Sub-systems in Aum Shinrikyo

A new way to conceptualise Aum Shinrikyo is as a series of different and nested sub-systems: (1) commercial/entrepreneurial front companies for capital accumulation and revenue generation; (2) initiatory/religious for the renunciates' pursuit of personal enlightenment (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6); and (3) the covert and compartmentalised research program to develop chemical and biological weapons. This organisational design enabled Aum Shinrikyo to deal with Jacob N. Shapiro's terrorist's dilemma via the stratification of the senior leadership and tactical violence operatives from the religious organisational membership of renunciates. Aum Shinrikyo thus used the commercial and entrepreneurial, and initiatory, religious sub-systems as a kind of pass-through vehicle or silos to fund its compartmentalised, covert activities. The broader implications of the initiatory, religious sub-system are discussed further in Chapter 6.

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[276] Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 47.
[277] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 91.

The commercial and entrepreneurial sub-system provided Aum Shinrikyo with the financing mechanism to invest in its covert research program. Aum Shinrikyo can be viewed as an asset management firm that allocated its assets to an aspirational and risk-seeking strategy to covertly develop chemical and biological weapons. Its asset management portfolio grew through bequests, the seizure of renunciates' assets, and Aum Shinrikyo's tax exempt status as a Japanese religious organisation. In doing so, Aum Shinrikyo followed a financing strategy that Buddhist monasteries used in Japan during the 10th and 11th century to build power and social influence.[278]

The distinction between Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership and its renunciates also illustrates Barry Oshry's model of organisations in which the organisation's nucleus can have a very different strategic view to mid-level and low-level members.[279] Renunciates over time made a series of escalated commitment decisions such as their donation of assets to Aum Shinrikyo's financial base, and their singular focus on the new religious movement's meditation and mantra practices.

Aum Shinrikyo's compartmentalised, covert research development program makes it a potential case study for how organisations deal with 'dual use' technologies. Its successful sarin gas attacks means that Aum Shinrikyo also illustrates Charles Perrow's 'normal accidents' hypothesis about the dangers inherent in complex socio-technical systems: as it became a more complex organisation it took on the greater risks of developing a covert research program into chemical and biological weapons (as a socio-technical system), rather than pursue low risk alternatives.[280] Much of the apocalyptic imagery surrounding Aum

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[278] Thomas Cleary, *The Japanese Art of War: Understanding The Culture of Strategy* (Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2005), 4.
[279] Barry Oshry, *Seeing Systems: Unlocking The Mysteries of Organizational Life* (rev. ed.) (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2018).
[280] Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living With High Risk Technologies* (rev. ed.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

Shinrikyo re-emerged when an earthquake and a tsunami caused a nuclear accident at Fukushima, Japan, on 11th March 2011 (as illustrated in the *Time* Magazine cover-story on 1st September 2014). Human and natural disaster events have thus shaped contemporary Japanese culture in significant ways.

Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership did not have the institutional knowledge to replicate Japan's continuity of government or politico-military institutions. This lack of institutional knowledge meant that Aum Shinrikyo was unable to develop counterfactual options to deflect the attention of Japanese judiciary, media, and police (these are discussed further in Chapter 5). Furthermore, Asahara's reliance on the covert research program also created a path dependency that shaped the violence calculus Aum Shinrikyo used to carry out the 20th March 1995 terrorist attacks.

Aum Shinrikyo developed what Lifton notes was an 'extra-territoriality' that enabled it to carry out violence against Aum's renunciates who defected and also against Aum's enemies.[281] 'Extraterrotoriality' suggests an isolating of the organisation from the contemporary society and nation-state around it: a covert and compartmentalised structure that is not necessarily visible to outsiders or auditable by external parties. Historian Timothy Snyder notes this 'extraterritorial' quality underpinned the Holocaust's unfolding in Europe during World War II.[282]

Aum Shinrikyo's Initiatory, Religious Sub-system

Aum Shinrikyo and Shoko Asahara developed a syncretic belief system of Hindu Tantra cosmology; Tibetan Buddhist practices from the Vajrayana and Phowa traditions; Evangelical Christian eschatology (in Aum Shinrikyo's post-1989-90 apocalyptic period); and the

[281] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 163.
[282] Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust As History And Warning* (London: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).

adoption of cultural ideas from Japanese new religions and Western New Age movements (such as interest in the oracle Nostradamus). Aum Shinrikyo used meditation, yoga, and Asahara's purported levitation in media campaigns to broaden its appeal to new renunciates and to a broader, potential follower base: a way of engaging with Japan's cultic milieu. Collectively, the imagery and practices created a socialisation process for new renunciates into Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system.[283] These imagery and practices are explored further in Chapter 6.

Shoko Asahara's 'Deity Yoga' Experience

Lifton notes that in 1985, Shoko Asahara had a transformative encounter with a "nameless deity" which he later revealed in a Japanese media interview as the Hindu god Shiva. The nameless deity "ordained him as Abiraketsu no Mikoto ("the god of light who leads the armies of the gods)" in order to fight a cosmological war on behalf of the Tibetan kingdom Shambhala against the powers of darkness.[284] Asahara's self-identification with Shiva shaped his later preference for Aum Shinrikyo to conduct its covert research program into chemical and biological weapons. It also provided the transpersonal basis for Aum Shinrikyo's Shambhala Plan (discussed further in Chapter 5).

Asahara's subjective experience of the nameless deity he later identified as Shiva might be closer to the Tantric tradition of oracular and shamanic possession trance: a broader and deeper Southeast Asian context to consider Aum Shinrikyo's genesis and its early, utopian growth period. Shiva is 'the Destroyer' in Shaivite Hinduism, and a god of yoga which Asahara had experimented with in his personal studies. Asahara's encounter took place during a transitional life period in which he had left Agonshu and wandered. The deity yoga encounter was what scholar Lambert Schmithausen called "a new 'life-experience'

[283] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 61.
[284] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 20.

(*atmabhava*)" or "rebirth" in "Yogacara Buddhism": Asahara emerged with a new life mission when he decided to become a spiritual teacher and to found his own group that would carry out his life mission (the Shambhala Plan discussed further in Chapter 5).[285]

Thus, Asahara's deity yoga experience suggests the existence in Aum Shinrikyo of cultural transmission—at least amongst the senior leadership. The deity yoga experiences provided Asahara with legitimation as a new spiritual teacher despite not being part of an established lineage-transmission in the Shaivite Hinduism and Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism religious traditions. As Aum Shinrikyo grew in membership numbers, Asahara's focus on Shiva provided a psychological anchor for the organisation's eventual pathway into terrorist violence.

Aum Shinrikyo and Phowa Practices

Lifton identified Phowa practices adopted from the Vajrayana school of Tibetan Buddhism as Shoko Asahara's religious justification for killing Aum Shinrikyo's enemies (Poa). Aum Shinrikyo targeted investigative journalists, police, judiciary, and ex-renunciates who had turned apostate. Lifton suggests Aum Shinrikyo used the Phowa practices to help their enemies achieve enlightenment and to discontinue to accumulate karma in their lives. Poa also provided in-group socialisation of the mid-level and senior-level renunciates who carried out the killings.[286]

The Vajrayana tradition of Phowa involves two key ritual practices that differ from Aum Shinrikyo's interpretation: (1) the abandonment of attachments to people and objects in the external world near the time of death; and (2) the individual's mindful concentration on the

[285] Smith, *The Self Possessed*, 302, 581.
[286] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 27.

"inner Pure Land" or "Dharmakaya" of the Buddha-mind at the moment of death and in the transitional *bardo* states that occurred afterwards.[287]

The strategic subculture theory conceptualised in Chapter 1 gives a different perspective on Asahara's use of Phowa practices. Asahara formed Aum Shinrikyo after only several years in Agonshu, and during self-immersion into New Age and occult beliefs and symbol systems. He was not part of a deep religious tradition, school, or lineage. Instead, Asahara relied on Tibetan Buddhist Mahayana and Vajrayana's structure in order to shape Aum's new initiatory systems for renunciates. Asahara's misuse of Phowa practices to murder renunciates and enemies of Aum Shinrikyo was one example of this process, which Chapter 6 explores in greater detail.

Conspiracy Theories, Propaganda, and Sociological Rumours in Aum Shinrikyo

Aum Shinrikyo actively managed its renunciates through the use of conspiracy theories, propaganda, and sociological rumours as organisational communication—as a strategy of identity formation, cultural maintenance, and as an in-group worldview.[288] Asahara cited a 'world shadow government' run by Freemasons in his communiques and media coverage. This conspiracy idea likely diffused from evangelical and fundamentalist Christian sources connected with the United States political far right. Asahara's vision of a trans-national political elite echoed Timothy McVeigh's fears of the Bilderberg trans-national elite group which McVeigh adopted from far right militias and radio broadcasts whilst in Montana.[289] However, Aum Shinrikyo went a step beyond these conspiracy theories. They created a shadow proto-government with key functions assigned to different members of Aum

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[287] Kelsang Gyatso, *Living Meaningfully, Dying Joyfully: The Profound Practice of Transference of Consciousness* (Glen Spey, NY: Tharpa Publications, 2000), 52-53.
[288] Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (rev. ed.), (Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Joseph E. Uscinski, ed. *Conspiracy Theories and the People Who Believe Them* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2018.
[289] Michel and Herbeck, *American Terrorist*.

Shinrikyo's senior leadership. Aum Shinrikyo also used sociological rumours to shape the social learning and cultural transmission experiences of its renunciates.

Milton Leitenberg and Raymond A. Zilinskas contend that propaganda complicates the estimative intelligence assessment of Aum Shinrikyo's covert chemical and biological weapons capabilities.[290] Layers of potential disinformation must be carefully re-evaluated. Leitenberg anticipated the later critical counterteorrism school of scholars and John Mueller in arguing that Aum Shinrikyo provided government policymakers with a pretext to create new threat securitisation narratives. For Lisa Stampnitzky, this climate of fear enabled 'old terrorism' experts in counterterrorism studies to be displaced by new risk management practitioners who had different disciplinary backgrounds and outlooks.[291]

One specific sociological rumour involving Aum Shinrikyo involved early internet speculation about experimental weapons prototypes. This included speculation about so-called Tesla weapons and Aum Shinrikyo's use of a Western Australia property for sarin gas testing. Thomas Bearden—a retired United States Army lieutenant colonel involved in the subcultural fringes of experimental weapons research—evoked an organised crime-terrorism *zeitgeist* in his concerns about a possible strategic alliance between Aum Shinrikyo, Russia, and Japanese Yakuza gang members.[292] Bearden's perspective illustrates how rumours of emerging threats and terrorist organisation capabilities can shape the estimative assessments in the aftermath of a major terrorist attack.

Aum Shinrikyo renunciates cultivated a conceptual distance from Japanese mainstream society. Asahara's conspiratorial worldview regarding this conceptual distance exemplifies

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[290] Milton Leitenberg and Raymond A. Zilinskas, *The Soviet Biological Weapons Program: A History* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), Kindle edition.
[291] Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror*.
[292] Thomas Bearden, "Aum Shinrikyo: Anatomy of a Dangerous Cult," (1997), accessed 11th March 2019, http://www.cheniere.org/aum/.

what political scientist Alan Bloomfield calls a "latent strategic subculture" that does not have mainstream appeal but that has aesthetic, ideological, and symbolic power, particularly for adherents who are receptive to it.[293] Conspiracy ideas provided Aum Shinrikyo with a motivational environment and a meta-ethical, moral calculus that justified the development and use of terrorist violence against government, media, and judicial elites.

Aum Shinrikyo's interest in conspiracy theories and the occult milieu made it an aberrant force in Japanese politics during the 1990 political campaign. However, aspects of its interests together with its attempts to build offshore groups in Russia and South Korea foreshadowed later developments in Russian and United States politics in 2016. During Donald Trump's Presidential campaign his advisor Steve Bannon adopted a Traditionalist worldview influenced by Italian neo-fascist theoretician Baron Julius Evola's meta-politics of the Kali Yuga.[294] In Russia, the geopolitical theorist Aleksandar Dugin who promoted a revived Eurasianist worldview was also influential in politico-military circles concerning Russia's role in an emerging, multipolar world.[295] Donald Trump's campaign also tapped into the Alt-Right movement and so-called 'meme warfare'—the use of memes or cultural units of information in targeted cultural transmission—to build and mobilise a voter bloc in 'swing' states. This suggests that Aum Shinrikyo's forays into conspiracy theories, propaganda, and short-lived political campaigns were an historical forerunner in Japan of later, more sophisticated information warfare strategies in Russia and the United States, which are still under debate.

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[293] Bloomfield, "Australia's Strategic Culture", 62.
[294] Joshua Green, *Devil's Bargain: Steve Bannon, Donald Trump, and the Storming of the Presidency* (New York: Penguin, 2017).
[295] Charles Clover, *Black Wind, White Snow: The Rise of Russia's New Nationalism* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2016).

Perfect Salvation Initiation and Cyberpunk Parallels

Western analysts have singled out Aum Shinrikyo as deviant due to sensationalist media coverage of its cyberpunk-like, experimental research. For example, Aum Shinrikyo developed a Perfect Salvation Initiation (PSI) headset that purported to record Asahara's brain-waves and transfer them to the renunciate.[296] However, this evaluative judgment by Aum Shinrikyo's chroniclers and critics also demonstrates how isolated some counterterrorism analysis can potentially be from its surrounding cultural and historical context.

Aum Shinrikyo's experiments reflected a period of earlier research on biofeedback, brain hemispheric synchronisation, and flotation tanks (as distinct from a parallel research program during the Cold War on counter-coercion in isolation environments) in which human brain-wave states, belief systems, and deep brain physiology could be experimented with.[297] Parallel research occurred in the United States amongst cyberpunk and early internet subcultural communities into similar experimental technologies.[298] Thus, innovations such as Asahara's Perfect Salvation Initiation headset can be situated in terms of these cyberpunk-influenced research programs, which led in the early 21st century to a new consumer electronics industry. Asahara's deity yoga experience with Shiva and his interest in the use of the drug LSD in Aum Shinrikyo rituals can also be situated as a Japanese example of psychedelic experiences from the 1960s onwards, as further illustrated in Philip K. Dick

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[296] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 70-71, 117.
[297] Michael Hutchinson, *Megabrain: New Tools and Techniques for Brain Growth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986); John C. Lilly, *The Deep Self: Consciousness Exploration in the Isolation Tank* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977).
[298] Mark Dery, *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century* (New York: The Grove Press, 1996); Erik Davis, *Techgnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (San Francisco: Harmony Books, 1998).

(VALIS), Terence McKenna (the Overmind), and Robert Anton Wilson (the 8 circuit framework co-developed with Timothy Leary).[299]

Diet Elections

In 1990, Aum Shinrikyo members and leader Shoko Asahara ran as election candidates for the Japanese Diet. Aum Shinrikyo fielded 25 candidates as part of the Shinrito (Truth Party).[300] As with FARC's experiments in the 1980s with the Patriotic Union party this was Aum Shinrikyo's attempt to be involved in the political mainstream and to integrate more closely into Japanese mainstream society. However, Japanese voters overwhelmingly rejected Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo's other political candidates, refusing the promise of salvation from apocalypse. This election campaign outcome further marginalised Aum Shinrikyo and its senior leadership from mainstream Japanese society.

The Covert Biological and Chemical Weapons Development Programme

Scientist Recruitment

Aum Shinrikyo recruited experts and scientists from research laboratories and universities: knowledge diffusion from Japan's science and technology sector to Aum Shinrikyo as a non-state actor. These experts and scientists joined Aum Shinrikyo to carry out their research in a less restrictive and tenure track oriented environment, or they had a personal affinity with Shoko Asahara's religious leadership. Despite this recruitment strategy, Aum Shinrikyo did not gain the relevant scientific expertise to develop a successful chemical weapons program: it was only partially successful, as demonstrated in the Matsumoto attacks of July 1994 and the Tokyo subway attacks of March 1995.

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[299] Erik Davis, *High Weirdness: Drugs, Esoterica, and Visionary Experiences in the Seventies* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2019).
[300] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist,* 196.

It is unclear if Aum Shinrikyo was able to export its blueprints and prototypes to other countries as A.Q. Khan's covert network had done with Pakistan's nuclear technology.[301] This outcome suggests that although terrorist organisations might seek to emulate nation-states, there are resource and knowledge-based limitations on what they can achieve. The resources of nation-states to pursue covert research programs still overshadows the attempts at these capabilities by non-state actors.

Compartmentalisation

Aum Shinrikyo compartmentalised its covert research programs from the main group of renunciates. Aum Shinrikyo also used deception practices in dealing with investigative journalists and police, such as disguising the Satyam 7 facility in Kamikuishiki, Japan as a shrine, where in fact its experimental biological and chemical weapons manufacturing facilities were covertly located.[302] Aum Shinrikyo also used front organisations in their attempts to gain access to and control over 'dual use' technologies.

In 1990, Aum Shinrikyo purchased property and experimented at Banjawarn Station in Western Australia.[303] In 1992-93, Aum Shinrikyo sought to acquire the Ebola virus in Zaire. They attempted to create VX chemical weapons, and anthrax, botulism, and Q fever. The failure to create biological weapons led Aum Shinrikyo in 1993 to focus more on chemical weapons like sarin gas.[304] Aum Shinrikyo did acquire military equipment such as a used Russian MI-17 helicopter which they planned to use to spread botulin and sarin in Tokyo.[305]

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[301] Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[302] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End Of The World*, 269-270; Sumiko Oshima and Toshi Maeda, 'Aum Three Years Later: Sarin Plant Haunts Kamikuishiki', *The Japan Times*, March 18th, 1998, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/1998/03/18/national/aum-three-years-later-sarin-plant-haunts-kamikuishiki/#.XbPZSugzZPY.
[303] Kaplan and Marshal, *Cult At The End Of The World*, 160-163.
[304] Milton Leitenberg, "Aum Shinrikyo's Effort to Produce Biological Weapons: A Case Study In The Serial Propagation of Misinformation," *Terrorism & Political Violence* 11, no. 4 (1999), 149-158.
[305] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 181.

Aum Shinrikyo's other incidents included the 1989 murder of lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto who investigated them, and his family; and in June 1994, an attempt to target three judges with sarin gas in Matsumoto, Japan, led to the deaths of seven people and injured 200 others.[306]

Covert Research Program Failure

There are several possible reasons why Aum Shinrikyo failed to develop a successful covert research program. Aum Shinrikyo's research team lacked scientific judgment and the skills to test *botulinum* and *anthracis*, and they did not have the ability to disseminate the biological weapons. Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership relied on their own knowledge and capabilities rather than others—and thus limited their potential choices and scientific knowledge base to carry out their plans. Lifton specifically blames the scientist Seiichi Endo—a Kyoto University educated graduate student and virologist who oversaw Aum Shinrikyo's manufacture of sarin—for the covert research program's failure, due to a lack of scientific knowledge, and difficulties in developing and following operational laboratory protocols.[307]

Historical Analogies and Cultural Anxieties

Strategic subcultural analysis is sometimes differentiated from historical, analogical reasoning. Yet Aum Shinrikyo's use of sarin gas in the Tokyo subway attack has disturbing historical parallels to Japan's Unit 731, which used germ warfare in China during World War II.[308] Such historical analogies suggest that Aum Shinrikyo's covert experimentation with chemical and biological weapons may have war-time precursors in Japan. It is unclear if Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership were aware of Unit 731.

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[306] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End Of The World*, 49-52, 175-182, 266-267.
[307] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 30.
[308] Daniel Barenblatt, *A Plague Upon Humanity: The Hidden History of Japan's Biological Warfare Theory Program* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

Asahara's "nuclearism" or his psychological, extreme self-identification with nuclear weapons reflected Japan's experiences at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[309] Historian John W. Dower contends that Hiroshima and Nagasaki—"the Ground Zeros of 1945"—meant a "continuum of resort to brute force."[310] Asahara's fascination with and attempts to acquire nuclear weapons can be understood as a continuation by a well-financed non-state actor of its subjective perception of late Cold War era conflict between the United States and the USSR. Likewise, Asahara's interest in experimental laser, particle beam, and directed energy weapons reflected a personal synthesis of Japanese anime and manga culture; conspiracy theories and rumours about inventor Nikola Tesla's blueprints for developing such weapons; and as a spillover effect of the Reagan Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative related space weapons research.[311]

Asahara's forecasts also occurred during a period of heightened socio-political tension between Japan and the United States. Japan's domestic factors included an economic deflation crisis after the Nikkei speculative bubble from 1986 to 1991. Asahara's fears about natural disasters and wars reflected the collective psychology of the bubble's end. In contrast, the United States during the early-to mid-1980s had feared the rising power of Japanese corporations. The cultural manifestations of these anxieties included films such as Ridley Scott's *Black Rain* (1989) which referenced the United States nuclear bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945; Michael Crichton's *Rising Sun* (1993) which dealt with United States fears of Japanese corporate espionage and competitive intelligence; and John Woo's *Mission: Impossible II* (2000) in which the Aum Shinrikyo-like biological weapon Chimera is unleashed in Sydney, Australia. Aum Shinrikyo's decision to develop chemical

[309] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 194.
[310] Dower, *Cultures of War*, 223.
[311] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 191.

and biological weapons thus also reflected broader anxieties about Japan's rapidly growing geo-economic power.

Re-evaluating Aum Shinrikyo's Covert Research Program in Chemical and Biological Weapons

United States: The Initial Reaction

Counterterrorism policymakers interpreted Aum Shinrikyo's Tokyo subway attack in March 1995 as crossing the threshold for terrorist non-state actor use of biological and chemical weapons. Aum Shinrikyo's actions fit an emerging narrative in counterterrorism circles about criminal dark networks, covert experimentation, and the possible risk of nuclear proliferation to terrorist non-state actor groups.[312]

Aum Shinrikyo fitted a cluster of other high-profile terrorism attacks and events involving secluded, poorly understood, apocalyptic new religious movements, including the Branch Davidians siege at Waco (1993); Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing (1994); and the Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia (1995). However, this also might have meant Aum Shinrikyo was curve-fitted to a prior pattern about apocalyptic and militant new religious groups, rather than being perceived as a deviant and outlier event. Recency and representativeness heuristic biases (where Aum Shinrikyo is compared incorrectly to other groups and organisations that have outwardly similar profiles) from these incidents might also have affected the judgment of United States policymakers about Aum Shinrikyo's terrorist threat.

[312] Jessica Stern, *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

The United States of America: Reassessment of Aum Shinrikyo's Chemical and Biological Weapons Research and Development Program

Counterterrorism analysts now differ on Aum Shinrikyo's historical significance. Adam Dolnik believes Aum Shinrikyo was "the most innovative terrorist organization of all time" due to its covert research and development program for chemical and biological weapons.[313] In contrast, Milton Leitenberg and Raymond Zilinskas were more sceptical: they contended that the Western media had misreported Aum Shinrikyo's biological weapons capabilities and that this unintentional disinformation had shaped United States policymakers. Over the next decade, Leitenberg and Zilinskas would reassess Aum Shinrikyo as he did interviews and historical document analysis to forensically understand the Soviet Union's covert research development program into biological weapons.

Leitenberg subsequently discovered that Aum Shinrikyo had contacted Oleg Lobov who "later served as [Boris] Yeltsin's National Security Council from 1993 to 1996."[314] Lobov was allegedly the Russian source for Aum Shinrikyo to buy the "blueprints and technical documents for the production of the nerve gas sarin", although this has not been confirmed. [315] Aum Shinrikyo also sought the biological weapons expertise of Anatoly Vorobyov, the then Deputy Director of Russia's Biopreparat.[316] Masami Tsuchiya, the head of Aum Shinrikyo's chemical weapons development, is alleged to have spent three weeks in Russia in 1993. However, Russian sources, and the absence of Aum Shinrikyo sources, make it difficult to identify what knowledge transfer occurred between Russia and Aum Shinrikyo regarding biological weapons.[317] The specific involvement of Russian and South Korean

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[313] Adam Dolnik, *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics, and Global Trends* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 8.
[314] Leitenberg and Zilinskas, *Soviet Biological Weapons Program*, Loc 10059 (Kindle edition).
[315] Rennselaer W. Lee III, *Smuggling Armageddon: The Nuclear Black Market in the Former Soviet Union and Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), 67.
[316] Leitenberg and Zilinskas, *Soviet Biological Weapons Program*, Loc 10837 (Kindle edition).
[317] Leitenberg and Zilinskas, *Soviet Biological Weapons Program*, Loc 10066 (Kindle edition).

sources in Aum Shinrikyo's covert research programs for biological and chemical weapons remains a significant gap in the publicly available literature about the new religious movement. These data collection gaps illustrate significant barriers to understanding how terrorist organisations develop covert research development programs in biological and chemical weapons.

Japan-United States Security Relationship and Japan's Anti-Militaristic Culture

Strategic cultural theorists like Jeffrey Lantis have cited Thomas Berger's work on Japan's anti-militarist culture evident in the alliance decision-making surrounding the 1990-91 Gulf War.[318] A plausible explanation for this is Japan's adjustment to its on-going security alliance with the United States. In contrast to Japanese defence, security, and politico-military institutions, Asahara was deeply concerned about Japan's relationship to the United States: he forecast nuclear war between the two countries. Asahara extrapolated the Reagan Administration's Strategic Defense Initiative from the United States rather than the Japanese anti-militarist culture that Berger had focused on. This suggests a potential spillover effect from Reagan's SDI program—which also had a psychological operations and a strategic deception role against the Soviet Union—to influence Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo as a clandestine, terrorist non-state actor.[319]

Lifton suggests that Japan's anti-militaristic culture after World War II identified by Berger had a dark side. It suppressed any in-depth discussion of Japan's human rights and military crimes during wartime. This meant that the militant aspects of Japan's national strategic culture could not adequately be understood or psychologically integrated by new generations of Japanese youth. Lifton contends that this psychological barrier paradoxically created the

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[318] Lantis, "Strategic Culture".
[319] Mira Duric, *The Strategic Defence Initiative: US Policy and the Soviet Union* (New York: Routledge, 2017). Gordon R. Mitchell, *Strategic Deception: Rhetoric, Science, and Politics in Missile Defense Advocacy* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2000).

psychohistorical dynamics that Asahara and Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership would use to recruit socially alienated Japanese youth and spiritual seekers to become renunciates.[320] However, Lifton's view remains debateable and there are likely to be other historical reasons than the anti-militaristic culture's role, such as the role that the United States has played in domestic Japanese politics and reshaping the ideological spectrum.

Re-evaluating Haruki Murakami's Underground Interviews with Aum Shinrikyo Members

The Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami interviewed eight current and former Aum Shinrikyo followers and renunciates for his non-fiction book *Underground* (2001). Although none of Murakami's eight interviewees carried out violent or terrorist attacks, their reflections documented aspects of the radicalisation process within Aum Shinrikyo; how the initiatory, religious sub-system worked; and why some of the renunciates became deradicalised and subsequently left the new religious movement. Murakami contended "the collective narrative of these personal stories has a powerful reality of its own" which involved "multiple viewpoints" in order to understand Aum Shinrikyo on its own terms.[321]

The majority of Murakami's interviewees became interested in Aum Shinrikyo after experiencing either psychosocial stressors in life or feeling alienated from broader Japanese society. Mitsuharu Inaba, Hajime Masutani, and Shinichi Hosoi each had attachment problems and conflicts with their parents.[322] Hidetoshi Takahashi described becoming a "'Moratorium Person': who does not want to grow up."[323] Shinichi Hosoi had school problems and learning difficulties. Hosoi and Akio Namimura each experienced early onset depression.[324] Collectively, these experiences and factors suggest a counter-view to the new

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[320] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 247-248.
[321] Haruki Murakami, *Underground* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 214, 215.
[322] Murakami, *Underground*, 240, 253, 273-275.
[323] Murakami, *Underground*, 296.
[324] Murakami, *Underground*, 273, 232.

religious movement narrative: problems with attachment and early socialisation experiences create potential vulnerabilities, and recruitment can take the form of 'limited re-parenting' experiences (suggestive of Jeffrey Young's insights that led him to formulate Schema Therapy). Harumi Iwakura suggests this possibility: "People raised in happy families probably wouldn't join Aum."[325]

Adolescent encounters with different philosophical and religious systems were also important for Hiroyuki Kano (Emanuel Swedenborg and Buddhism); Mitsuharu Inaba (Friedrich Nietzsche, Soren Kierkegaard, Zen, and esoteric Shingon Buddhism); Akio Namimura (an Okinawa yuta or shaman and Soka Gakkai); Miyuki Kanda (childhood experiences with an astral or mystical plane); Shinichi Hosoi (Nostradamus prophecies as a Japanese media narrative); and Hidetoshi Takahashi (King Crimson guitarist Robert Fripp and the Graeco-Armenian magus George Gurdjieff, who also influenced Fripp via Gurdjieff's student John Godolphin Bennett).[326] Each of these had passed through the Japanese 'cultic milieu' of underground, occult beliefs and practices before affiliating with Aum Shinrikyo. These adolescent encounters had several consequences for the future Aum Shinrikyo renunciates. They prioritised philosophical and religious solutions (instead of other alternatives) to existential and lifespan challenges and thus shaped each individual's decision preferences. They reflected personal quests for meaning-making that also created a receptiveness to joining Aum Shinrikyo and to having a Vajrayana Tantric Buddhist-like teacher-student relationship with Shoko Asahara. Once in the new religious movement, they may also have created the preconditions for each renunciate's self-socialisation into the initiatory, religious sub-system.

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[325] Murakami, *Underground*, 294.
[326] Murakami, *Underground*, 218-220, 240-241, 230-232, 261-262, 273, 296.

The renunciates' individual decisions to join Aum Shinrikyo occurred through a combination of encounters with its media and propaganda; meeting its senior leadership; and visiting its dojo facilities, in which personal experiences arose regarding existential or lifespan challenges. Hiroyuki Kano, Mituharu Inaba, Miyuki Kanda, and Shinichi Hosoi each visited the Setagaya dojo.[327] Hajime Masutani visited an Aum dojo in Kyoto and then later joined Aum Shinrikyo's headquarters near Mount Fuji.[328] Hudetoshi Takahashi met Hideo Murai whilst working at the Ministry of Science and Technology as a renunciate.[329] Hosoi read back issues of *Mahayana* magazine.[330] The charismatic Fumihiro Joyu, who later founded the post-Aum Shinrikyo group Hikari no Wa, directly recruited Mitsuharu Inaba to join Aum Shinrikyo.[331] These experiences coincided in 1989-90 with a period of rapid recruitment growth in Aum Shinrikyo's collective membership, just prior to the new religious movement turning more inwards and more apocalyptic in outlook.

This elite-driven, 'weak ties' organisational pattern of recruitment into Aum Shinrikyo (where the decision elite clique acts as a boundary-spanner to recruit new members through the charismatic leadership of being transcendent spiritual teachers) also illustrates how the posited causal mechanisms in Chapter 3 can work together in an integrated fashion. Many of the renunciates experienced a different philosophical and religious environment prior to joining Aum Shinrikyo, as an aleatory, unstructured form of cultural transmission. Aum Shinrikyo's *Mahayana* magazine and distributed leaflets created a folklore around Asahara and the research achievements of the initiatory, religious sub-system. This folklore created heightened emotional salience for the renunciates which enabled Aum Shinrikyo to create a series of escalated commitments. Initial encounters such as Hiroyuki Kano's "secret yoga"

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[327] Murakami, *Underground*, 222, 241-242, 263, 275.
[328] Murakami, *Underground*, 253.
[329] Murakami, *Underground*, 300.
[330] Murakami, *Underground*, 274.
[331] Murakami, *Underground*, 241.

meeting with Asahara on personal health problems or Mitsuharu Inaba's attendance at religious sermons provided each renunciate with a foretaste of socialisation experiences.[332]

Each of the renunciates worked in different Aum Shinrikyo facilities. Hiroyuki Kano worked in Aum Shinrikyo's construction division at the Naminomura facility and then worked at the Mount Fuji facility under Hideo Murai's leadership.[333] Miyuki Kanda like many renunciates was responsible for distributing Aum Shinrikyo flyers, and later became an administrator and cook.[334] Shinichi Hosoi worked in an Aum Shinrikyo book-binding plant for resourcing the 1990 political campaign and then spent three years in the animation division.[335] Harumi Iwakura worked in Naminomura's home economics division; in Tokyo doing clerical work, and then in the dubbing division.[336] Their experiences illustrate how Aum Shinrikyo rotated new members through a series of organisational support roles, and used them as an internal labour pool. Although cultic narratives have critiqued such practices as exploitative they have subsequently been adopted by contract, franchise and public sector organisations based on a private equity model of precarious labour and wealth extraction.[337] The experiences of Aum Shinrikyo renunciates have also anticipated a United States debate on religion's role in countering work burnout.[338]

In Murakami's interviews, these work experiences overshadow each renunciate's involvement with Aum's Shinrikyo's initiatory and religious sub-system. Mitsuharu Inaba began with a self-image of Asahara as a Buddhist teacher and gradually noticed over time

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[332] Murakami, *Underground*, 223, 241.
[333] Murakami, *Underground*, 225.
[334] Murakami, *Underground*, 263-264.
[335] Murakami, *Underground*, 276-278.
[336] Murakami, *Underground*, 289-292.
[337] David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad For So Many And What Can Be Done To Improve It* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Carl Benedikt Frey. *The Technology Trap: Capital, Labour, and Power in the Age of Automation*. Princeton (NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
[338] Jonathan Malesic, "How to Save Americans from the Hell of Work," *The New Republic*, March 4, 2019, https://newrepublic.com/article/153205/save-americans-hell-work.

that people around him were suffering from mysterious illnesses.[339] Miyuki Kanda underwent changes in psychological attachments, energy levels, and beliefs about past-life experiences—yet also experienced the release of sarin gas at the Kamikuishikiri-mura facility, which Aum Shinrikyo members feared was the result of an external attack.[340] Shinichi Hosoi attended the initiatory states of Liberation and Masterhood but noticed when given access to the Satyam No. 7 facility that Aum Shinrikyo was spending significant amounts of money on chemical storage tanks.[341] Several of the renunciates glimpsed the compartmentalised and covert research program to develop chemical and biological weapons yet lacked the operational context to understand what they saw until afterwards.

Conflicts in the initiatory, religious sub-system emerged when renunciates experienced a gap between their Buddhist Tantric Vajrayana ideals and particular spiritual practices in Aum Shinrikyo. (These aspects are discussed further in Chapter 6.) Hidetoshi Takahashi singled out Asahara's guru theatre and Aum Shinrikyo's use of drugs during the Christ Initiation.[342] Hajime Masutani heard the screams of other renunciates undergoing drug related initiation; heard rumours about drug-related deaths and spies; and was placed in solitary confinement.[343] Harumi Iwakura experienced a dissociative gap of two years with memory gaps before waking up in a Kamikuishiki-mura cell.[344] Collectively, these experiences point to the corruption of Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory,religious sub-system in terms of the initiatory methods used and the organisational power dynamics in which the renunciates lived. They also highlight that Aum Shinrikyo renunciates were susceptible to significant dissociative experiences, which occurred in the context of religious ritual practices.

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[339] Murakami, *Underground*, 245.
[340] Murakami, *Underground*, 267.
[341] Murakami, *Underground*, 280.
[342] Murakami, *Underground*, 298-299.
[343] Murakami, *Underground*, 256.
[344] Murakami, *Underground*, 291.

Murakami found significant variance in how the renunciates each reacted to news of the 20th March 1995 sarin gas attack in Tokyo. Hiroyuki Kano read of the attack on internet news whilst in Aum Shinrikyo's Mount Fuji facility with intense psychological disbelief.[345] Hajime Masutani and Miyuki Kando experienced alienation and cognitive dissonance respectively. Shinichi Hosoi was interrogated by Japanese police and was released, and later joined the Canary Association, which is critical of Aum Shinrikyo and its successor organisations.[346] Akio Namimura became a police informant.[347] These different reactions illustrate how effective Aum Shinrikyo's folklore and social learning processes were in camouflaging the covert research and development program from the initiatory, religious sub-system that the renunciates participated in. Aum Shinrikyo thus had a 'dual use' and layered reality that led the renunciates to differ in their interpretations about what kind of new religious organisation that they were actually members of.

The Aum Shinrikyo renunciates perceived significant differences between the senior leadership and their role as followers. Mitsuharu Inaba experienced "such a huge gap between the Asahara I have in my mind and the Asahara I see on trial."[348] Shinichi Hosoi described internal divisions within Aum Shinrikyo's Ministry of Science and Technology: the senior leadership were a "handpicked elite 'Brains Trust'" who gained "preferential treatment" whilst Hosoi was part of a non-elite group of "Subcontractors."[349] Hidetoshi Takahashi believed that Asahara chose his senior leadership "from among the strongest believers" who had "total devotion" to Aum Shinrikyo's strategic vision.[350] Hajime Masutani believed that the key to advancement in Aum Shinrikyo was "educational background" for

[345] Murakami, *Underground*, 226.
[346] Murakami, *Underground*, 282.
[347] Murakami, *Underground*, 237.
[348] Murakami, *Underground*, 247.
[349] Murakami, *Underground*, 283-284.
[350] Murakami, *Underground*, 301.

men and "how attractive you were" for women: a focus on cultivating expertise and social mobility.[351] Consequently, few of the renunciates who Murakami interviewed felt that they would have been selected by the senior leadership to carry out the terrorist attacks.

Murakami's interviews of Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates reveals a more complex internal view of the terrorist organisation and its social learning process than media portrayals or cultic narratives. Most rejected a mind control or undue influence explanation for their behaviour. The renunciates did not fully accept Aum Shinrikyo's Tantra Vajrayana worldview and noticed a transition over time to more extremist and militant behaviour. Murakami's interviews suggest that small clandestine groups may reflect facets of larger cultural and sociological problems in the host society that have not been adequately dealt with. Several renunciates saw different faces of Asahara, Hideo Murai, and Yoshihiro Inoue but were still unable to leave Aum Shinrikyo due to escalated commitments. When Asahara's prophecies failed the renunciates sought refuge in Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory and religious sub-system practices. Yet, despite these challenges, several former Aum Shinrikyo renunciates went through a disengagement process and were able to reintegrate with contemporary Japanese society.

In 2019, Haruki Murakami reflected on his Aum Shinrikyo interviews for the book *Underground* in a *New Yorker* interview with journalist Deborah Treisman: "The Aum Shinrikyo cult members were not ordinary people, in that they were seeking some kind of truth or absolute truth. But the victims were ordinary commuters on their way to work. I interviewed the cult people, too, but their voices didn't impress me."[352]

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[351] Murakami, *Underground*, 255.
[352] Deborah Treisman, "The Underground Worlds of Haruki Murakami," *The New Yorker*, February 10, 2019, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-interview/the-underground-worlds-of-haruki-murakami.

Aum Shinrikyo's Successors: Aleph and Hikari no Wa

Joyu Fumihiro emerged as Aum Shinrikyo's public face to deal with the media and was depicted as such in the influential documentaries *A* (1998) and *A2* (2001).[353] Joyu had been responsible for Aum Shinrikyo's Russian membership, which remains a gap in the relevant literature, and had not been in Japan during the Tokyo sarin gas attack.[354] On 18th January 2000, Joyu founded the successor organisation Aleph with Muraoka Tatsuko.[355] Aleph soon split into two different factions over Asahara's status as spiritual teacher, and disagreements over his legacy. The Japanese new religious group Agonshu also publicly distanced itself from Asahara.

Joyu Fumihiro and 200 members of Aleph founded Hikari no Wa ('Rainbow of Light') in March 2007.[356] Joyu shifted Hikari no Wa's emphasis from Asahara's India, Phowa practices, and apocalyptic beliefs "to early Japanese Buddhism (in particular the semi-legendary figure of Shotoku Taishi) and Shinto tradition."[357] Taishi was responsible for Buddhism's historical growth in Japan, and his "Seventeen Article Constitution" taught Confucian ethics for rulers. Joyu's doctrinal decision thus shifts away from Asahara's personal synthesis, and more closely aligns Hikari no Wa with Buddhist and Shinto religious traditions that inform Japan's national religious identity. This has included pilgrimages to "famous Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples" in Nara and Kyoto.[358]

Japan's Public Security Intelligence Agency continues to monitor both Aleph and Hikari no Wa. Whilst Aleph has remained secretive, Hikari no Wa has used the Internet since 2010 to

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[353] Tatsuya Mori, *A* (Tokyo, Japan: 'A' Production Committee, 1998); Tatsuya Mori, *A2* (Tokyo, Japan: 'A' Production Committee, 2001).
[354] Erica Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa: A New Religion Recovering From Disaster." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 39, no. 1 (2012), 33.
[355] Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa," 34.
[356] Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa," 34.
[357] Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa," 36, 38.
[358] Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa," 38-39.

promote its "Global Spiritual Networking" ideal using blogs, the video streaming sites Ustream and YouTube, and the social media platform Twitter.[359] Joyu has used Hikari no Wa's Ustream broadcasts to further distance the group from Aleph and from Asahara's earlier teachings. Ustream remains popular in Japan: Hikari no Wa's use of it for proselytising echoes Aum Shinrikyo's use of Japanese anime and manga culture for recruitment purposes.

Conclusion

Aum Shinrikyo: When a Strategic Subculture Fails

Aum Shinrikyo illustrates how and why a terrorist group can attempt to create a viable strategic culture—and yet can still fail. Its founder and leader Shoko Asahara conceptualised from his experiences a personal synthesis of cross-cultural philosophical and religious sources into an initiatory, religious sub-system that rapidly attracted a large group of renunciates, although not as large as other Japanese new religions (discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6). Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership were then able to use these renunciates to accumulate financial capital, and to acquire material and technological resources. Yet the senior leadership's goal of a covert research development program for chemical and biological weapons was far too ambitious for their actual capabilities, scientific knowledge, and their organisational knowledge base. Aum Shinrikyo never developed the doctrinal tradition or the mobilisational counter-power to achieve a fully articulated strategic subculture as defined in Chapters 1 and 2—although they came close to it with some aspects.

Aum Shinrikyo could have made different decisions to facilitate its economic growth. Rather than asset seizures and expropriation from its renunciates it could have leveraged entrepreneurial ventures or moved into asset management. The Perfect Salvation Initiation

[359] Baffelli, "Hikari no Wa," 44-45.

headset foreshadowed contemporary interest in brain neuro-plasticity, consumer electronics products, and psychotherapies informed by affective neuroscience and interpersonal neurobiology. Aum Shinrikyo's tax exempt status means it could have become a wealthier Japanese new religion with substantive media outreach capabilities.

Aum Shinrikyo failed to create a viable strategic subculture in several ways. Its core ideology from Shoko Asahara's personal synthesis of philosophical and religious sources was too distanced from Japanese contemporary society for the new religious movement to become truly influential and establish a deeper power base. Asahara's obsessions affected the decision preferences of Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership. The renunciates who Lifton and Murakami each interviewed had often internalised a guru model of Asahara and were unable to critique Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory and religious practices. It lacked the institutional knowledge to survive. Aum Shinrikyo's successful terrorist attack on 20th March 1995 did not deflect attention, as Hideo Murai and others had hoped: the Japanese government and police response disrupted the new religious movement. This ultimately led to the imprisonment, and the execution of its senior leadership in 2018.

Chapter 5: Aum Shinrikyo and Counterfactuals

Introduction

Chapter 4 detailed Aum Shinrikyo's pathway into embracing terrorist violence. The new religious movement began initially with a utopian mission to create 30,000 renunciates who would spiritually liberate Japan. After the failed political campaign of 1990, Aum Shinrikyo turned inward, embracing Armageddon in its private seminars, and building a compartmentalised research and development program into biological and chemical weapons. Its founder Shoko Asahara became more world-denying in outlook and retreated into paranoia. The utopian vision of spiritual transformation in Japan became transformed into a bleak, dystopian outlook of combatting a militaristic nation-state that Asahara believed threatened Aum Shinrikyo's survival.

What other alternative paths might Aum Shinrikyo have taken to terrorist violence, or how might it have been expressed differently? This chapter continues the theory-building approach to process tracing outlined in Chapter 3 to examine retrospectively why this organisational trajectory occurred. The 'Aum affair' gained notoriety in Japan; however, its cultural impact was not predetermined. As this chapter details further, there were both 'for better' and 'for worse' counterfactuals which could have led to very different outcomes. Aum Shinrikyo existed over its brief lifespan from 1984 to 1995 in a 'many worlds' interpretation of quantum-like 'possibility spaces'. Had slightly different decisions been made by Asahara and the decision elite, there is a spectrum of outcomes that range from Japanese police discovery and pre-emption of Aum Shinrikyo's attack planning to more successful attacks using chemical and biological weapons with a higher number of mass casualties.

This chapter proceeds in the following manner. I first discuss the unexpected events that provide some closure to Chapter 4's path dependent organisational trajectory: the Japanese Government's execution in 2018 of founder Shoko Asahara, and 12 other senior and mid-level members of the new religious movement. These executions occurred symbolically to cleanse the Heiwa era's end before the new Reiwa era began in Japan. For interested researchers, the executions closed off the opportunity to get further answers to Aum Shinrikyo's internal workings from its senior leadership.

I then backtrack to discuss one relatively unexamined reason for Aum Shinrikyo's pivot after 1990-91 into Armageddon: the end of the Heisei Boom economic bubble in Japan and the onset of austerity and macroeconomic debt deflation. This leads into Aum Shinrikyo's Shambhala Plan for ruling Japan—a nebulous form of decision elite groupthink that began as shared dream states amongst renunciates, and which progressed into a more manifest reality as the new religious movement acquired Russian military weaponry.

This necessary background context then sets up a way to consider a range of possible and plausible counterfactuals for what Aum Shinrikyo might have become. These counterfactuals range from 'minimal rewrite' or small variations to Chapter 4's organisational trajectory, to 'apocalyptic' outcomes in which Shoko Asahara's Armageddon is realised, and 'maximal rewrite' possibilities in which major, significant variations might have occurred.[360] Consequently, the 'Aum affair' could have been far more multidimensional. Finally, I consider other, alternative explanations that converge on Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system and the likely dysfunctions that cumulatively occurred within it.

[360] Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit*, 15, 24, 77.

The 2018 Executions and Revisiting the Non-State Actor Debate on Terrorists

On 6th July 2018, the Japanese Government executed Aum Shinrikyo's founder Shoko Asahara and six other members.[361] A further six members were executed on 26thJuly 2018.[362] Former senior Aum Shinrikyo members were in both executed groups. These executions were done symbolically before Japan's Heisei era (Emperor Akihito, 8th January 1989 to 30th April 2019) became the Reiwa era (Emperor Naruhito, 1st May 2019—present) in order to contain the 'Aum affair'.

Amnesty International and other human rights organisations protested the Japanese Government's executions of Aum Shinrikyo members, and its support of the death penalty.[363] Shoko Asahara's execution highlighted how Japan's death penalty stance was at odds with many Western countries' (such as Australia and the United Kingdom) views and legislation on capital punishment. The Aum Shinrikyo member executions revived narratives about the terrorist organisation and led to a new audience on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These events were an important reminder that terrorism involves a broader and deeper spectrum of political and religious-motivated groups and organisations beyond the militant Islamist jihadism, which has become more prominent since Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks against the United States on 11th September 2001.

Shoko Asahara's descent into paranoid psychosis during his court trial did not prevent Japanese authorities executing him. This psychopathology can also be understood as adaptive in an evolutionary psychology sense: it enabled Asahara to create a subcultural niche for

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[361] James Griffiths and Yoko Wakatsuki, "Japanese cult leader Shoko Asahara executed for Tokyo sarin attack," CNN, 6th July, 2018, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/07/05/asia/japan-aum-shinriyko-leader-executed-intl/index.html.
[362] Anonymous, "Tokyo Sarin attack: Japan executes last Aum Shinrikyo members on death row," BBC, 26th July, 2018a, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44962581.
[363] Anonymous, "Japan: Executions of seven cult members fails to deliver justice," Amnesty International, 6th July, 2018b, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/07/japan-aum-cult-executions-fails-to-deliver-justice/.

himself within Aum Shinrikyo despite his fears and paranoia, which also influenced other senior members to carry out his wishes.[364] Asahara's long-term objective for Aum Shinrikyo to rule over Japan failed. Successor organisations and cultic milieu subcultures continue to be subtly influenced by Asahara, even if like Hikari no Wa, they apologise for Aum Shinrikyo's attacks, and attempt to create new, distinct religious identities.[365]

The Japanese Government's executions have prompted a media and public reassessment of Aum Shinrikyo in a new and more contemporary sociocultural context. When the online media streaming platform Netflix released the 2018 documentary *Wild, Wild Country* about the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh cult's experiences in Oregon, the United States, *The New Yorker's* journalist Win McCormack noted that if Aum Shinrikyo had been more effective, the March 1995 sarin gas attack on Tokyo's subway system "death toll could have reached hundreds of thousands."[366] In this chapter, I discuss several 'minimal rewrite', 'apocalyptic' and 'maximal rewrite' counterfactuals where such 'mass casualty' outcomes might have occurred. Aum Shinrikyo thus remains a cultural marker for the dangers of charismatic leadership, small in-group group beliefs, orchestrated public relations campaigns in the media (that may hide darker operational realities), and how motivated and well-funded non-state actors can attempt to acquire chemical and biological weapons.

Aum Shinrikyo signified that non-state actors (detailed in Chapter 2's discussion of what I call fourth generation strategic culture, which I date from 2002 to the present) have greater significance in a new, uncertain, volatile, multipolar world. For some international relations

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[364] Marco Del Giudice, *Evolutionary Psychopathology: A Unified Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[365] Anonymous, "Ex-Aum executive Joyu offers apology to cult's victims on day of Asahara's execution," *The Japan Times*. 6th July, 2018c, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/06/national/crime-legal/ex-aum-executive-joyu-offers-apology-cults-victims-day-asaharas-execution/#.W8r_9WgzZPY.
[366] Win McCormack, "Outside The Human Limits Of Imagination," *The New Yorker* 27th March, 2018, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://newrepublic.com/article/147657/outside-limits-human-imagination.

theorists this is a return of a classicist and premodern worldview to the current era and to contemporary security problems.[367] In this view, Aum Shinrikyo was a modern terrorist organisation that was motivated by a pre-modern religious ideology that gained control of chemical and biological weapons.

However, Aum Shinrikyo combined both the culturally transmitted roots of its Hindu and Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism worldview with fascination of contemporary technology: a vision that rivalled the Western interest in Cyberpunk subcultural aesthetics. If counterterrorism officials were more familiar with this cultic milieu, subcultural, and technological imagination (rather than just strategic imagination in strategic studies more generally) then Aum Shinrikyo's Tokyo subway attack would possibly not have had its 'strategic surprise' effects that it had on policymakers.

This leads to a very different situation that counterterrorism and national security analysts must face. Premodern historical ideas are either resurgent or recurrent in the contemporary geopolitical climate, as international relations scholar Jakub J. Grygiel has noted.[368] However, their ideological drivers—or Red Team thinking in intelligence and security studies terminology—also lie outside the Western canon of thinkers like Thomas Hobbes, Niccolo Machiavelli, Immanuel Kant, and Carl von Clausewitz. Nor can they be reduced to the threat salience of apocalyptic, nuclear terrorism: the terrorist moral calculus and its strategic logics must be understood on their own terms and metaphysical foundations in order to be effectively countered. Why then did Aum Shinrikyo transform from a utopian new religious movement to a dystopian terrorist organisation that could not be deterred from violence?

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[367] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (New York: Random House, 2000).
[368] Jakub J. Grygiel, *Return of the Barbarians: Confronting Non-State Actors from Ancient Rome to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge Uiversity Press, 2018), 5.

The Pivot from Utopia to Dystopia: The Onset of Japan's 'Lost Decades'

Why did Aum Shinrikyo pivot in 1990-91 from its initial, utopian vision to embrace the more apocalyptic vision of facilitating Armageddon? In this section I advance a new factor for consideration: the end in 1991 of the Heisei Boom or economic speculative bubble in Japan, and the subsequent onset of the 'lost decades' of austerity and debt deflation. The speculative mania of 1980 to 1991 in Japan is common to economic bubbles more generally. This transitional period likely had a macro-foundational impact on Aum Shinrikyo.

When Shoko Asahara returned from the Himalayas in 1986 after meeting religious leaders, he had an optimistic growth plan for Aum Shinrikyo: to gain 30,000 renunciates who would spiritually liberate Japan. I call this the utopian vision of the initial, long-term Shambhala Plan (discussed further in the next section). This is understandable both as religiously motivated organisational expansion, and, secondly, as a specific example of euphoria driven thinking in 1980s Japan, during what became known as the Heisei Boom.[369] This optimism also anticipated and paralleled the cyberpunk and techno-utopian communities in Europe and the United States that played a role in the 1995-2000 dotcom bubble: similar subcultural and technological experimentation occurred.[370] Such euphoria and optimism diffused contagion-like from these subcultures into the broader society in Japan, the United States, and Europe as the promise of 'new times' thinking and economic growth. This time it was different—until it wasn't.

What this economic bubble-driven thinking suggests is that Shoko Asahara, Fumihiro Joyu, and Hideo Murai in particular were susceptible to the decision heuristics of anchoring, representativeness, and overconfidence (in which they were both overconfident about Aum

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[369] T.J. Pempel, *Regime Shift: Comparative Dynamics of the Japanese Political Economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[370] Davis, *Techgnosis*.

Shinrikyo and about their scientific and technical knowledge). Asahara's encounter with Shiva discussed in Chapter 4 created an anchoring bias for Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system: without Shiva, it would have been a very different new religious organisation. As Asahara sought to gain 30,000 new renunciates he became initially overconfident about the probability of success. Engagement with Japan's cultic milieu and its media only reinforced this feeling of overconfidence. The cultic milieu also provided representativeness bias—as the decision elite looked to Nostradamus's prophecies and other explanations of millennialist Armageddon to confirm their pre-existing beliefs. These cognitive biases fed the euphoria-like thinking—despite Aum Shinrikyo lacking the economic, political, and social infrastructure base of more established Japanese new religions such as Soka Gakkai International.[371]

Renunciates' donations of their assets to Aum Shinrikyo can also be understood as a specifically new religious form of this euophoria-like thinking. Aum Shinrikyo was a utopian safe haven from the complexities of Japanese society including its socio-economic stressors. However, when Japan's Heisei Boom ended in 1991 this began the 'lost decades' of deflationary stagnation and visible socio-economic austerity. Japan's communitarian form of capitalism was undergoing significant transformation as the safety net of its traditional institutions was being hollowed out and eroded.[372] Instead, Aum Shinrikyo increasingly became a psychic prison in which there was increased internal competition for preferential access to in-group social status and resources, such as the religious names that Asahara bestowed on those who survived ritual ordeals (discussed further in Chapter 6).

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[371] Levi McLaughlin. *Soka Gakkai's Human Revolution: The Rise of a Mimetic Nation in Modern Japan* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2018).
[372] Anchordoguy, *Reprogramming Japan*.

Shoko Asahara's embrace of a more apocalyptic worldview makes more sense in the context of Japan's 'lost decades' of austerity and debt deflation. This was a signifier in Aum Shinrikyo of the depressive psycho-political shock that Japanese society as a whole suffered. The Japanese Government had failed and had proven to be corrupt in the 1990 Diet campaign, Asahara believed. Armageddon would cleanse Japan and would enable Aum Shinrikyo to displace them and to rule instead as a religious counter-elite. Asahara's Armageddon Seminar can thus be seen entrepreneurially as the Japanese new religious forerunner of Zerohedge.com's enigmatic Tyler Durden, Infowars.com's founder Alex Jones and discredited conspiracy theory entrepreneur, and YouTube documentaries about the next economic crisis after the Global Financial Crisis or the Great Recession in 2008-09.[373]

The 'lost decades' meant that Aum Shinrikyo mirrored Japanese society through a glass, darkly. An early, optimistic phase of rapid membership growth to about 3,000 renunciates soon stalled well below Asahara's utopian growth goals.[374] The 'lost decades' created specific psychosocial stressors such as unfunded debt obligations and unemployment: this created a pool of potential followers who were estranged from Japan's attachment-rank competitiveness over preferential access to resources and status. Such potential followers were receptive specifically to Asahara and Joyu's message of achievable spiritual growth.

However, Aum Shimrikyo developed a similar attachment-rank hierarchy in its initiatory, religious sub-system. Progress was in part via asset and financial donations, surviving ritual ordeals, and acquiescing to the personalities and symbols surrounding Asahara's religious leadership. This financialisation of Aum Shinrikyo in the context of 'lost decades' austerity

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[373] An example is Martin Borgs' *Overdose: The Next Financial Crisis* (2010) which connects Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001 to Federal Reserve policies that helped to create the precursor conditions for the 2003-08 speculative bubble in subprime real estate, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RmHAqiBbyE8 [accessed 11th March 2019].

[374] This process is outlined in particular in Ian Reader's *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan*, 205-06, 244, where Aum Shinrikyo's failure is examined comparatively.

and debt deflation has become much clearer since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis or Great Recession in the United States, Europe, and Australia.[375] Japan's 'lost decades' and its high levels of debt were the "canary in the coal mine" according to Adair Turner for economist Larry Summers' revival of the secular stagnation hypothesis, to explain post-2008 macroeconomic conditions of low growth and productivity.[376] Thus, Aum Shinrikyo can be reinterpreted in a new, more contemporary political economy and socio-economic context.

The 'Aum affair' is viewed as part of a larger crisis narrative about Japan that now also includes the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear reactor disaster of 11th March 2011, a rapidly ageing population, and the spectre of artificial intelligence to create a vast, unemployed workforce.[377] Yet it also had a unique view about how crisis is created: the moral calculus and the (stylised) preference for violence that was the Shambhala Plan.

The Nebulous Shambhala Plan

In 1986, Shoko Asahara returned to Tokyo from the Himalayas with a confident, religious mission to gain 30,000 renunciates and to spiritually liberate Japan from its existing Government. What happened in the Himalayas to Asahara remains mysterious (beyond a meeting with the Dalai Lama which Asahara interpreted as a special mission) but it was a transformative experience that catalysed his strategic vision. The childhood roots of this religious mission lay in Asahara's narcissistic aspirations to become the Prime Minister of

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[375] Adam Tooze, *Crashed: How A Decade of Financial Crises Changed The World* (London: Allen Lane, 2018). Also see the summary of Japan's 1987-2017 period of economic bubble, 'lost decades', and renewed macroprudential policy intervention in Ray Dalio's *Principles For Navigating Big Debt Crises* (Westport, CT: Bridgewater, 2018), 303-306. For the hypothesis that Japan exported deflationary stagnation and debt austerity to the world see William Pesek's *Japanization: What The World Can Learn From Japan's Lost Decades* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2014).

[376] Institute of New Economic Thinking, 'Investigating 'Secular Stagnation'' (2016), accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sirXAfpIrao; Adair Turner, *Between Debt and the Devil: Money, Credit, and Fixing Global Finance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[377] Pilling, *Bending Adversity*.

Japan. Neither goal was ever likely to happen. The Shiva deity encounter in 1985 (discussed in Chapter 4) had further inflated his ego and prompted a religious solution to the challenges of Aum Shinrikyo's continued expansion. As Japan progressed after 1991 into the 'lost decades' of austerity and debt deflation, Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates were having shared dreams of post-apocalyptic landscapes in which they survived and meditated. The socio-economic conditions and psychosocial stressors contributed to a significant mindset shift in 1989-90 in Aum Shinrikyo's membership which coincided with the Heisei Boom's end.

What I call the Shambhala Plan was an emergent, aspirational, and utopian vision that Aum Shinrikyo would survive a 'limited' nuclear war in 2003 between the United States and Japan, which would likely engulf the entire world. Helen Hardacre, a Harvard University researcher, referred in 1996 to this as the 'Japan Shambhala Plan.'[378] Asahara referred to this as the "Japan Shambhalization Plan" which involved "Aum offices and training centers in every major Japanese city" and "a "Lotus Village" or utopian community where "Aum members would survive Armageddon."[379] In its initial stages the Shambhala Plan operated like a donor fund for renunciates to provide money and assets to Asahara for Aum Shinrikyo's future growth.[380]

After the 'limited' nuclear war occurred, Aum Shinrikyo would overthrow the Japanese Government, and would then inaugurate a global, Buddhist paradise. What Aum Shinrikyo desired more deeply was a radical resacralisation and restructuring of Japanese society from its existing socio-economic and political power structure into a new, more potently religious

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[378] Helen Hardacre, *Aum Shinrikyo and the Japanese Media*, JPRI Working Paper No. 19, April 1996. Oakland, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, accessed 28th September 2019, http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp19.html.
[379] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 22.
[380] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 23.

form. The renunciates would bring this utopian world into being through their cultivated religious practices.

The Shambhala Plan did not exist in a codified, structured planning document. Rather, it existed at a group level as an *imagos* of the preferential future that Aum Shinrikyo's decision elite wished to bring into being: a more Indo-Tibetan world that was ruled and safe-guarded by an initiated elite. They would control and promulgate the necessary and sufficient knowledge for social mobility and spiritual enlightenment. The Shambhala Plan was a way to deal with the socio-economic uncertainty that Japan faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the Heisei Boom ended, and the 'lost decades' of austerity and deflationary debt began.

This means that the Shambhala Plan was more speculative and utopian in intent: "the place that was promised" as novelist Haruki Murakami describes it in his *Underground* section on Aum Shinrikyo current and former member interviews, but whose lived experience turned out to be very different than their initial dreams, expectations, and hopes.[381] Likewise, the Tokyo subway attack can be interpreted as both a priming event for possible war contagion, and as a defensive, improvised operation designed to deflect police and judicial attention away from Aum Shinrikyo and towards either the Japanese Government or to external enemies.[382]

Shoko Asahara presented himself to students as a Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana teacher who claimed to be authentic—despite not being part of a recognised or sustained lineage of teacher-student transmission of ethical, initiatory and religious knowledge.[383] Asahara can instead be likened to the 'crazy wisdom' style of Rinpoche Chogyam Trungpa (a

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[381] Murakami, *Underground*, 211.
[382] John R. Hall and Philip D. Schuyler, *Apocalypse Observed: Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe, and Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2000).
[383] Tsongkhapa, *Tantric Ethics: An Exploration of the Precepts for Buddhist Vajrayana Practice*. Trans. Gareth Sparham (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2005).

controversial and influential Tantric Buddhist who founded the Shambhala International community, and who was trained in the Kagyu and the Nyingma lineages) and other religious teachers: Asahara sought legitimation from an older spiritual tradition and also to establish guru-like dominance in a teacher-student relationship with renunciates.

However, as Trungpa himself noted this teacher-student relationship has significant dangers and it is misunderstood in the West outside of its original, appropriate cultural context.[384] Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana's reliance on the student's focus of the guru as a religious exemplar meant that Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates were more likely to develop a dependency relationship with Asahara. They did not become independent, sovereign individuals who might question his authority and threaten to overthrow his positional power. This power relationship was also a religious form of affective politics—which continues to influence contemporary geopolitical events.[385]

Exploring Counterfactuals in Aum Shinrikyo

This section discusses several different types of counterfactuals regarding Aum Shinrikyo: different historical outcomes and possibilities that did not come to pass. Identifying counterfactuals is an important stage of theory-building process tracing. This section identifies and discusses a range of 'minimal rewrite', 'maximal rewrite', and more apocalyptic counterfactuals regarding Aum Shinrikyo's pathway from a new religious movement into embracing and mobilising terrorist violence. In these counterfactuals, a range of other decision branches or outcomes could have emerged to shape very different possible

[384] Nga la Rig'dzin Dorje, *Dangerous Friend: The Teacher-Student Relationship in Vajrayana Buddhism* (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 2001).
[385] William Davies, *Nervous States: How Feeling Took Over The World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018).

and plausible futures.[386] Varied decision branches could have had very different consequences for the 'Aum affair' in broader Japanese society.

Whilst Aum Shinrikyo had successful chemical weapon attacks in Matsumoto in 1994 and Tokyo in 1995, it failed in its aims to carry out larger-scale attacks in Japan. Counterfactual reasoning can reveal the possible spectrum of adjacent possibilities that exist with potential terrorist attacks: 'minimal rewrites' of Al Qaeda and 11th September 2001 for example illustrate threat scenarios where terrorist attacks may be prevented or thwarted as well as darker realities of greater mass casualty outcomes.[387] Likewise, similar counterfactuals can be generated for Aum Shinrikyo: both positive (in which Japanese investigative journalists, judiciary, and police may have discovered its covert research program) and negative (or where the religious organisation was possibly able to carry out large-scale militaristic and terrorist attacks in Tokyo that would have led to a greater number of deaths) for counterterrorism and intelligence analysts.

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactuals

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #1: Asahara is successful as a micro-political candidate in 1990 and is surprisingly elected to Japan's Diet, along with other Aum Shinrikyo-affiliated political candidates. Rating: Improbable.

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #2: Aum Shinrikyo creates a greater political scandal as a micro party (such as concerning the role of dark money funding) that affects single issue candidates and minor political parties in Japan. Rating: possible.

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[386] Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit*, 15, 24.
[387] Alex Burns (2011). 'Doubting The Global War on Terror', *M/C* 14(1), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/338

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #3: Japanese media and police placed Aum Shinrikyo under greater scrutiny prior to its terrorist attacks in 1994 and 1995, such as using investigative journalism and the estimative intelligence assessments of Aum Shinrikyo's covert and overseas funding networks. Rating: possible.

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #4: Aum Shinrikyo was able to pivot from the end of Japan's Heisei Boom to the onset of its deflationary period. It is able to make this entrepreneurial pivot via effective technology commercialisation (such as of its Perfect Salvation Initiation headset as consumer technology to experiment with brainwaves). Rating: possible.

Other counterfactual possibilities are considerably darker:

'*Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #5*: Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack on 20th March 1995 was more successful: it became an apocalyptic or 'mass casualty' terrorist event which leads to a greater death toll in Japan (than the 13 people killed). Rating: possible.

'Minimal Rewrite' Counterfactual #6: Aum Shinrikyo is able to use its acquired Russian MI-17 military helicopter in order to carry out larger scale, airborne sarin gas attacks in Tokyo in November 1995. Rating: possible.

This latter 'minimal rewrite' counterfactual provides a bridge to a second set of possibilities: apocalyptic counterfactuals in which the new religious movement was able to successfully usher in contemporary Armageddon.

Apocalyptic Counterfactuals

Apocalyptic Counterfactual Scenario #1: Aum Shinrikyo's success with larger scale attacks in Tokyo in November 1995 leads to hybrid or proxy warfare with Russia, who are blamed for the attacks. Rating: improbable but possible in the contemporary environment.

Apocalyptic Counterfactual Scenario #2: Aum Shinrikyo is able to acquire chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons from Russia, and is able to successfully deploy these weapons in Japan to 'go nuclear'. Rating: improbable.

Apocalyptic Counterfactual Scenario #3: Aum Shinrikyo is able to create a long-term successor, cross-border franchises, or a covert network in Japan, Russia, and South Korea that is able to fund long-term research and development, and possible, future terrorist attacks. Japanese police, intelligence, and judiciary are unable to stop the trans-national growth of this successor, cross-border franchises or covert network, which uses front companies, money laundering, and offshore domiciled tax havens. Rating: probable.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactuals

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #1: Shoko Asahara became part of a Kalacakra lineage-transmission: this changes the initiatory, religious sub-system in Aum Shinrikyo to embody less experimental syncretism and more alignment with a Hindu or a Tibetan Buddhist religious tradition. Asahara is able to confirm and embody the esoteric practices of Kashmir Shaivite and Tantric Buddhist Vajrayana direct realisation. Rating: improbable.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #2: Shoko Asahara has a deity yoga experience with a different deity to the Hindu 'destroyer' Shiva—and consequently, Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system develops evolutionarily into a very different form. Rating: probable.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #3: Shoko Asahara dies in an accident and is replaced by another member of the decision elite who takes Aum Shinrikyo in a different direction. Rating: possible.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #4: The murders conducted by Aum Shinrikyo are discovered and prosecuted before the 1995 sarin gas attack takes place—reinforcing the 'evil secret society' media narrative about Aum Shinrikyo, but directing the 'Aum affair' into different criminal and civil legal cases. Rating: possible.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #5: The Tokyo Broadcasting Service documentary about Aum Shinrikyo is broadcast (rather than the Shoko Asahara interview that replaced it), leading to a public outcry against the new religious movement. Rating: possible.

'Maximal Rewrite' Counterfactual #6: Aum Shinrikyo's political campaign is successful: Shoko Asahara is elected as a micro party politician but is then caught up in legal problems. A darker variation on this is that Asahara is still elected as a politician but is then assassinated, leading to greater scrutiny of Aum Shinrikyo by police and judiciary. Rating: improbable.

Richard Ned Lebow's counterfactuals method (discussed briefly in Chapter 3) can also be applied at an individual level to consider the possibilities of Aum Shinrikyo renunciates and their respective subjective experiences of the new religious movement. Such possibilities include: (1) leaving the new religious movement; (2) never joining due to career transitions and psychosocial adjustments; (3) or if they had joined different (and possibly competing) Japanese new religious organisations. This would provide a more dynamic approach to consider the pre- and post- factors of renunciates interviewed by Haruki Murakami, as previously explored in Chapter 4.

Aum Shinrikyo Related Counterfactuals in Popular Culture

Counterfactuals about Aum Shinrikyo have also influenced (millennialist) popular culture. 'The Time Is Now' episode of Chris Carter's television series *Millennium* (1998) recast the

shadowy Millennium Group as an Aum Shinrikyo-like propagator of a deadly virus that led to a contained, fever-like Apocalypse. John Woo's film *Mission: Impossible 2* (2000) relocated the film's deadly Chimera virus from Tokyo to Sydney, Australia, hinting that Aum Shinrikyo might have had greater success if its covert research program was implemented undetected in Western countries. The Umbrella Corporation of the *Resident Evil* film series and video games also regenerated aspects of Aum Shinrikyo's techno-scientific research for a subcultural fandom audience. Whilst Aum Shinrikyo's Shambhala Plan failed in real life to reach its maximum impact, its potential as a contagion or a 'mass casualty' event lives on in multiple fictional universes. Similar fears arose in United States domestic politics and media culture after Al Qaeda's terrorist attacks on 11th September 2001.[388]

Aum Shinrikyo is famous in terrorism studies for being the first post-Cold War non-state actor to cross the threshold and attempt to acquire chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. However, its popular media impact suggests that Aum Shinrikyo—like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant—may have 'afterlives' in terms of the public's own folklore narratives, stories, and symbols about what terrorism is and who the terrorists are. One manifestation of this is the emergence of a 'neo-Aum' culture such as religious sermons based purportedly on Asahara's teachings, but which are in fact likely fake—being designed to promote other philosophical and religious interests.[389] Another manifestation is the growth of popular novels that either reconstruct Aum Shinrikyo's Tokyo subway attack from its own, organisational and internal viewpoint, or that posit

[388] Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis, and America's War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[389] Isamu Michi, *Neo-Aum Sermons* (Martinet Press, 2017).

counterfactuals where the new religious movement successfully acquired and deployed nuclear and radiological weapons.[390]

Some of these popular culture counterfactuals deal with various scenarios about Shoko Asahara and the senior leadership: Aum Shinrikyo may have faced leadership transitions and succession planning pressures earlier than it did—possibly leading to schisms and dramatic changes in direction in the initiatory, religious sub-system. Some counterfactuals such as the lineage transmission links suggest a possible realignment of Aum Shinrikyo's experimental syncretism to other religious traditions—a change in a relational focus. Many narratives of Aum Shinrikyo paint the new religious movement as successful due to the errors or weaknesses of its various adversaries—several of the counterfactuals here suggest that greater contestation and possible conflict might have occurred if those strategic actors had acted differently (thus providing also a check and balance on Aum Shinrikyo's attempts to develop mobilisational counter-power capabilities).

Different, Possible Explanations of Aum Shinrikyo's Failure

This section considers other, different, possible explanations for Aum Shinrikyo's failure to grow as an initiatory, religious movement. These explanations situate Aum Shinrikyo in terms of a broader religious and initiatory context beyond its status as a terrorist organisation. In doing so they offer possible ways to potentially reintegrate Chapter 2's new religious movement, terrorism studies, and comparative religious studies literature. They also offer an alternative to Chapter 4's event and pathway-based analysis that is informed by Chapter 3's process tracing methodology.

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[390] Jonas Fox, *Tsar Bomba* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Square Press, 2017); Stew Magnuson, *The Song of Sarin*. (Seattle, WA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012); David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten* (New York: Vintage, 2001).

Explanation #1: Being Outside of Established Lineage-Transmissions

Shoko Asahara was deeply influenced by the Kalacakra transmission in Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana.[391] He met the Dalai Lama briefly in Dharamsala, India, in 1986. When he was questioned in 1995, the Dalai Lama denied giving Asahara a specific and special religious mission to fulfil. This was despite—as will be further discussed in Chapter 6—that Asahara embraced a religious mission after his Himalayas trip in 1986 to cultivate 30,000 renunciates and thus liberate the world. Perceptions differed about the meeting and what happened at it. Asahara thus assumed a heightened religious status outside an established lineage-transmission that led to his own highly erratic and individualised trajectory.

Consequently, Asahara strayed from his initial, beneficent purpose of 1984 to 1989 and embraced a far more apocalyptic mindset. He had in fact created a highly artificial, improvisational tradition that took ideas and trends from Japan's cultic milieu (in terms of interests in levitation and other purported special powers or siddhis) and from non-Vajrayana sources. This illustrates the dependent origination that Aum Shinrikyo had on Asahara's early cultic milieu experiences and the wandering phase of his initiatory work. Asahara was not part of an established lineage-transmission or initiatory community which could have halted his trajectory. Instead, he became the dominant philosophical and religious force in Aum Shinrikyo—and then led it into an increasingly paranoid and reactionary relationship with broader Japanese society.

Explanation #2: The Rapid Overexpansion in the Initiatory, Religious Sub-System

Over a relatively short period of time of 11 years—from 1984 to 1995—the initiatory, religious sub-system grew from a small yoga group in Shibuya, Tokyo, to 3,000 renunciates, a growing network of rural commune facilities, and a broader non-renunciate membership

[391] Khedrup Norsang Gyatso. *Ornament of Stainless Light: An Exposition of the Kalacakra Tantra*, trans. Gavin Kilty (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2014).

and community of support. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, the new religious movement developed many of its own ritual ordeals based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of Kashmir Shaivite and Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana practices, which Aum Shinrikyo distorted into its own forms. It mixed these practices with the pursuit of mystical, occult, and paranormal beliefs such as in levitation, telekinesis, and telepathy (which were interests also of Japan's cultic milieu, and so perhaps an attempt by Aum Shinrikyo to match its environment). The result was a religious-oriented experimental syncretism in which a diverse range of Aum Shinrikyo members could find a practice or a philosophy to adopt.

The novelty and intensity of this mixture of philosophy and practices led to a larger pool of renunciates beyond Asahara's initial span and control. Asset donations further confused the affiliation and screening procedures that Aum Shinrikyo used. The experimental syncretism led to a range of renunciates from different backgrounds and psychosocial experiences: the challenge was to integrate them into a coherent, hierarchical initiatory sub-system that had both financial and religious aspects. To deal with these growth dynamics Asahara led Aum Shinrikyo firstly from the cultic milieu to Mahayana Buddhism and then into Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana practices—thus intensifying but also destabilising its knowledge base for renunciates who were unable to cope with the new demands being made of them.

Explanation #3: A Focus on Rapid, Overseas Expansion at the Core's Expense

From the late 1980s onwards, Aum Shinrikyo expanded rapidly overseas. This growth strategy echoed the Heisei Boom's period of economic growth in Japan from 1986 to 1991 in particular. Aum Shinrikyo established facilities in the United States, South Korea, Russia, and other countries in attempts to recruit new followers and renunciates from these countries. Asahara's operations in the United States occurred during a period when the Japanese yen

appreciated against the United States dollar.[392] Aum Shinrikyo's "Russian Salvation Tour" of 1992 occurred soon after the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had broken up.[393]

What the United States and the Russian expansions highlighted was Asahara's 'crisis alpha' awareness. He was able to time Aum Shinrikyo's growth with the Heisei Boom when there were favourable macroeconomic and currency market conditions with the United States. However, apart from a New York City office Aum Shinrikyo did not gain many United States-based renunciates. The growth into Russia coincided with the country's existential crises, political changes, and economic upheavals. However, this only lasted several years before Aum Shinrikyo was deregistered by Russian authorities.[394] What connects both examples—the 'crisis alpha'—is using the implied volatility of the macroeconomic and the geopolitical environment to one's favour.

However, the rapid overseas expansions likely created internal pressures on Aum Shinrikyo's rural commune facilities in Japan. It meant that Aum Shinrikyo was trying to become a cross-border new religious movement at a time when it should have been consolidating its operational base in Japan. The Russia expansion was as a diversification after the Japanese Diet electoral failure in 1990. When combined with Aum Shinrikyo's world-denying stance this international expansion meant that the new religious movement was distracted: this in turn affected internal resource allocation such as the Radio Moscow propaganda campaign that Aum Shinrikyo ran in Russia.[395] The result was an overextension that was similar to a corporate acquisitions spree.

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[392] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 83.
[393] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 86.
[394] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 333.
[395] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of the World*, 91.

Explanation #4: Path Dependencies and False Prophecies in the Shambhala Plan

The Shambhala Plan shifted Aum Shinrikyo's focus to building commune-like Lotus Villages in rural areas. This decisive shift created new pressures on the new religious movement. Renunciates were needed to provide low-cost labour for Lotus Village construction. More asset donations were needed for Aum Shinrikyo's working capital and its internal cost structure. The declaratory policy of living in a utopian, religious community was in advance of Aum Shinrikyo's actual capabilities. This created renewed pressures to close the gap between the actual capabilities and the ideal. The high thresholds involved for non-state actors in chemical and biological weapons development created further pressures of which most renunciates were not aware of.[396]

These pressures and path dependencies will likely have hastened Aum Shinrikyo's organisational failure. Although the Shambhala Plan's original scope and its victory conditions were specified, they were far too ambitious for Aum Shinrikyo to catalyse by itself. The specific event sequence that Asahara prophesied about for the Shambhala Plan included a United States-Japan trade war in 1990; widespread natural disasters in Japan in 1996; the macroeconomic collapse of the United States, Europe, and China in the early 21st century; and a nuclear war between 30th October and 29th November 2003.[397] These were all significant macro level phenomena that were beyond Aum Shinrikyo's influence or control. The Shambhala Plan was also a reinterpretation of the French mystic Nostradamus (who was popular in Japan's cultic milieu) as applied to contemporary affective, geopolitical, international political economy, and nuclear strategy discourses. However, unlike the civilian think tank intellectuals profiled in Chapter 1 about strategic culture's Cold War era genesis,

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[396] Sonia Ben Ouagrham-Gormley, *Barriers To Bioweapons: The Challenges of Expertise and Organizations for Weapons Development* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Haruki Murakami, *1Q84: The Complete Trilogy* (New York: Vintage, 2012).
[397] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of The World*, 19-20.

Asahara and his decision elite did not understand how the United States actually thought about 'limited' nuclear war.

The specific event sequence played out differently to what Asahara had prophesied to Aum Shinrikyo initiates. The Heisei Boom ended in 1991 without a United States trade war. On 17th January 1995, Japan experienced the Kobe earthquake which Asahara later took credit for. China's purchase of United States treasury bonds buffeted the 2000 dotcom crash, the 2008-09 Global Financial Crisis or Great Recession, and the 2011 European Union monetary crisis. A 'limited' nuclear war did not develop between the United States and Japan: both countries continue to have close military relationships and security dialogues.

Thus, Asahara's overlay of Nostradamus's prophecies on contemporary geopolitical and macroeconomic events may have initially felt receptive in the pre-millennialist early 1990s. However, they turned out to be incorrect as a guide to the near future. This was despite Asahara's attempts to integrate Nostradamus with anime and manga imagery like *Space Battleship Yamato*, and with the speculative frontiers of contemporary scientific knowledge (such as the Perfect Salvation Initiation headset).[398] His cultic milieu background gave Asahara an awareness of 'crisis alpha' but not the hedge fund tools to correctly forecast or to profit from its implied volatility.

Explanation #5: A Dramatic Shift in Religious Worldview to Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana

According to Aum Shinrikyo scholar Daniel Metraux, Shoko Asahara first experienced a Kundalini energy awakening in 1981.[399] The same year he joined the Japanese new religious movement Agonshu but left in 1984 due to disagreements about the direction of contemporary Buddhist practices, and Asahara's personal interpretation of them. After

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[398] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End of The World*, 19, 173; Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 46.
[399] Daniel Alfred Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact on Japanese Society* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 17.

founding Aum Shinrikyo in 1984, he adopted a Mahayana Buddhist and utopian outlook that also appears to have drawn on Kashmir Shaivite practices for the Shaktipat Initiation (discussed further in Chapter 6).

Asahara began to break with this initial stance after his Shiva deity yoga experience in 1985 and his adoption of a religious mission to liberate the world (also discussed further in Chapter 6). In 1986-87 he made religious journeys to the Himalayas and to meet with other religious leaders. In 1989-90, he shifted Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory focus to Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana.[400] This was a period of rapid change and reorientation in which the initiatory, religious sub-system in Aum Shinrikyo became more scalable and transpersonal. There were increased demands for a higher number of renunciates, as well as greater pressure for a high level of religious achievement and status-seeking.

This religious shift had significant implications for Asahara as a religious teacher. The worldview choice illustrated Asahara's own escalated commitment to the religious mission that he believed had resulted from his Shiva deity yoga experience in 1985 (discussed in Chapter 4), and his Himalayas trip in 1986 (which both can be considered as psychological priming experiences in terms of Asahara's personal initiatory experiences). He became less compassionate about non-affiliated people and non-renunciates: his stance became more wrathful, like Shiva. The experience amplified Asahara's core being including his childhood pathogenesis as a school bully. His sermons became angrier and more disordered from 1990-91 onwards. Asahara became more self-interested: a stance at odds with the Tibetan Buddhist lineage-transmission tradition of what teachers need to be like.[401]

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[400] Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 19.
[401] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 14-15, 20, 53-55, 344.

The shift to Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana also had significant implications for the renunciates in Aum Shinrikyo. Vajrayana practice is more selective than Mahayana Buddhism is, especially in the Highest Yoga Tantra and the Generation stages (which are discussed further in Chapter 6).[402] Asahara shifted the Vajrayana focus for renunciates to cultivating the body's channels: the *nadis* (physiological energies), the *prana* (the winds or mind energies), and the *bindu* (essence of mind). The Vajrayana emphasis meant that Asahara was now practicing guru yoga with his renunciates—in which the renunciates identified strongly with Asahara and followed directly what he said, thus problematising the teacher-student relationship into what could become a dependency relationship. Vajrayana initiatory work brought up Asahara's projections about Armageddon—living in a defiled, desacralised, and fallen world—and spread them throughout Aum Shinrikyo, thereby changing the direct realisation experiences of its renunciates.

Explanation #6: A 'Double Bind' Strategy and a Failure to Reintegrate into Japanese Society

Aum Shinrikyo drifted from a Mahayana Buddhist and utopian religious corporation from 1984 to 1989-90 into a very different form as it matured. Its rapid growth meant that it never established the governance structure or the decision elite span of control that it needed to survive as a long-lasting institution. This is a key outcome of why I noted in Chapter 4 that Aum Shinrikyo had a 'failed' strategic subculture: it never established its longevity beyond Japan, and its Lotus Village commune facilities led to local community conflict that intensified over time.

This failure can be traced to failures in strategy formulation between Asahara and his senior leadership. Aum Shinrikyo adopted both a world-denying stance to mainstream Japanese society and also competitiveness with other Japanese new religions for new members. This

[402] Daniel G. Cozort. *Highest Yoga Tantra* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1986).

dual stance created internal pressures for expansion but also simultaneously for isolation. At its core this was a ‘double bind’: Aum Shinrikyo needed new followers to reach its 30,000 renunciates goal, but it also did not want them to reintegrate into mainstream Japanese society. This ‘double bind’ led to variant outcomes. The renunciates became dependent on Aum Shinrikyo, which needed to generate income in order to feed and house them. Their lack of reintegration kept the media’s focus on Asahara rather than the scalability of Aum Shinrikyo as a growing new religious movement.

It was thus no surprise that the 1990 election campaign for the Japanese Diet failed.

Explanation #7: A Grandiose Decision Elite and Dependent, Self-Sacrificial Renunciates

Initiatory, religious sub-systems can place dramatic pressures on initiates. These pressures can include new metaphysical philosophies that directly challenge established ideas and identities; self-change in which there are aleatory and oblique personal trajectories; and continued attempts to refine the ontological relationship between self-identity, a religious teacher, and meaningful action in the world. Dynamics from interpersonal friction and personality conflicts to disputes over doctrinal interpretations and meso-level, organisational milieu can lead to unanticipated outcomes. There are no guarantees of success. Each initiatory, religious sub-system in their respective organisations will also differ on what success looks like to them.

In Aum Shinrikyo, two different cohorts or sub-populations interacted in the context of its initiatory, religious sub-system. This functioned as an attachment-rank hierarchy: initiates sought to gain the favour of Asahara or other senior members and they also over time escalated their commitment to Aum Shinrikyo itself. In Jeffrey Young’s schema therapy—a psychotherapy modality that examines distorted cognitions and emotions—at least three specific schemas can be noted for the decision elite and the renunciates. As illustrated by

their ambitious, cross-border and expansion goals the decision elite embodied an "entitlement/grandiosity" schema: they were elite, highly competitive, dominated renunciates through ritual ordeals, and felt they had the right to preferential access to Aum Shinrikyo's resources.[403]

In contrast, the renunciates seem to have adopted a stance of the "dependence/incompetence" schema in which they became over-reliant on Aum Shinrikyo as a substitute parent rather than develop a self-directed and sovereign life.[404] Renunciates who provided low-cost labour illustrated the "self-sacrifice" schema in which the new religious movement took their assets, their labour power, and their surplus value—but from what was still a self-conscious decision the renunciates made to let this happen, in order to pursue religious goals.[405]

Young's schema therapy points to a potentially fatal flaw that any initiatory, religious sub-system may have. This is the "approval-seeking/recognition-seeking" schema and how it may manifest in a highly pressured environment.[406] The 'seeker after truth' or the potential new follower will project their half-formed goals, dreams, and desires onto the initiatory, religious organisation and its founder(s) or senior leadership. This is why the mouth-to-ear encounters between new followers and Asahara or Fumihiro Joyu noted in Chapter 4 were so personally significant: it confirmed to the renunciate that they had found a safe haven. In contrast, the decision elite may become more narcissistic over time, having gained the admiration of others—and thus distorting what in Aum Shinrikyo was a guru or a teacher-student relationship—into pursuing pure self-interest rather than what initiates need.

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[403] Jeffrey E. Young, Janet S. Klosko, and Marjorie E. Weishaar, *Schema Therapy: A Practitioner's Guide* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 237.
[404] Young et al., *Schema Therapy*, 237.
[405] Young et al., *Schema Therapy*, 247.
[406] Young et al., *Schema Therapy*, 251-252.

When examined more closely, Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system had other schemas as well which turned out to be traps for its affiliated initiates. The Shambhala Plan was a "negativity/pessimism" schema about Japan's ability to survive a trade war, natural disasters, economic and geopolitical tensions, and a possible 'limited' nuclear war. The ritual ordeals that renunciates faced such as immersion in water or drinking Asahara's bodily fluids illustrated both distortions of Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana doctrines and the "punitiveness" schema: renunciates faced punishment for non-compliance or status loss. The rural commune lifestyle illustrated "social isolation" from mainstream Japanese society.[407]

These schemas meant that Aum Shinrikyo had a range of deeper and more systematic problems. They went far beyond adopting and having an apocalyptic mindset from 1990-91 onwards. Rather, they were an integral part of Aum Shinrikyo's organisational structure and how its initiatory, religious sub-system functioned. Rather than liberate initiates the initiatory, religious sub-system either harnessed self-sacrificial renunciates as a low-cost labour pool for Aum Shinrikyo's rapid growth and expansion, or created a narcissistic, self-absorbed, and magnetised decision elite that pursued its own agendas. The result was to gradually destroy over time the self-integrity of Aum Shinrikyo as a functional new religious movement.

Conclusion

This chapter has continued the process tracing methodology outlined in Chapter 3 and begun in Chapter 4's historical analysis. The Japanese Government's execution of Shoko Asahara and other senior and mid-level members in 2018 has closed off some research avenues. It is still possible to identify a range of 'minimal rewrite', 'apocalyptic' and 'maximal rewrite' counterfactuals for what Aum Shinrikyo might have become had a range of different

[407] Young et al., *Schema Therapy*, 256, 268, 222.

decisions been made. Furthermore, different explanations to those advanced in Chapter 4 are considered. In particular, these focus on the growth dynamics of Aum Shinrikyo as a new religious movement, and the evolution and pressures within its initiatory, religious sub-system.

Aum Shinrikyo evolved rapidly from a small yoga group in 1984 to a religious corporation in 1995. By this time it had a complex infrastructure of offshore interests, commune facilities, revenue-generating businesses, front companies, and a major, covert and compartmentalised research program. Its initial, utopian vision from 1984 to 1990 turned more world-denying after its failure as a micro political party to gain power. Changes to initiatory worldviews hid growing self-interest from Asahara and the decision elite. The growth outside an established lineage-transmission tradition led to a lack of institutional safeguards for renunciates from the dangers to be faced. The ‘double bind’ of Aum Shinrikyo’s growth strategy—when combined with Asahara’s growing instability as a religious teacher—led to strategic drift from its original purpose. The promised utopian Lotus Villages in the Heisei Boom era became an increasingly dystopian Shambhala Plan. The initiatory, religious system had more potential traps for renunciates than just an apocalyptic mindset.

Chapter 6 continues this process tracing informed analysis to focus on the interaction of three posited causal mechanisms. As previously defined and discussed in Chapter 3 they are: cultural transmission (CM1), social learning (CM2), and folklore (CM3). This next chapter develops a deeper understanding of Shoko Asahara’s religious mission; specific initiatory practices in Aum Shinrikyo; the social learning role of the indoctrinability of renunciates, elite circulation and social stratification; and how folklore enabled Aum Shinrikyo to adopt ideas from the cultic milieu in order to recruit more followers as potential renunciates. I use these three posited causal mechanisms (which each converge functionally on the

indoctrinability of renunciates) to then discuss two further explanations of Aum Shinrikyo's failure to develop a viable strategic subculture (as previously outlined in Chapters 1, 2, and 4): Shoko Asahara's paranoid, delusional system, and the probable elite deviance of the decision elite.

Chapter 6: Causal Mechanism Explanations for Aum Shinrikyo

Introduction

Chapter 5 considered a range of counterfactuals and reasons for why Aum Shinrikyo failed to develop a viable strategic subculture. The new religious movement rapidly overexpanded into cross-border and international operations during Japan's Heisei Boom economic bubble. Renunciates faced an initiatory, religious sub-system that moved from a philosophical basis in Mahayana Buddhism to the more demanding and esoteric practices of Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana. The result of these dynamics was a 'double bind' system that drifted strategically from its original purpose.

How do the causal mechanisms posited in Chapter 3 help to explain Aum Shinrikyo's internal dynamics and its terrorist violence outcome? To explore this further, I refer in this chapter to Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious practices and rituals collectively as Aum Initiation. These collective practices and rituals began first with Shoko Asahara's individual, subjective experiences as the organisation's founder and as its first initiate. The many, diverse problems noted in Chapter 5 regarding Aum Initiation occurred as Aum Shinrikyo expanded and the initiatory, religious sub-system became more transpersonal in scope and scale. These tensions likely influenced Aum Shinrikyo more towards a violent trajectory.

This chapter proceeds as follows. I discuss in greater detail each of the three posited causal mechanisms that were initially defined and explored in Chapter 3: cultural transmission (CM1), social learning (CM2), and folklore (CM3). In each of these sections, I revisit some issues previously raised in Chapters 4 and 5, such as Shoko Asahara's wandering phase of personal initiatory work, how indoctrinability functioned for Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates, and the diffusion or the feedback loop relationship between its internally generated folklore

and the broader cultic milieu outside it. These sections provide greater analytic depth of distinct areas where the three posited causal mechanisms can interlock and work together as an integrated causal process.

I then discuss two different, further explanations for why Aum Shinrikyo failed to develop a viable strategic subculture, as posited in Chapter 4. The first focuses on Shoko Asahara as Aum Shinrikyo's leader and first initiate: the schizotypal ideas he developed early on in his cultic milieu experiences developed into a paranoid delusional system that under increased pressures became paranoid psychosis shortly before the Tokyo subway attacks. The precursors of this paranoid delusional system are noted in Chapter 4's historical event analysis and Chapter 5's discussion of Aum Shinrikyo's growing problems. The second is that the decision elite in Aum Shinrikyo engaged in opportunistic elite deviance due to opportunity hoarding and self-interest. As noted previously in Chapter 5, this group cohort dynamic changed Aum Shinrikyo from a utopian, optimistic new religious movement to a dystopian terrorist organisation.

Both explanations may have likely occurred concurrently in Aum Shinrikyo. If so they further highlight the lack of institutional safeguards and the organisational impact of being outside a lineage-transmission tradition, as defined and explored in Chapter 5. I close this chapter by considering a significant implication: decision elites or senior leadership in meso-level organisations may inadvertently become hostages to ideas from earlier philosophical, religious, economic, or political periods. This dynamic may anchor their strategy formulation and resource allocation processes—leading to major errors and mistakes.

Aum Shinrikyo and CM1: Cultural Transmission

This section re-evaluates Aum Shinrikyo in the context of the first posited causal mechanism in Chapter 3: the *cultural transmission* of religious, subcultural, and spiritual beliefs, norms, and practices (collectively, Aum Initiation). I conceptualise this specifically in the context of two aspects: (1) the cultural and religious *knowledge base* that informed Aum Shinrikyo's developmental milieu; and (2) how the new religious movement then *utilised* this knowledge base to develop specific initiatory practices for the religious fulfilment of its renunciates. Significantly, the knowledge base grew and evolved over time. The initiatory practices occurred outside an established doctrinal or lineage-transmission form, which in turn led to idiosyncratic beliefs within Aum Shinrikyo that were significant distortions of more established religious traditions.

Shoko Asahara's Pathogenic Childhood

The roots of Shoko Asahara's problems lay in maladaptive life patterns first developed in a pathogenic childhood. There are few details in the Aum Shinrikyo literature about Asahara's relationship with his parents: it is speculative that he may have had disorganised attachment. Asahara's parents sent him to a special needs school where he bullied other students.[408] He developed behaviour to manipulate and financially take advantage of other students—a repertoire that Aum Shinrikyo would enable on a larger scale with followers and renunciates who were coerced into making donations to the Shambhala Plan fund.

The psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton has concluded: "None of this can account for what he did later."[409] I disagree. From both developmental and interpersonal neurobiology perspectives the patterns that Asahara adopted in his education environment came to also define his later,

[408] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 14.
[409] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 16.

unstable life as a religious teacher. The roots of his behaviour can be found in his childhood pathogenesis that remained untreated even during his marriage to Tomoko Ishii, becoming a father, and after being arrested in 1982 "for selling fake Chinese medicines."[410] Had it been possible to psychologically or to therapeutically treat Asahara in childhood then he might have possibly pursued a different individual life trajectory.

The Wandering Phase of Initiation 1: Shoko Asahara and Japan's Cultic Milieu

Asahara spent the period of 1978 to 1981 immersed in Japan's cultic milieu of underground occult and subcultural interests. Lifton summarised this period of Asahara's interests as self-study "of various forms of traditional fortune-telling, Taoist medicine, and related expressions of divination and mysticism."[411] Daniel Metraux notes that Asahara immersed himself in the writings of God Light Association founder Takahashi Shinji, and the Buddhist scholars Nakamura Hajime and Masutani Fumio.[412] This immersion period can be considered as a kind of modelling, and also as the search for a stable religious identity.

Asahara joined Agonshu in 1981 but left in 1984. He did not make a significant impact on the rival new religious movement. Consequently, by the time he founded Aum Shinrikyo in 1984, Asahara had spent at least 6 years in first a wandering phase in Japan's cultic milieu and then a mutual evaluation period in which he found Agonshu's interpretation of Buddhism did not reflect his own beliefs. Asahara's life trajectory to this point followed the initiatory pattern of "wandering" followed by "shock."[413] This would inform Asahara's later experimental syncretism in Aum Shinrikyo.

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[410] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 17.
[411] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 17.
[412] Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 15.
[413] Don Webb, *Uncle Setnakt's Guide to the Left Hand Path* (Smithville, TX: Runa-Raven Press, 1999), 13.

Asahara was oppositional to mainstream, traditional Japanese Buddhism. Instead, he relied on Aum Shinrikyo's Aum Publishing to legitimate and to publicise his attachment-rank status as a new, innovative religious teacher. Asahara promised new renunciates that they would achieve special powers or *siddhis*: levitation, telepathy, and trance-possession states. He claimed to have mastered Tibetan Buddhist esoteric and tantric practices that would enable these special powers to be achieved.[414] Aum Initiation would be the transpersonal vehicle for this outcome to occur.

The cultic milieu in Japan effectively pre-screened and it also stratified individuals who desired these siddhis to consider joining Aum Shinrikyo. The prevalence of occult, mystical, and paranormal beliefs in the cultic milieu created a receptiveness to Asahara's (esoteric) knowledge claims. Functionally, this also increased the risk for new followers and potential renunciates of being susceptible to indoctrinability. The Indo-Tibetan worldview at the core of Aum Initiation was at a conceptual distance from the Buddhist and Shinto religious traditions of mainstream Japanese society. This meant that Aum Initiation would appeal to self-styled religious 'seekers after truth' who both experienced disaffected anomie and disillusionment. Aum Shinrikyo's world-denying emphasis would facilitate a dependency relationship for renunciates on Asahara as a religious teacher.

Cultural transmission enabled Asahara to rapidly develop Aum Initiation. In only 11 years, he transformed the mesocosmic context of Aum Initiation from a small yoga group in the Tokyo suburb of Shibuya to become a broader, international, and more transpersonal vehicle for renunciates to achieve siddhis. This was a relatively short time period of experimental syncretism when compared with the longitudinal lineage-transmissions in more established

[414] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 110-114.

religious traditions. In contrast, Aum Initiation was more like an entrepreneurial start-up in terms of its fluidity and scalability.

Its short-term lifespan meant that Aum Initiation failed to mature into becoming a lineage-transmission tradition or a viable strategic subculture. As Chapters 1 and 2 have previously noted, this short time period is a challenge more generally for strategic culture research, whose selected case studies are often synchronic rather than diachronic in nature. When its world-denying focus and pursuit of siddhis faced communal opposition and rejection from outsiders, as Chapter 4 discussed, Aum Shinrikyo turned inward and increasingly embraced violence as a solution. This violence spanned both the 'limited' nuclear war fantasies that I have stylised as the Shambhala Plan in Chapter 5, and the isolation, self-sacrificial-like practices evident in Aum Initiation rituals.

Asahara's Shiva Experience and His Religious Mission as an Avatar

Shoko Asahara had an obsessive high conviction about his religious mission after encountering Shiva in 1985.[415] Prior to his Shiva experience, and during his wandering phase, Asahara lacked the conventional pathway to achieving educational attainment, career success, and social mobility. His wandering phase created the antecedent preferences that the Shiva experience would further crystallise—providing the historical and religious justification for Aum Initiation to take a world-destroying focus. Cultural transmission was thus the contextual background for Aum Shinrikyo's eventual terrorist violence.

Encountering Shiva magnetised Asahara and gave him a personal mission as a religious avatar. Aum Shinrikyo provided the meso-level structure for Asahara to facilitate this mission via the experiential, transpersonal vehicle of Aum Initiation. The deity yoga experience meant that violence existed in a latent, seed form during the 1984-86 genesis period, despite

[415] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 20.

more utopian impulses in the initiatory, religious sub-system. This obsessive high conviction enabled Asahara to convince the decision elite about his legitimacy as a religious teacher.

Himalaya experiences in 1986 reinforced these delusional beliefs despite the variant perceptions of the various religious teachers Asahara met: the result was failed recognition that expanded his narcissistic self-esteem. After 1990, Asahara became just as obsessive about creating Armageddon through biological and chemical weapons. Decision elite-led research focused on a cross-cultural and a cultic milieu understanding of how Armageddon might occur in the late 20th century as a strategic focal point. Although new information sources were integrated into this ongoing research agenda it had a predetermined end: to identify the preconditions for sparking a 'limited' nuclear war in 2003 that would cleanse Japan and enable Aum Shinrikyo to rule over its survivors (as outlined in Chapter 5). Cultural transmission facilitated this encultured (and revealed) preference for mobilised terrorist violence.

In addition to its economic base and human capital this fervent religious mission—and its culturally transmitted capabilities and resources—distinguished Aum Shinrikyo in the Japanese new religious marketplace. However, cultural transmission also enabled a much darker outcome to occur. After his Shiva experience, Asahara was able to import an existing, more violent cosmology and eschatology into the contemporary era. He did this outside an established lineage-transmission or teacher-student relationship that might have prevented this outcome. Aum Shinrikyo had no safeguards in its initiatory, religious sub-system to prevent mobilised terrorist violence.

Specific Initiatory Practices in Aum Shinrikyo

Aum Initiation had three main courses as part of its specific initiatory practices.[416] The 'yoga tantra course' was an expansion of Shoko Asahara's initial yogic teachings for the renunciate to gain mastery of body, emotions, and mind. The 'siddhi course' embedded cultic milieu interests in mystical, occult, and paranormal states into an Indo-Tibetan context of achieving siddhis or special powers. The advanced '*boddha* course' was for the renunciate to directly emulate Asahara as a religious teacher: success meant considerable personal advancement in Aum Shinrikyo.

The first two courses developed from Asahara's early initiatory experiences in Agonshu and the wandering, self-styled masseur phase of his personal initiatory search. The third developed from Asahara's later initiatory experiences, particularly in the Himalayas in 1986: he would seek to expand the resulting religious practices in Aum Shinrikyo from 1987 to 1991. This was done first in the initiatory, religious sub-system, and then attempted via a micro political party.

The following are some of the specific initiatory practices in Aum Shinrikyo:

The *Shaktipat* Initiation: this was adopted from Swami Muktananda, Swami Vivekenanda and other avatars in Kashmir Shaivite and Siddha yoga religious traditions, which use direct realisation. Shaktipat dealt with the awakening of *kundalini*, the chakra system, and subtle channels and winds (the last an esoteric aspect of the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana initiatory system). In this context, Shiva is interpreted as pure, grounded Consciousness. Shaktipat involves the transfer of (kundalini) energies between the guru teacher and his or her students.

[416] Apologetics Index, "Aum Shinrikyo." Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Apologetics Index, 2005, accessed 29th September 2019, http://www.apologeticsindex.org/a06.html.

It is thus based on an energetic model of cultural transmission that uses meditation, mantra, posture, breathing, and other forms.

The Perfect Salvation Initiation: this proto-Cyberpunk form of initiatory consciousness extended the Shaktipat Initiation's energetics to also include brainwaves and electromagnetic field activity in the human body. The Perfect Salvation Initiation reflected cultic milieu interests at the time in body energy fields and fringe science explanations. The Perfect Salvation Initiation involved the purported transfer of Asahara's brainwave patterns to renunciates.[417] It can be considered as a techno-cyberpunk form of achieving grace in the contemporary era—bringing Kashmir Shaivite and Tibetan Buddhis Vajrayana esoteric practices into a more contemporary and technological context.

The Christ Initiation: this was part of the boddha tradition in Aum Shinrikyo of the renunciates' fusion with the teacher. It used LSD and other hallucinogenic drugs to influence the renunciate about Asahara's status as a religious teacher.[418] This reflected cultic milieu and countercultural beliefs at the time, and Asahara's embrace of Christ Consciousness as an exalted, avatar-like state.

The Blood Initiation: Renunciates would drink Asahara's blood or bodily fluids in order to purportedly gain access to his religious essence.[419] This initiatory ritual can be considered as being based in folklore rather than in an ontological reality. It also illustrates schizotypal magical thinking or ideas of reference in Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system.

Aum Shinrikyo developed a range of other initiatory rituals that were idiosyncratic and improvisatory.[420] Aum Initiation rituals had two primary aims. The first was for the

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[417] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 70-71.
[418] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 91-93.
[419] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 36, 48.
[420] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 24-25.

renunciates to strip away their worldly attachments and their social conditioning. This meant an antinomian disavowal of their familial life, school and education experiences, career plans, and their antecedent experiences during their own wandering phase of initiatory experiences. With a clean slate, the renunciate could now focus on their (escalating) commitment to Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system, and to the states of tantric consciousness that Asahara promised them. This can be considered as an organisational survival strategy: others could carry out Asahara's religious mission if he was imprisoned or killed.

Aum Shinrikyo's Distortions of Hindu and Buddhist Practices

Aum Shinrikyo distorted the following Hindu and Buddhist practices:

Phowa: as noted previously, the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana practice (such as in the Kagyu lineage) involves the transfer of consciousness at the time of death through the roof of the head—either to a Buddha consciousness state or to another body. Asahara misinterpreted this esoteric tantric teaching as the right 'to poa' or to kill others—in order to facilitate the removal of the bad karma that had been built up during their lives that would prevent nirvana.[421] Asahara did so outside an established lineage-transmission of Phowa knowledge.

Shaktipat: As noted above Shaktipat energy transfer between guru and student is influential in Kashmir Shaivite and Siddha tantric yoga traditions—and so it continues to have a broader impact well beyond the gravitational pull that Aum Shinrikyo had.[422] Asahara existed outside the lineage-transmissions of these tantric yoga traditions.[423]

Aum Shinrikyo and Esoteric Buddhism: Although described by some sources as a Mahayanist Buddhist sect, the 'boddha course' suggests Asahara's attempts to synthesise

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[421] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 8, 43, 60, 66, 312.
[422] Swami Shankarananda, *Consciousness Is Everything: The Yoga of Kashmir Shaivism*. Mount Eliza, Australia: Shaktipat Publications, 2003.
[423] Christopher D. Wallis, *Tantra Illuminated: The Philosophy, History and Practice of a Timeless Tradition* (2nd ed.). (Petaluma, CA: Mattamayura Press, 2013).

esoteric practices from Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana and Phowa initiatory lineages—albeit outside their established lineage-transmission traditions. Asahara had not been initiated into these initiatory lineage-transmissions—such as during his 1986 visit to the Himalayas to meet with religious teachers—and so it is clear that he understood them in a fragmented, distorted way.[424] Asahara's earlier, wandering phase in Agonshu and in Japan's cultic milieu also reflected this.

Aum Shinrikyo and CM2: Social Learning

This section re-evaluates Aum Shinrikyo in the context of the second posited causal mechanism: the *social learning* involved primarily in Aum Initiation. Social learning has several key aspects: as a means of in-group stratification based on differential knowledge and initiatory experiences; and, importantly, as a status reproduction mechanism that reinforced the attachment-rank hierarchy between the decision elite and the renunciates. The latter aspect enabled the decision elite to preferentially hoard opportunities and resources.

Aum Shinrikyo organisationally had an internal structure that was an in-group, attachment-rank hierarchy. As noted in Chapter 4, this hierarchy was based on educational attainment and effectiveness in interpersonal skills; receptiveness to Asahara's desires and his specific initiatory teachings was also very important. Renunciates would be screened from the cultic milieu for interest in occult, mystical, and paranormal ideas that would then be layered into the initiatory, religious sub-system as personal siddhis and tantric consciousness states to be achieved. Asahara was a spiritual teacher in a guru-like context, so renunciates would be expected to copy and to emulate his initiatory beliefs and preferences.

[424] Kaplan and Marshall, *Cult At The End Of The World*, 15-18.

Its initiatory, religious sub-system meant that renunciates in Aum Shinrikyo were sorted through innate abilities and organisational effort into different categories. The initiatory, religious sub-system was originally conceptualised as a transpersonal way to copy Asahara in order to reach his goal of 30,000 renunciates: a way for the decision elite, the renunciates, and the followers to collectively achieve synchronisation. The Heisei Boom or economic bubble coincided with Aum Shinrikyo's utopian period (between 1984 and 1990), and fuelled Aum Shinrikyo's rapid, offshore expansion into Russia, South Korea, the United States, Australia, and other countries. Consequently, Aum Shinrikyo quickly became a cross-border religious institution beyond Japan.

To deal with this growth trajectory, renunciates were sorted into a low-cost labour pool for administrative, construction, media, and publishing activities. This lowered the transaction costs for Aum Shinrikyo's network of business interests and front companies that enabled the new religious movement to appear larger and more dynamic than its membership size really was. The low-cost labour pool provided both *labour power* (in terms of the time value of money) and the promise of *effort-reward over time* towards personal and collectively shared goals (the money value or the opportunity cost of affiliative time spent in Aum Shinrikyo).

On the surface the initiatory, religious sub-system was meant to prioritise personal agency. For critic Rei Kimura, the 'lived reality' of Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory practices were very different to their utopian, idealistic promise: they involved listening for hours to repetitive tape loops of Asahara's sermons in isolated cells; a poor diet that was not nutritious; hard and repetitive work for no salary; and the use of hallucinogenic drugs in specific rituals such as the Christ Initiation. These initiatory practices appear collectively to be broadly similar in methodology to Ewan Cameron's controversial 'psychic driving' experiments for behavioural modification and identity change conducted at McGill University's Allan Memorial Institute

between 1957 and 1964 for the Central Intelligence Agency's MKUltra research projects.[425] The cumulative results were to create dependency relationships on Asahara and the active subjugation of renunciates to Aum Shinrikyo's expansive goals.

Only those initiates who moved into senior positions of power learned of Aum Shinrikyo's covert research and development program into chemical and biological weapons. Compartmentalisation provided access controls to this elite and secret knowledge. Asahara used intensive lectures, seminars, interviews, and publications to psychologically condition, prime, and to prepare the renunciates for the high likelihood that Armageddon would occur by 1999 at the latest. As Asahara faced growing legal and journalist investigations, the 'apocalyptic' and the 'maximal rewrite' counterfactuals explored in Chapter 5 became more defensive: the religious teacher was threatened by a growing and networked coalition of enemies: the parents of renunciates, lawyers, and police and the judiciary. The polarisation increased Asahara's paranoia and his eventual retreat into paranoid psychosis.

For Asahara to survive, the renunciates would need to be mobilised to protect Aum Shinrikyo from its enemies. This meant that a crucial aspect of the initiatory, religious sub-system became the individual renunciate's receptiveness to the (enculturated) indoctrinability of Asahara's escalating demands. Social bonds enabled Asahara to form and to begin to circulate a counter-elite of renunciates who he hoped would seize and take over Japan's politico-military institutions once Armageddon had happened (an aspect of the Shambhala Plan as an organisational *telos* or strategic vision). A series of escalated commitments from the initial encounter and affiliation decision to sharing personal assets with Aum Shinrikyo

[425] Dominic Streatfeild, *Brainwash: The Secret History of Mind Control* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2006), 221-225.

made it harder for renunciates to leave Aum Shinrikyo or to criticise it, without suffering serious financial and personal consequences.

Initiatory progress in Aum Initiation had two primary avenues. The first way was flexibility with the cultic milieu to provide narratives and symbols that could be used to influence others. In this way, Aum Shinrikyo's expansion had parallels with the ways that some multi-level marketing companies work to recruit new members. The second way was via embodied mastery of its Indo-Tibetan derived knowledge base particularly the survival of Aum Initiation ritual ordeals. Such renunciates were promoted in Aum Shinrikyo to roles with greater preferential access to opportunity hoarding and resource allocation—embodying a counter-elite that Asahara hoped would rule Japan, in the near future.

Indoctrinability and Social Learning

Aum Shinrikyo established an organisational process that shaped how followers and renunciates perceived the teacher-student relationship: a more submissive stance where Asahara asserted his dominance, particularly during his sermons, which evolved into the later period Armageddon seminars. The key to this is the notion of *indoctrinability* in which an adherent adopts or is socialised into particular political, philosophical, or religious beliefs in a group context.[426] Indoctrinability may involve appeals to war, to defend civilizational blocs from enemies, or to protect and to proselytise for a particular belief system. In its earlier, formative period of 1984 to 1990 (discussed in Chapter 4), Aum Shinrikyo used indoctrinability to rapidly build a new religious organisation—about which Asahara had over-optimistic growth projections. In its later stages—as Asahara shifted to his Armageddon

[426] Albert Somit and Steven A. Peterson, *Darwinism, Dominance, and Democracy: The Biological Bases of Authoritarianism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), 4.

seminars—he then appealed more directly to Armageddon, eschatological and psycho-political anxieties.

Indoctrinability is also the key to why Aum Shinrikyo invested so much of its financial resources and workforce in Aum Publishing. This media infrastructure coincided with the growth of CNN and other international news networks in the early-to-mid 1990s, and the post-Gulf War climate of renewed public diplomacy. This media infrastructure attracted the attention and sensitised potential recruits to Aum Shinrikyo: it acted as an ecosystem around which the new religious movement could rapidly grow.

What its renunciates and followers encountered in Aum Shinrikyo was a meso-level organisational environment that Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Robert Tollison might have recognised: indoctrinability provided the belief system and the social class structure for economic and social rents to be extracted from susceptible believers who have come to accept the cultic milieu into which they have been socialised.[427] Aum Shinrikyo thus had a 'dual use' function as a new religious movement: (1) it provided a Japanese new religion for wandering seekers and for those who decided to commit to becoming renunciates; and (2) the new renunciates provided a captive workforce for extracted rents (including labour power) to flow upwards to Aum Shinrikyo's ruling decision elite, in a patronage sense.

As noted in Haruki Murakami's interviews of low-level and former Aum Shinrikyo members detailed in Chapter 4, some renunciates and followers initially came to Aum Shinrikyo with the past experience of psychosocial stressors (or priors). These varied regarding each individual's respective background and life experiences. When they committed to being a renunciate each follower engaged more with Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-

[427] Erik Olin Wright, ed., *Approaches to Class Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Erik Olin Wright, *Understanding Class* (New York: Verso Books, 2015).

system: about 3,000 renunciates did so over the organisational history of the new religious movement, from 1984 to 1995. A larger pool of followers interacted with Aum Shinrikyo more from a cultic milieu context (of paranormal and mystical beliefs about siddhis or special powers, and the initiatory role of spiritual teachers), and so had a more receptive, schizotypal-conducive background.

The renunciates endured ritual ordeals which when they worked resulted in more magnetised and harmonised personalities who advanced in Aum Shinrikyo and became more dominant in its attachment-rank hierarchy. Part of this indoctrinability was to emulate Asahara's attitudes, beliefs, norms, preferences, and values with the goal of achieving his Shiva or Christ-like consciousness. When these ritual ordeals failed, the renunciates became unharmonised and experienced stressors, which included persistent, dissociative states over extended time periods. Aum Shinrikyo did not appear to provide psychological services or referral for these stressors. These outcomes also illustrated the lack of safeguards in Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system for renunciates.

Elite Circulation and Social Stratification

Seiichi Endo, Hideo Murai, and others attempted to build a 'shadow' ministry in Aum Shinrikyo that mirrored the Japanese government's ministerial responsibilities. This organisational strategy also reflected the bureaucratic elites who influenced socioeconomic policies.[428] Whilst this may seem unusual it also mirrored the cultivation and placement of ex-officials from Japanese Government ministries into the public sector and private corporations.[429] Aum Shinrikyo's active recruitment of scientists from Japanese universities reflected this process in reverse: Asahara sought to gain specific science and technology

[428] Hudson, *Who Becomes A Terrorist*, 200.
[429] Richard A. Colignon and Chikako Usui, *Amakudari: The Hidden Fabric of Japan's Economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

expertise through science and technology-based knowledge transfer. However, as Chapter 4 previously noted, Seiichi Endo, Hideo Murai, and others did not have the necessary and sufficient scientific expertise to completely fulfil the aims and objectives of their covert and compartmentalised research program.

Aum Shinrikyo's organisational structure created two different and parallel cohorts of social stratification: (1) the senior leaders who hoarded opportunities, enjoyed preferential access to financial and material resources, and who knew of the new religious movement's long-term strategic objectives (the Shambhala Plan discussed previously in Chapters 4 and 5); and (2) the renunciates and the followers who were indoctrinated into a syncretic belief system and ritual practices, and who provided a low-cost workforce labour pool for construction, marketing, publishing, facilities management, and other activities. This social stratification mirrors the "closed multi-track model" of "lower track", "intermediate track", and "elite track" pathways that occurs in Japanese government bureaucracy.[430]

Ideational Sources, Cognitive Biases, and Tax Arbitrage

It is still unclear whether Shoko Asahara gave the direct order for the Tokyo subway sarin gas attack, or instead whether Hideo Murai and others independently acted on Asahara's beliefs in order to please him. A possible event history of the sarin gas attack from the perspective of the Tokyo subway commuter network would look very different to the existing literature on Aum Shinrikyo.[431] Katsuhisa Furukawa's doctoral dissertation examined several different models—rational actor, bounded rationality, groupthink, and group dynamics—reflecting the theory-building legacy of Martha Crenshaw, Herbert Simon, Irving Janis, Wilfred Bion and

[430] B.C. Koh, *Japan's Administrative Elite* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989), 125.
[431] Michael Fisch, *An Anthropology of the Machine: Tokyo's Commuter Train Network* (Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 2018).

other theorists.[432] Furukawa's research suggests that Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership engaged in group-based decision-making in an increasingly bounded context that was cut off from effective reality testing.

Seiichi Endo, Hideo Murai, and others got many of their ideas from anime and manga depictions of a post-apocalyptic Japanese society—rather than from the specialised scientific knowledge of chemical and biological weapons (CBW) development, in which they lacked expertise. This was a significant knowledge gap which meant that Endo and Murai, in particular, failed in their reality-testing of the knowledge base that they needed to have a successful research development program. This is a common limitation of non-state actors who attempt to develop their own chemical and biological weapons.[433]

This research program outcome suggests that the causal link between educational status in Japanese universities and Aum Shinrikyo's claimed scientific expertise to carry out CBW research was false. There is a further relatively unexplored implication to the interest of Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership in anime and manga. As the anthropologist and critical theorist David Graeber has observed, an interest in fantasy fiction and similar subcultures provides a way to psychologically cope with a strongly bureaucratised, neoliberal world.[434] Fantasy narratives in Aum Shinrikyo provided a psychological buffer against the harsh socio-economic realities of Japan's deflationary 'lost decades', from the early 1990s onwards.

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[432] Katsuhisa Furukawa, "Report on PhD Thesis Defence." Tokyo, Japan: National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), 1, accessed 1st November 2019, https://grips.repo.nii.ac.jp/?action=pages_view_main&active_action=repository_view_main_item_detail&item_id=558&item_no=1&page_id=13&block_id=24.
[433] Ouagrham-Gormley, *Barriers To Bioweapons*, 4.
[434] David Graeber *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity, and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy* (Brooklyn, NY: Mellville House Publishing, 2015), 183-189.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government gave Aum Shinrikyo tax-exempt status as a religious corporation in August 1989.[435] This enabled Asahara to shift his new religious organisation from self-financing via a low-cost labour pool to donor-based financing via asset donations. Aum Shinrikyo began a rapid expansion of information technology and real estate portfolios, and cross-border interests. This was a similar organisational outcome to the Church of Scientology's successful campaign for tax-exempt status in the United States, despite ongoing tensions with the Internal Revenue Service.[436] More broadly, tax arbitrage is increasingly a self-financing strategy for religious corporations and institutions, and a tax shelter strategy for religious adherents.[437]

The Wandering Phase of Initiation 2: Shoko Asahara and Social Mobility

Due to childhood disability, Shoko Asahara grew up outside the sociocultural context of mainstream Japanese society. He aspired in childhood to be Prime Minister but failed to enter university.[438] Instead, what he discovered whilst in Agonshu and when forming Aum Shinrikyo in 1984 was that there was a receptive marketplace for religious entrepreneurs who could provide answers to the anomie that seekers after truth felt. Their attention would legitimate Asahara as a teacher. This in turn would enable Asahara to ask for their assets thus building Aum Shinrikyo's economic and material base.

This dynamic created an accelerating 'flywheel' effect[439] in Aum Shinriikyo that would enable more research, lead to more marketing and media, attract more followers and

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[435] Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. "III: Background of the Cult," *Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on Aum Shinrikyo* (Washington DC: United States Government, 1995), accessed 29th September 2019, https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/part03.htm.
[436] Wright, *Going Clear*.
[437] Samuel D. Brunson, *God and the IRS: Accommodating Religious Practice in United States Tax Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[438] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 15.
[439] Jim Collins, *Good To Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap . . . and Others Don't* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 182-184.

renunciates, and create more asset inflows. Aum Shinrikyo was thus the vehicle for Asahara's social mobility and his status attainment as a now revered religious teacher—and for the financialisation of the initiatory, religious sub-system.

Aum Shinrikyo and CM3: Folklore

This section re-evaluates Aum Shinrikyo in the context of the third posited causal mechanism: the (cultic milieu) folklore as a type of information that contextualised and shaped Aum Initiation. Folklore had multiple pragmatic functions within Aum Shinrikyo. It provided an information filter between the various stratified in-groups between the decision elite and the renunciates. It provided a narrative that the decision elite used to justify Shoko Asahara's status of being an elite spiritual teacher—including after the terrorist attacks that led to the sudden end of Aum Shinrikyo's post-1990 apocalyptic, dystopian period. It resituated the culturally transmitted knowledge base within Japan's cultic milieu about paranormal and special powers, and in the trans-national flows of conspiracy theory and rumour subcultures, which echoed similar aspirational religious currents in the evangelical Christian communities in the United States.[440]

Folklore provided Aum Shinrikyo with an informational way to position itself compared with competing new religious movements. The first way to achieve this goal was to reframe cultic milieu discourses and symbols in terms of the specific siddhis that Aum Initiation would create as observable benefits and outcomes for its renunciates. Since the initiatory practices in Aum Initiation were addictive and intensive in nature the folklore information provided a parallel way to the social bonds of social learning to escalate the renunciates' commitment, and to strongly bind them to the new religious movement. The key way to achieve this was to

[440] Tsuji Ryutaro, "The Role of Conspiracy Theories in the Aum Shinrikyo Incident," in Asbjørn Dyrendal, David G. Robertson, and Egil Asprem, eds., *Handbook of Conspiracy Theory and Contemporary Religions* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2019), 394.

use the antecedent or prior psychosocial vulnerabilities of renunciates (such as if they had cultic milieu experiences prior to affiliating with Aum Shinrikyo that reinforced schizotypal patterns of behaviour and thinking) and to destroy their capacity for effective reality testing (by immersive rituals, lectures, seminars, and other group experiences that implanted or strengthened irrational ideas and emotions).

In this sense, folklore provided a gatekeeping mechanism in Aum Shinrikyo to help 'sort' renunciates into the different groups of low-cost labour pool, intensive and isolation-like practice, or as a potential candidate for mid-level organisational functions. The self-styled seeker who encountered Aum Shinrikyo projected their wishes, dreams, and desires onto the new religious movement. Folklore held this idealised period via the promise of spiritual enlightenment and greater self-agency. Aum Shinrikyo did this through several means: media campaigns that used cultic milieu, anime and manga imagery; more complex resource allocation such as the Bhajaran station site in Western Australia that was accessible only to the decision elite; and a reliance on computer and technology stores in Japan to raise money for covert biological and chemical weapons experimentation.

Folklore also allowed Aum Shinrikyo to penetrate and to operate in the cultic milieu whilst also simultaneously being distinct from it, and through its evolving trans-national networks, to access similar cultural undergrounds in other countries. This ability gave Aum Shinrikyo an ideological fluidity in terms of the rituals, symbols, and practices with which it experimented, that other Japanese new religions did not have to the same extent. However, this experimental syncretism may have also undermined its ability for the rational tradition of doctrinal strategic thought about the use of force that a viable strategic subculture has.

Aum Shinrikyo had the decision elite as a core nucleus but its infiltration of Japan's cultic milieu meant that it likely had a larger community of support as well in the consumers of the

new religious movement's media and publishing activities. When a potential follower made the affiliation decision to join Aum Shinrikyo—and often to transfer their personal assets—this escalated their commitment to the initiatory, religious sub-system at the expense of alternatives and other competing organisations. Thus, the new religious movement had different gradations of in-group and out-group relationships—which social learning also mediated—and with differential access to and understanding of the culturally transmitted knowledge base of religious beliefs, rituals, and practices. Material and symbolic rewards could be promised for which the renunciates would seek to condition themselves in order to receive them.

This informational and organisational structure meant that it was easier for Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership to create a 'dual use' organisation for threat finance purposes. The Shambhala Plan explored in Chapter 5 could remain nebulous: visible first through apocalyptic narratives and symbols, when in fact it existed as a compartmentalised reality that the mid-level and low-level renunciates did not see. Folklore thus mediated the cultic milieu as a source for fantasies in which the Shambhala Plan and its planned Lotus Villages could gradually take shape, via the meso-level priming environment that the new religious movement provided. But the Shambhala Plan could also remain nebulous because its function was as an apocalyptic counterfactual scenario to the present reality: Shoko Asahara's growing paranoia after 1990 would shift to a preference for terrorist violence.

Folklore and the Cultic Milieu

This section discusses the feedback loop between Japan's cultic milieu and Aum Shinrikyo's folklore. As noted, Asahara had a wandering phase during which he cobbled together insights from his experiences in Agonshu and from Japan's cultic milieu to create a personal synthesis as a yoga teacher. Asahara did not pursue university education: he thus lacked important skills for peer review, communal verification, and the scholarly sources for the Indo-Tibetan

lineage-transmissions in which he was interested. As Chapter 5 noted, Asahara existed outside an established lineage-transmission tradition. Thus, Asahara turned in part to the cultic milieu and to the narrative power of folklore in order to recruit new followers and thus reach his goal of 30,000 renunciates.

Asahara focused on the cultic milieu in order to attract followers who would become renunciates. The decision elite sought also to discover the pseudo-science underpinning siddhi states and special powers such as levitation, telekinesis, and telepathy. This was done in the context of a new religious movement rather than the research protocols of a scientific laboratory. Since Aum Shinrikyo was founded on what became fraudulent ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological principles, this intrinsic falseness in turn affected the prospects for personal advancement in the initiatory, religious sub-system. Advancement occurred primarily due to endurance of experiential, ritualised ordeals and the dominance of magnetised, strong personalities. This goal contributed to destroying effective reality testing in Aum Shinrikyo. It foreclosed off non-violent counterfactuals from occurring, such as the Perfect Salvation Initiation headset's potential commercialisation. Consequently, Aum Initiation also relied more on cultic milieu folklore far more than competing new religious movements like Agonshu did.

A Leadership Explanation: Shoko Asahara's Paranoid Delusional System

This section advances a leadership-based explanation of Aum Shinrikyo's failure, as noted in Chapter 4, to develop a viable strategic subculture. I agree with psychiatrist Lifton's diagnosis of "functional paranoid megalomania" which in contemporary diagnostic criteria means a grandiose, paranoid delusional system of Self and its relation to others. Lifton's description of functional paranoid megalomania is a fusion of narcissistic and paranoid

personality disorders. In an interview with the Buddhist *Tricycle* Magazine, Lifton described Asahara and the senior leadership in Aum Shinrikyo as having a "shared grandiosity."[441]

Asahara may have had an untreated personality disorder that could have evolved from a possible childhood pathogenesis into a paranoid, delusional system. Reflecting on Lifton's psychiatric diagnosis, and on Asahara's subsequent erratic behaviour during his lengthy court trial in Japan, the psychologist Daniel Shaw described Aum Shinrikyo's religious leader as having "florid schizophrenia."[442] Alistair Munro, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, noted that paranoid schizophrenics have "persecutory delusions … hallucinations … related to the predominant delusional themes … and there is a tendency for the patient to act out his anger and agitation with violence."[443]

This psychiatric diagnosis might also explain that Asahara was likely susceptible to schizotypal thinking during his wandering phase of interest with the cultic milieu, and in particular to the folklore around the mystic Nostradamus, the inventor Nikola Tesla, and anti-Semitic conspiracy theories about purported power elites, which had previously arisen in Europe.[444] Asahara's subsequent conflicts with rural commune neighbours, parent groups, lawyers, and the Japanese judicial system would have increased his sense of feeling threatened, and thus his willingness to use violence as a solution to his mounting problems.[445]

Aum Shinrikyo also provided a deeper, religious context for Asahara's paranoid personality disorder to develop into paranoid psychosis. The financialisation of its initiatory, religious

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[441] Tricycle, 'From Mysticism To Murder', *Tricycle* (Winter), 1997, https://tricycle.org/magazine/from-mysticism-to-murder/
[442] Daniel Shaw, *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 41.
[443] Alistair Munro, *Delusional Disorder: Paranoia and Related Illnesses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 162-163.
[444] Paul Hanebrink. *A Specter Haunting Europe: The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[445] Martin Kantor, *Understanding Paranoia: A Guide for Professionals, Families, and Sufferers* (Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 87.

sub-system through asset donations to the Shambhala Plan meant that Asahara and his decision elite could investigate folklore aspects (such as Nostradamus and Tesla), and anime and manga popular Japanese culture (*Space Battleship Yamato*) as potential technologies that Aum Shinrikyo could entrepreneurially develop and commercialise. Yet because these potential technologies were based on folklore and popular Japanese culture they did not have the same ontological reality as the covert biological and chemical weapons experimentation that Aum Shinrikyo also sought to investigate. The disjuncture between the folklore and the technological ontologies became apparent at the Banjawarn Station in Western Australia, when Aum Shinrikyo attempted experimentation, which led to subsequent, speculative, and folklore-influenced media narratives about the new religious movement.[446]

Asahara's trajectory as a religious teacher offers a darkly cautionary tale of how a possibly untreated paranoid personality disorder can develop over the lifespan. He embraced schizotypal thinking about early Buddhism and Kashmir Shaivite practices during his wandering period from 1978 to 1981. His time in Agonshu from 1981 to 1984 meant that Asahara did not fully engage with deeper, structured religious practices but instead left to pursue an independent trajectory. The Shiva experience in 1985 constellated his personality around a wrathful deity. His Himalaya trip in 1986 and meeting with the Dalai Lama enabled Asahara to claim exalted meditative states and a religious mission that would often come instead from years more of immersive practice.

This meant that Asahara had delusionary and overvalued ideas about his achievements and status as a religious teacher. He claimed to be an exalted spiritual teacher too early, especially when compared with more established lineage-transmissions. His primary delusion was that

[446] Jake Hanrahan, "From Tesla to Asahara: One Japanese Death Cult's Insane Attempt to Split the World in Two," *Vice* Motherboard, October 19th, 2012, accessed 2nd November 2019, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/4xx8vd/deathray.

he would be able to liberate humanity—a grandiose variant on his childhood dream to become Japan's Prime Minister. The Shambhala Plan was likewise also grandiose and overambitious: a network of commune-like Lotus Villages (in its 1986-90 utopian phase), and then survival after a 'limited' nuclear war (in its 1990-95 dystopian phase).

The 1989 murder of lawyer Tsutsumi Sakamoto and his family, and the 1990 election loss for the Diet campaign were dual shocks to Aum Shinrikyo. Consequently, Asahara further retreated from direct engagement with mainstream Japanese society. He began to develop symptoms more like paranoid psychosis: becoming obsessed with conspiracy rumours about Jews and Freemasons, giving more apocalyptic and persecutory themed sermons, and identifying himself as a religious teacher with Jesus Christ. Aum Shinrikyo became increasingly militant by manufacturing guns and acquiring Russian military weapons.[447]

The decision elite was also part of this paranoid delusional system in Aum Shinrikyo. They did not form a therapeutic alliance with Asahara to mitigate his symptoms of paranoia; instead, they reinforced the paranoid delusional system in which he became embedded.[448] He in turn reinforced their individual delusions and their ability to enact large-scale violence on his behalf, whist his own paranoia remained untreated—closely fitting a scenario that psychiatrist Martin Kantor warns about where paranoid personality disorder sufferers may become violent.[449] Consequently, there was no reality testing mechanism in Aum Initiation for developing alternative beliefs or for disconfirming adopted beliefs. Instead, there was

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[447] Philipp C. Bleek, 'Revisiting Aum Shinrikyo: New Insights into the Most Extensive Non-State Biological Weapons Program to Date' (Washington DC: Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2011), accessed 14th April 2020, https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/revisiting-aum-shinrikyo-new-insights-most-extensive-non-state-biological-weapons-program-date-1/.
[448] Anthony Stevens and John Price, *Prophets, Cults and Madness* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2000), Loc 929 (Kindle edition).
[449] Kantor, *Understanding Paranoia*, 83.

paranoid delusion maintenance that reinforced a confirmation bias that the Shambhala Plan outlined in Chapter 5 would be possible and ultimately successful.

As it matured Aum Shinrikyo's initiatory, religious sub-system functioned as an attachment-rank hierarchy. As explored in Chapter 5 this was a form of social stratification along elite, initiatory lines. Its renunciates facilitated this attachment-rank hierarchy via their affiliation decision and by their attempts to personally advance in Aum Shinrikyo via the ritual ordeals. In contrast, Asahara appears to have existed in a borderline state to the attachment-rank hierarchy in which his anger and his grandiose, narcissistic visions cemented his status as the primary religious teacher in Aum Shinrikyo, and dissuaded potential rivals.

The decision elite functioned as a buffer between the attachment-rank hierarchy (since they advanced in Aum Shinrikyo due to specific expertise or personal charisma), Asahara's borderline states and guru status, and the more fluid, dynamical cultic milieu. This enabled Asahara to reach a far broader audience—both in Japan and internationally—than he would have as a solo, small-scale religious teacher. This outcome illustrates that Aum Shinrikyo had some but not all of the elements for a viable strategic subculture: it focused primarily on media, cross-border, and offshore expansion for organisational growth.

After 1990, Asahara retreated more into a paranoid personality disorder narrative of being a persecuted religious teacher. Aum Publishing shifted its focus to the Japanese Government's perceived military build-up. Asahara became more fearful of authorities, particularly with the Matsumoto sarin gas attack that Aum Shinrikyo orchestrated on 27th June 1994. This escalating situation led Asahara into likely paranoid psychosis and delusional groupthink.

A Group Cohort Explanation: Elite Deviance in Aum Shinrikyo

This core institutional logic of rent-seeking and wealth extraction places Aum Shinrikyo in the larger case universe of elite deviance and white collar crime: a broader understanding than just being a terrorist organisation. In their evolutionary psychology-informed study of schizotypal prophet-led cults the psychiatrists Anthony Stevens and John Price observe that Shoko Asahara benefited from a luxurious lifestyle that his renunciate followers lacked, which included "private quarters", "a bath large enough to accommodate ten people" and "entertaining young ladies from the cult's 'Dance Department'."[450] Although this may seem bizarre in a 'crazy wisdom'-led new religious movement, it may be better understood as a form of aspirational, Weberian 'opportunity hoarding' that is not unique to new religious movements like Aum Shinrikyo. For example, the Brookings Institution policymaker Richard Reeves has noted 'opportunity hoarding' also occurs in United States-based upper middle class families, regarding the preferential access to education opportunities and suburban land zoning.[451] What connects the two divergent examples is a form of social stratification in which status attainment is the ultimate personal goal.

These observations indicate that as Aum Shinrikyo evolved organisationally it became a mesocosm for elite deviance by its decision elite or senior leadership—albeit in a religious corporation rather than a corporate or a political context.[452] The organisational architecture that Aum Shinrikyo developed—asset expropriation, front companies, covering up formal complaints and harm, and the murder of a lawyer and renunciates—also reflects some of the forensic behavioural and the causal mechanisms of how white-collar crime works.[453] This

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[450] Stevens and Price, *Prophets, Cults and Madness*, Loc 296 (Kindle edition).
[451] Richard Reeves, *Dream Hoarders: How the American Upper Middle Class Is Leaving Everyone Else in the Dust, Why That Is a Problem, and What to Do About It* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2017).
[452] David R. Simon, *Elite Deviance* (11th ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2011).
[453] Eugene Soltes, *Why They Do It: Inside the Mind of the White-Collar Criminal* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016).

organisational architecture enabled Aum Shinrikyo's leadership to extract economic rents from its renunciates, followers, and from other sympathetic donors, whilst simultaneously hiding its misdeeds.

Aum Shinrikyo's attempt to create a viable strategic subculture had a 'dual use' purpose: (1) to protect the new religious movement from its ever-growing list of external critics, and (2) to ensure that its senior leadership maintained its positional power base with preferential access to financial and material resources. Cultivating sarin gas would enable the covert disposal of critics and also would shift attention elsewhere, such as to the Japanese domestic fear of foreign interference. Maintaining a syncretic religious ideology would provide the "psychological control" mechanisms and practices[454] for Aum Shinrikyo's senior leadership to indoctrinate the renunciates and followers—and to hide key facts and omit vital information from them about the elite deviance that was actually unfolding within the organisation. One of the micro-foundations of this was the information asymmetries that existed between what the senior leadership knew and when, and how the renunciates and followers perceived the same circumstances.

This case universe link between Aum Shinrikyo and the forensic behavioural mechanisms of white-collar crime becomes clearer when the religious cult is compared to other high profile cases. Asahara engaged in fraudulent activity as a young masseur.[455] This behaviour later continued in Aum Shinrikyo via the faking of levitation photos for *Twilight Zone* Magazine and other publications, and in Aum Shinrikyo-funded, fee-paying hospitals that did not conduct appropriate or safe medical procedures. Aum Shinrikyo functioned as the religious corporation equivalent of a 'long firm' fraud: building a reputation on the basis of Asahara's

[454] Michael A. Aquino, *MindWar* (rev. ed.) (San Francisco, CA: Barony of Rachane, 2016).
[455] Lifton, *Destroying The World*, 17.

charismatic leadership and media interviews, and then using this to seize renunciates' assets before 'defaulting' in 1995.[456]

The Risk of Ideas Capture in Terrorist Organisations

In Chapter 1, I discussed how a terrorist organisation involves a decision elite (or subcultural elite) and can recruit tactical violence operatives who carry out the operational aspects of a terrorist campaign. In this section, I discuss a new proposition: how subcultural elites who seek mobilisational counter-power capabilities (whether terrorist or not) may become captured by specific political, religious, or philosophical ideas. Decision or subcultural elites may be particularly vulnerable to this outcome if there is strong in-group belief and little or no constructive dissent or exploration of alternative viewpoints. The pivotal case for this ideas capture is Nazi Germany's ideological experiences prior to and during World War II.[457]

The three posited causal mechanisms (defined in Chapter 3) also suggest further potential explanations for terrorist organisational failure that are revealed through the theory-building approach to process tracing. *Cultural transmission* means that a senior leadership can become hostage to past ideologies: Aum Shinrikyo's pathway into violence (discussed in Chapter 4) echoed the militant, earlier periods of Hindu and Buddhist Vajrayana religions.[458] *Social learning* means a 'small world' group can convince itself of extremist, militant beliefs: the senior leadership existed in an isolated world of its own—a pre-internet echo chamber and filter bubble that reinforced its cognitive biases and decision heuristics. *Folklore* stories, symbols, and narratives can replace or undermine effective reality-testing in a 'small world'

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[456] Daniel Davies, *Lying For Money: How Legendary Frauds Reveal the Workings of the World* (New York: Profile Trade, 2018), 21.
[457] Johann Chapoutot, *The Law of the Blood: Thinking And Acting As A Nazi* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[458] Jacob P. Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).

group: the direct feedback loop from Japanese culture and media into the senior leadership's mindset highlights this particular danger. Each of these three posited causal mechanisms underpins the indoctrinability of Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates and followers during Asahara's leadership period.

Combining these three posited causal mechanisms leads to a cognitive process in which subcultural elites who seek mobilisational counter-power (such as against a nation-state's existing government or socio-economic and oligarchical elites) may instead be captured by specific political, religious, or philosophical ideas. This outcome can occur in a legitimation process of attempted counter-elite circulation, mobilisation, or replacement. This observable phenomena has also occurred with Aum Shinrikyo's successor organisations and with the 'neo-Aum' subculture in Japan. Aleph, Hikari no Wa, and other successor organisations now mean that Aum Shinrikyo and Shoko Asahara's religious vision will continue to survive and mutate into new ideological forms: an illustration of cultural transmission that lies beyond an individual life and that takes on a more mutational form over time.

Aleph's 'cult of personality' about Asahara, for example, is a function of guru-like systems: the resulting 'Aumer' subculture in Japan (a phrase coined by independent researcher Sarah Hightower)[459] has parallels in how the Elizabethan magus John Dee, Thelema promulgator Aleister Crowley, and Dianetics and Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard have each left distinct subcultural legacies in Western esotericism.[460] Social learning and folklore provide experiences, myths, symbols, and narratives that bind the renunciates and followers to Aum's deviant, decision elite, which over time consolidated its material, positional, and reputational power. These two causal mechanisms both illustrated in Aum Shinrikyo the interaction of the

[459] Sarah Hightower. 'Aum Shinrikyo VEVO 2020.' Twitter, accessed 7th August 2019, https://twitter.com/nezumi_ningen/

[460] Jason Louv, *John Dee and the Empire of Angels: Enochian Magick and the Occult Roots of the Modern World* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2018).

organisational structure with the susceptibilities or vulnerabilities of the renunciates and followers. This means that over time the renunciates and followers came to accept the validity of Asahara's teacher status due to his *Kalacakra* Tantra knowledge (cultural transmission), that they felt part of the organisation and felt unable to leave (social learning), and that the organisation's myths, stories, and narratives had influential and motivational power in their lives (folklore). The result of these interacting causal mechanisms was a kind of self-selection for escalated commitment and greater indoctrinability in the renunciates.

An effective strategic subculture thus enables a core belief system or ideology to survive beyond specific individuals and also beyond the lifespan of its founders. In its original formulation this related to defence and politico-military institutions that had the state-based authority to use and to mobilise force—often reflecting a national 'way of war'. Aum Shinrikyo's growing extremist militarisation via Asahara's Armageddon Seminar has its echoes in the role that Shinto played in building support for Japanese nationalism, and their armed forces in the build-up to World War II. Likewise, its interest in chemical and biological weapons meant Aum Shinrikyo was the possible contemporary heir to the Imperial Japanese Army's Unit 731, which was active from 1935 to 1945 in Harbin, China.[461] Viewing Aum Shinrikyo in this analogical, historical context highlights that there are precursors in Japanese history about the potential roles that extremist and militant religious forms can play in the psychological build-up to and decision to use force, albeit in a war mobilisation rather than a terrorism context.

[461] Barenblatt, *A Plague Upon Humanity*.

Conclusion

This chapter has continued the process tracing analysis defined in Chapter 3 to examine three posited causal mechanisms in Aum Shinrikyo. Cultural transmission consolidated Shoko Asahara's religious teacher identity, from his wandering phase of initiatory work to his religious mission to liberate humanity. Social learning facilitated the indoctrinability of followers and renunciates to carry out this religious mission on Asahara's behalf. Folklore provided a gatekeeping mechanism with the cultic milieu: Asahara lacked the experiential initiation that he would have had either in Agonshu or in a lineage-transmission tradition.

It is possible to combine these three posited causal mechanisms into a broader, generalisable meta-model. Cultural transmission creates a more longitudinal *knowledge base* in terms of ontology, epistemology, metaphysics, and praxis. Social learning creates a *network topology* between bonded individuals and small group cohorts. Folklore creates an *information vector* in terms of shared stories, symbols, and narratives. This meta-model could potentially integrate the strategic culture theory-building in Chapters 1 and 2 with contemporary information theory. It could be applied to other terrorist organisations, and to broader phenomena such as rumours, conspiracy theories, political risk events, and the information revelation processes involved with discovering trade secrets.

Aum Shinrikyo's knowledge base involved a personal synthesis of Asahara's initiatory experiences, his personal studies, and an improvisatory approach to folklore, trends, and symbols in the cultic milieu. Asahara's personal interpretation of Kashmir Shaivite and Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana (including Phowa) practices was highly idiosyncratic—and thus more destructive to the renunciates who adopted them. The decision elite functioned as a 'small world' network that was a node for 3,000 renunciates, and a broader network of

followers. Aum Shinrikyo used Aum Publishing and its other media in a projective way to create its own information vectors in order to reach a cross-border, international audience.

Asahara interpreted his personal *yidam* deity Shiva as a cosmological, divine power in the universe. His religious mission took a variation on the Buddhist vow to liberate humanity: after 1990, Asahara decided to do this by becoming more Shiva-like and embodying wrathful destruction. Yet this Armageddon war contagion was only meant to be a transitional stage to an eventual, more utopian future. Asahara's original aim to dispel negativities and to help his renunciates to accumulate merit turned into a misapplication of Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana action and textual tantras.

The path dependent trajectory of Aum Shinrikyo into embracing terrorist violence (as outlined in Chapter 4) highlights several important and significant dangers on the Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana path. Asahara had observable psychological disturbances from childhood and an untreated possible paranoid personality disorder that evolved into paranoid psychosis. Aum Shinrikyo's renunciates were attached to Asahara's delusions rather than omniscience: a guru yoga devotion to the teacher despite signs of his impurities and weaknesses. Aum Shinrikyo harmed others, and this eventually destabilised the broader practitioner community of renunciates within it. Finally, Asahara mixed his limited understanding of authentic teachings from Kashmir Shaivite and Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana sources with non-Tantric teachings from cultic milieu, popular culture, and folklore sources. This experimental syncretism did not embody a lineage-transmission teaching.

Chapter 7 integrates the preceding data, analytical, and results chapters conclusions about the possible existence strategic culture and meso-level strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. I address four specific new contributions that strategic subcultures theory can make to terrorism studies and to the broader sociological imagination about terrorist cells,

groups, networks, and organisations. I revisit Chapter 3's process tracing and the new tests for identifying viable strategic subcultures. I also consider future research and a potential policy synthesis for cross-domain coercion to deter terrorist organisations.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Introduction

Aum Shinrikyo compartmentalised a covert research and development program into chemical and biological weapons. They also attempted to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities. This hidden strategic priority differed from the new religious movement's Hindu and Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism-influenced media and public image. Aum Shinrikyo's initially successful terrorist campaign led to Japanese, United States, and international counter-responses that disrupted and degraded its senior leadership's survivability.

Aum Shinrikyo was motivated by millenarian prophetic religious currents in Japan, and also from cultural-psychological exposure to similar currents in Russia and the United States. Their resulting core ideological worldview offer possible empirical evidence for the 'new terrorism' emphasis on religiously motivated terrorism as a new form of extremist, militant, terrorist violence, discussed in Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6. In Chapter 2's literature review, I summarised the relevant research findings from fourth generation strategic culture and terrorism studies, which can be further decomposed into two key aspects: (1) a cumulative and unfolding *belief adoption process* that may have a transcendental dimension of meaning-making for receptive individuals and that may function cognitively as a bounded rationality; and (2) a *decision preference for violence* over ranked ordered alternatives, and a subsequent *willingness to act on this decision preference* by enculturated tactical violence operatives.

Counterterrorism has in the past dealt with these two key aspects in a range of ways. Countering violent extremism and deradicalisation programs have attempted to deal with

violent beliefs and schemas. The social anthropologist Scott Atran[462] and political scientist Marc Sageman[463] have each focused on the critical role of social bonds that recalls the "mutual conversion" dynamic found in some cults and teenage gangs.[464] A separate strand of terrorism studies research has focused on the role of economic incentives such as the possible niches for new terrorist groups in extra-state regions.[465] Attempts to deal with the decision preference for violence include denial and degrade counterterrorism operations against terrorist groups; the revival of Cold War nuclear deterrence theory now applied to terrorism; and targeted drone strikes.[466] These strategies involve substantive research programs in terrorism studies and counterterrorism policymaking.

Aum Shinrikyo challenges these research insights from terrorism studies in several ways. Aum Shinrikyo openly courted influential religious studies academics like J. Gordon Melton who were sympathetic to its existence, and who were given supervised tours of the religious corporation's facilities, in order to write favourable research that would shift the public's attention from the investigative lawyers, journalists, and police who also investigated it. Aum Shinrikyo shifted from a failed attempt to run a political election campaign in 1990 for Shoko Asahara to approaching Russian scientists in a failed attempt to acquire nuclear and radiological weapons. Aum Shinrikyo validates some aspects of ongoing terrorism studies research whilst also revealing puzzles that are still to be fully addressed in the available English language literature to date.

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[462] Scott Atran, *Talking To The Enemy: Violent Extremism, Sacred Values, and What It Means To Be Human* (New York: Allen Lane, 2010).
[463] Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism*; Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*.
[464] William Sims Bainbridge and Rodney Stark, "Cult Formation: Three Compatible Models," *Sociology of Religion* 40, no. 4 (1979), 291.
[465] Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2009); Alan B. Krueger, *What Makes A Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism – 10th Anniversary Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[466] Alex S. Wilner, *Deterring Rational Fanatics* (Philadelphia, PA: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Andreas Winger and Alex S. Wilner, *Deterring Terrorism: Theory and Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

The Contribution of Strategic Subcultures Theory on Terrorist Organisations

Strategic subcultures theory outlined in Chapter 1 addresses how Aum Shinrikyo grew rapidly. Aum Shinrikyo articulated a *telos* or organisational purpose that attracted followers based in part on Shoko Asahara's guru-like charisma. What Aum Shinrikyo did as it grew rapidly was to develop an initiatory/religious sub-system that formalised Asahara's knowledge of Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism in particular into an experiential system of semi-controlled initiations and religious experiences that renunciates underwent. The 'legend-making' folklore surrounding Asahara created high emotional salience for followers. This was strengthened also via personal encounters with charismatic leaders that often left an indelible impression on the renunciates. Aum Shinrikyo's Poa doctrine aimed to kill enemies and unbelievers (which included Jews, Freemasons, and the United States).

Contribution 1: The Legend-Making of Terrorist Organisation Leaders

The 'legend-making' of a terrorist organisation founder or a charismatic leader provides a way to transform the friction of combat and war experience into an influential folklore narrative for in-group cultural transmission. This legend-making may also involve rumours and stories about the founder, the leader and the decision elite. The legend-making surrounding Aum Shinrikyo's Shoko Asahara provides an emotional salience and combination of conformity, and facilitated the copying and modelling of successful renunciates in the organisation's initiatory, religious hierarchy, as discussed in Chapter 6.[467] In-group conformity means the effective transmission from the decision elite to followers: it also may mean asset expropriation and transfer of followers' resources to the decision elite as part of capital accumulation strategies. Emotional salience can attract new recruits and enables the terrorist organisation to grow—despite the near-term success of drone and

[467] Hoppitt and Laland, *Social Learning*, 202.

leadership decapitation strategies. The legend-making phenomenon provides some limited validation of the cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore mechanisms that I posited in Chapter 3. However, further research on this legend-making phenomenon is needed in counterterrorism research.

Contribution 2: Explaining the Development Conditions of Strategic Subcultures in Terrorist Organisations

Chapter 1 developed a new model of strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations. Chapter 3 specified some of the specific criteria, tests, levels, and observations that counterterrorism analysts can use to discover the plausible existence of strategic subcultures. Group and organisational processes can influence terrorists beyond the incentives approach that rational choice theories emphasise. A strategic subculture enables a terrorist group to persist and survive via the regeneration of its decision elite, and the recruitment of new followers who may become tactical violence operatives. This includes the revival of beliefs, ideas, norms, and social practices that existed in earlier historical time periods and from different geographic locations.

A viable strategic subculture provides a theory, praxis, and the organisational capability of mobilisational counter-power for a terrorist organisation to better specify and to achieve long-term victory over its enemies. These aspects were evident in the first generation of strategic culture theorists discussed in Chapter 1: the influence of historical and collectively shared experiences (Jack Snyder), the possible ethnocentrism and analytic misjudgements of enemies (Ken Booth), and the importance of strategic thinking to formulating and then implementing a theory of victory over an adversary (Colin S. Gray). The new midrange theory of strategic subcultures defined in Chapter 1 and discussed further in Chapter 2's literature review integrates ideational roots, strategic thinking, and organisational capabilities from the terrorist organisation's internal perspective.

A viable strategic subculture gives a terrorist organisation an antifragile quality enabling it to harness the disruption, disorder, and volatility from successful terrorist attacks in order to cumulatively grow.[468] The terrorist organisation has a nonlinear growth curve in which the terrorist group has strategic gains that surprise other strategic actors. It has asymmetric, mobilisational counter-power against existing nation-states (which may attempt to use coercive deterrence), and it is also able to either dominate, form alliances with, or to take-over other terrorist groups. At least in its early stages, the terrorist organisation's leaders may have more optionality in terms of strategy formulation, and the specific terrorist campaign that it wages. Such optionality or alternative, branching choices may be counterfactuals that the terrorist organisation could have undertaken. These antifragile qualities give some terrorist organisation a similar J-curve growth pattern early on in their history to the Silicon Valley 'move fast and break things' strategy of disruptive innovation, illustrated in internet and technology start-ups like Apple, Google, Facebook, and Twitter.[469]

Contribution 3: Strategic Vision Thresholds

The chosen case study illustrates the critical role of thresholds for developing and implementing strategic visions or end-goals. Aum Shinrikyo adopted a high-risk and high-cost strategy in order to catalyse a war between the United States and Japan. Aum expected to survive this war and to establish rural commune Lotus Villages under its long-term Shambhala Plan. An alternative interpretation was that Aum sought to divert attention from Japanese police and judiciary investigations. The high-cost aspect was to pursue self-funding based on a network of entrepreneurial activities, front companies, and asset expropriation from Aum renunciates. The high-risk aspect was to pursue covert and private research

[468] Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *Antifragile: Things That Gain From Disorder* (London: Penguin, 2012).
[469] Jonathan Taplin, *Move Fast And Break Things: How Facebook, Google and Amazon Cornered Culture and Undermined Democracy* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2017).

development into chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons over alternative, counterfactual options.

A viable strategic subculture provides the resource-allocative focus for a terrorist group to pursue such high-risk strategies and to either absorb or transfer the potentially high transaction costs involved to other parties (creating a terrorism market in risk and transaction cost transfer). For Aum Shinrikyo, these costs were risk transferred from the decision elite, leadership or nucleus to the followers and violence operatives. The renunciates' assets and labour were used to fund the covert research and development program of which only senior Aum members were aware. After the Tokyo subway attacks on 20th March 1995, the Aum Shinrikyo renunciates had to face cognitive dissonance, investigation, and on-going surveillance from Japanese police that also extended to Aum's successor groups Aleph and Hikari no Wa. In Aum Shinrikyo's case, there were two strategic visions: one *overt* (a Mahayana Buddist and then Vajrayana Tantric Buddhist influenced new religious movement) and one *covert* (the compartmentalised research and development program into chemical and biological weapons).

Terrorist organisations face significant gaps between their strategic vision and the external conditions that they seek to change. This places a premium on effective reality-testing for decision elites about the actual conditions that they face, and the probability that their specific victory conditions will be achieved in the long-term. As small clandestine groups, they do not have the management expertise, resources, or power of the strategic subcultures in a nation-state's counterterrorism, intelligence, and national security organisations. Terrorist organisation leaders may not have the necessary skills to wage a terrorist campaign: Shoko Asahara was a self-anointed religious leader who entrepreneurially established Aum Shinrikyo as a new religious organisation. The necessary operational expertise often lies

elsewhere in the decision elite to translate the founder or leader's strategic vision into an actualised, embodied, and lived reality. Thus, the recruitment, selection, and circulation of the decision elite or the core nucleus in a terrorist organisation is crucial to overcoming background experience and skill limitations and other potential knowledge gaps that the founder or leader may have. A multi-skilled decision elite may mediate the potential expertise gaps and thus enable the terrorist organisation to formulate and to implement its violence campaign much more effectively and efficiently.

Aum Shinrikyo used macroeconomic, material, and psychosocial conditions in Japan to advance their respective strategic vision. Aum Shinrikyo benefited from a Japanese climate of experimentation, from a macroeconomic bubble from 1986 to 1991, from the growth of computers and information technology which enabled front companies to be effective vehicles for capital accumulation, and from Japanese estate and tax laws which facilitated asset expropriation and donations from renunciates, followers, and their families.

Collectively, these growth patterns suggest how terrorist organisations can hedge the pursuit of strategic visions that are both high cost and high risk. The terrorist organisation needs a skilled decision elite particularly if it is to make the significant operational shift from initially being a small, clandestine group that evolves into an open insurgency or into a transnational network with franchise operations. It needs to accumulate capital and resources in order to survive and to build effective counter-power to the nation-states within which it exists. It needs to be aware of the material and the specific biopsychosocial conditions, stressors, and vulnerabilities in host societies that it can exploit for tactical leverage and cumulative strategic advantage. Finally, it needs to recruit a steady pool of followers, and to have acculturation, social learning, and commitment escalation processes to transform these followers into effective tactical violence operatives.

Contribution 4: Understanding the Aims and Objectives of Terrorist Organisation Leadership

Process tracing suggests that terrorist organisation leaders may in some circumstances have multiple aims in mind rather than a single, overarching strategic vision. Leaders may have private aims as well as publicly espoused aims. The victory conditions may be communicated in a broad manner but the specific details may be kept hidden for reasons of operational secrecy. Consequently, strategic subcultures function primarily as meso-level mechanisms to ensure the more longitudinal group or organisational survival. They do this by creating transaction cost efficiencies and effectiveness that enable the terrorist organisation to continue growing. An alternative strategy is the risk transfer of the terrorist campaign operations from the decision elite to the tactical violence operatives via escalated commitment.

Particular outcomes identified for terrorist organisations include: (i) the achievement of a particular strategic vision (Y1); (ii) asset expropriation for decision elite or senior leadership control and preferential use over access by others (Y2); (iii) the promulgation of a particular political or religious ideology (Y3); (iv) the continuation of the core ideology through a successor group or institution (Y4); (v) evolving into a political party or developing a political wing that attempts to reintegrate with the broader society (Y5); (vi) the devolution into an earlier developmental phase or form (Y6); and (vii) the negotiation of a peace deal with a nation-state's government (Y7).

These outcomes provide greater clarity on the case study of Aum Shinrikyo (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). Whilst Shoko Asahara's Armageddon seminar in 1989-90 articulated a strategic vision (Y1) and religious ideology (Y3), Aum Shinrikyo failed to create a viable political wing in its 1990 political campaign (Y5) and instead metamorphosed into the successor groups, which include Aleph and Hikari no Wa (Y4). Aum Shinrikyo's trajectory discussed in Chapters 4 to 6 can now be modelled and compared with the lifespan of other terrorist

organisations. For example, the militant, jihadist terrorist organisation the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant achieved initial successes in its goal to re-establish the Caliphate (Y1), to gain control of northern Iraq and parts of Syria (Y2), and to attract mujahideen (Y3). However, the military responses from United States, Russian, and Iraqi military forces means that Islamic State has gone more underground and has devolved back into a small, clandestine group, with transnational affiliates and networks (Y6). This kind of analysis would enable the methodological integration of the three posited causal mechanisms in Chapter 3 with Life History strategies that were originally developed in evolutionary biology. Life History now concerns the reasons for psychological and macro-sociological change, and reproduction, that individuals, groups, and populations adopt.[470]

Using this Life History strategies approach (which has now also become influential in evolutionary psychiatry), a decision elite or senior leadership's range of strategic, resource allocation, and operational choices can thus be stratified into those that promote or reproduce a strategic subculture for group or organisational survival, and those that do not. These Life History strategies occur at a group or organisational level and concern cultural transmission. They are thus distinct and different from J. Phillippe Rushton's racialist schemas in his controversial Differential-K Theory, which were based on cherry-picked data, misinterpretation, and overgeneralisation of the r/K evolution framework, and that later influenced the Alt-Right's 'race realist' perspective.[471] From a Life History perspective a

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[470] Stephen C. Hertler, Aurelio Jose Figueredo, Mateo Penaherrera-Aguirre, Heitor B.F. Fernandes, and Michael A. Woodley of Menie, *Life History Evolution: A Biological Meta-Theory for the Social Sciences* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

[471] J. Philippe Rushton, "Differential K Theory: The Sociobiology of Individual and Group Differences," *Personality and Individual Differences* 6, no. 4 (1985): 441-452; J. Philippe Rushton, *Race, Evolution, and Behavior: A Life History Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Frederick Weizmann, Neil I. Wiener, David L. Wiesenthal, and Michael Ziegler, "Differential K Theory and Racial Hierarchies," *Canadian Psychology* 31, no. 1 (1990): 1-13; Edward Dutton, *J. Philippe Rushton: A Life History Perspective* (Oulu, Finland: Thomas Edward Press, 2018); Angela Saini, *Superior: The Return of Race Science* (London: 4th Estate, 2019); and Gavin Evans, *Skin Deep: Journeys in the Divisive Science of Race* (London: OneWorld Publications, 2019).

viable terrorist subculture is both a form of group selection evolution (within the terrorist organisation between the decision elite and the tactical violence operatives), and also a bridge from more short-term decision-making to being able to leave a more enduring, long-term legacy.[472] This group selection perspective also integrates the three posited causal mechanisms of cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore outlined in Chapter 3 and explored in Chapters 4 to 6.

If the causal influences on these Life History strategies can be understood then counterterrorism policymakers may be able to better focus their degrade, deter, denial, and leadership decapitation operations to prevent a terrorist organisation from regenerating itself. This is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for effective deterrence strategies against non-state actors. New counterterrorism strategies (such as rollback) can be conceptualised, developed, operationally tested, and evaluated.

The Contribution of Process Tracing and Posited Causal Mechanisms

This section discusses how the process tracing methodology and the identification of causal mechanisms outlined in Chapter 3 advances our understanding of strategic cultures in terrorist organisations in new and original ways. Process tracing enables within-case comparison of how a terrorist group or organisation grows and persists over time compared with other strategic actors. This growth trajectory is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a terrorist organisation to have a viable strategic subculture. The posited causal mechanisms provide a deeper understanding of some of the group level processes that can

[472] Howard Bloom, *Global Brain: The Evolution of Mass Mind from the Big Bang to the 21st Century* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2000). David Sloan Wilson, *This View Of Life: Completing the Darwinian Revolution* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2019).

occur in terrorist organisations and that can bind tactical violence operatives to decision elites.

The identification of the three posited causal mechanisms in Chapter 3 yields four different types of mechanism interplay. This establishes how a meso-level strategic subculture can vary in a terrorist organisation:

1. The *strong form* of strategic subculture involves a clear evidentiary base of cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore in a terrorist organisation. This type of strategic subculture involves beliefs and ideas that have historical roots; are transmitted via in-group social bonds; and have deep symbolic resonances for their decision elite, tactical violence operatives, and followers.

2. The *semi-strong form* of strategic subculture may involve historical beliefs and ideas (cultural transmission) that influence an in-group (social learning) or that involve the communication of folklore as a symbol system, in the terrorist organisation. This is evident in the legend-making surrounding past terrorist leaders like Al Qaeda's Osama bin Laden who his community of support viewed as a religious emir and as a successful entrepreneur.[473]

3. The *weak form* of strategic subculture involves evidence of decision elite attempts at cultural transmission but either failed social learning in the terrorist organisation (such as miscommunication between the decision elite, and its tactical violence operatives and followers), or folklore that takes over the group level decision-making and misdirects group resource-allocative processes into strategic dead ends and operational failures.

[473] Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama Bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al-Qaeda's Leader* (New York: The Free Press, 2006).

4. The absence of a strategic subculture means that each of these three causal mechanisms are not visibly apparent in the terrorist organisation's existence and its internal decision-making, nor in its decision elite or its senior leadership.

The strong form of strategic culture identifies a combination of ideas, learning, and the passage of historical time as important roots of terrorist decision elites and senior leadership. This adds weight to ideational, ideological, and socio-cultural explanations of terrorist root causes over poverty and other structural explanations.[474] Rather than a terrorist personality, the three causal mechanisms posited in Chapter 3 suggest that receptive individuals may have vulnerability to biopsychosocial stressors for their possible recruitment and enculturation by decision elites as mobilisable tactical violence operatives.

Process tracing and identifying some of the relevant causal mechanisms means that the potential explanatory variables for future case studies are now better specified. The process tracing in this thesis used within-case analysis for the case study of Aum Shinrikyo in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Recent advances in the development of research methods for causal case studies means that this new approach can be expanded to cross-comparative analysis between extremist, militant, and terrorist groups and organisations.[475] This will expand the potential case universe of possible terrorist groups and organisations that may have viable strategic subcultures.

A process tracing approach enables the development of causal and mechanism-based explanations of terrorist decision-making. This in turn will enable the development of more effective counterterrorism and national security strategies and operations to prevent and to

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[474] Tore Bjorgo, ed., *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Realities, and Ways Forward* (Milton, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2004).
[475] Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Causal Case Study Methods: Foundations and Guidelines for Comparing, Matching, and Tracing* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2016).

mitigate extremist, militant, and terrorist violence. This approach differs from posited causal factors in terrorism studies that are either individual or macro-level explanations, such as the existence of terrorist psychopathology. A mechanism-based approach also differs from theory-based explanations: the theoretical components need to be specified and tested, and all posited mechanisms need to be in place for causal effects to be transmitted from possible factors to outcomes. There may be equifinality: multiple ways to reach the same outcome. This means that alternative explanations and potential hypotheses must be considered.

Chapter 3 posited three causal mechanisms: cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore. These all involve group level processes in terrorist organisations:

Cultural transmission deals with the diffusion of beliefs, norms, values, and worldviews through time. Things from outside enter the group's conscious awareness and epistemic, ontological knowledge. It involves shared information in a group or a sub-population.

Social learning involves in-group knowledge that emerges in small cohorts and through targeted acquisition such as in mentor-mentee relationships. Social learning coordinates terrorists as encultured tactical violence operatives and enables them to act to carry out a terrorist campaign. It may involve situated learning in which new members move from the periphery to the core in-group or who may enter the decision elite, over time. Both cultural transmission and social learning as mechanisms fit an acquisition-based model of individual and group-based learning.

Folklore concerns shared, deep symbol systems that are myths, stories, legends, and narratives. It is one possible ontology and unit of transmissible cultural information. It binds followers (as agents) to leaders (as principals) in a terrorist organisation. It may mediate the potential influence of situational factors. It can propagate across a particular population which may not necessarily have been socialised into it, or that may choose to adopt its

beliefs. Folklore can function both within and outside the group: as a representation of group belief that sensitises and that attracts new recruits, or as symbol systems that cast shadows and make a terrorist organisation appear to be more influential and larger than it perhaps really is. Folklore may be non-coercive but it may also be a symbolic overlay on the truth of a person or a situational circumstance: using legends, myths, narratives, and symbols to frame a particular situation or to emphasise certain aspects over others, in order to convince individuals and groups that particular (pre-determined) decisions and resultant actions must be taken.

Folklore and *cultural transmission* can combine as causal mechanisms for apocalyptic beliefs and religiously motivated terrorism to spread from a group into a broader sub-population. Conspiracy theories are one informational model of how such delusional and paranoid beliefs can spread within a group or a specific sub-population.

All three posited causal mechanisms enable the information environment that surrounds a terrorist organisation. Understanding and developing effective counter-measures to them has been a challenge particularly for information and psychological warfare strategists.

I have identified several analytical tests for the three posited causal mechanisms:

*Cultural Transmission***:** Have historical experiences and symbol systems been transmitted across time periods? Is there observable belief adoption in a heterogenous population?

Social Learning: Are there belief adoption and acquisition-based learning observable in a homogenous population, and within a particular, specific, or bounded time period?

Folklore: Does the terrorist organisation have legends, myths, narratives, and symbols about its genesis, founder(s), leadership, or strategic visions?

Recent methodological advances in process tracing (as discussed in Chapter 3) enable these posited causal mechanisms to be identified and studied in terrorist organisations. Possible path dependencies might be identified and targeted by counterterrorism analysts to deny, degrade, disrupt, and to destroy the terrorist organisation. Consequently, meso-level explanations of terrorist organisations can be further developed in future research—as anticipated in the broader literature on organisational dynamics and social psychology—that provide new ways to study and to evaluate the full spectrum of extremist, militant, and terrorist organisations.

Organisational Insights and New Tests for Strategic Subcultures

A strategic subculture operationalises the attitudes, beliefs, preferences and values regarding the terrorist organisation's use of religious and political violence as force. The case studies suggest that an organisation's strategic subculture is rooted in the religious or political vision to which the decision elite, leaders or core nucleus are receptive. Terrorist group leaders—and the tactical violence operatives who carry out terrorist attacks and campaigns—have decision preferences for an offensive use of force. Strategic subcultures specify that these decision preferences may be shaped by diachronic cultural transmission and in-group social learning such as shared historical experiences or combat folklore.

Encultured preferences that persist over time are the initial, analytical evidence that a terrorist organisation might have the micro-foundations of a viable strategic subculture. These encultured preferences must be distinguishable analytically from alternatives such as episodic or synchronic decision-making, or particular cognitive biases and decision heuristics, such as availability, recency, and representativeness biases. Stochastic shocks and the reactions of other strategic actors may also need to be accounted for—including the extensive form

games, interactions, and pathways that may unfold. Encultured preferences must also shape the violence campaign that the terrorist organisation undertakes.

Terrorist groups with a viable strategic subculture have an evolutionary growth trajectory from an initial period of existence to growth in core ideology; decision elite control and allocation of material resources; and the cumulative development and efficient, effective deployment of mobilisational counter-power capabilities (how decision elites mobilise followers and violence operatives to wage terrorist campaigns on their behalf, and when compared with nation-state strategic actors such as counterterrorism, defence, and national security personnel). These encultured preferences become encoded into organisational capabilities; decision elite learning and their adaptiveness over time; and elite-based power accumulation (possibly leading to social stratification in the terrorist organisation, and the possibility of elite deviance). The first contributes to organisational coherence and the likelihood of survivability. The second enables a decision elite to regenerate and to have antifragile qualities: to thrive in the disorder-like conditions that are faced in combat. The third gives the terrorist group the ability to challenge its host society and to attempt to restructure the international system.

Future Research

This section considers some of the potential future research to emerge from the thesis, drawing on a synthesis of strategic studies, terrorism studies, and political economy subfields.

Macro-Meso Links: Globalisation, Neoliberal Elites, and Terrorist Organisations

The core or nucleus of a long-term terrorist organisation functions as a decision elite that controls organisational resources and safeguards its legitimacy. Through the development and the articulation of a strategic vision or purpose the terrorist organisation will distinguish itself from other clandestine, extremist or militant organisations. This may involve ideational

resources, material resources, and growth in mobilisational counter-power capabilities. Globalisation further empowers franchise operations and network nodes to expand the scope and reach of their respective terrorist activities.

The selected case study of Aum Shinrikyo illustrates some of these dynamics. Japan's 1980s economic bubble or the Heisei Boom and its favourable financial and taxation laws for new religions influenced Aum Shinrikyo's initial growth period, as discussed in Chapter 4. Japan's economic crash and the on-set of deflationary economic growth in the 1990s changed the socio-economic conditions that Aum Shinrikyo operated in, as discussed in Chapter 5. Consequently, this may have likely influenced Aum Shinrikyo's organisational preferences to fund terrorist attacks when its recruitment strategies for new renunciates were affected. Thus, a macro-foundation level understanding of globalisation and neoliberal elites can provide a way to also study how decision elites function in the broader political economy of terrorist organisations.

However, there is as yet no systematic study comparing the decision elites of terrorist groups with neoliberal elites in Western advanced economies. Such a systematic study would situate the fourth generation of strategic culture in a political economy context. The investigative journalist Steve Coll has revealed that Yeslam Bin Laden's stock market investment activities for the Bin Laden family in Saudi Arabia and the United States during the early 1980s was a different approach to capital accumulation than Osama Bin Laden's experiences in Afghanistan.[476] Both activities can be considered as different tactical variants on a long gamma (a change in the rate of change of a price) or a long vega (volatility) strategy to extract alpha (excess returns above a benchmark), as options traders use in the financial derivatives markets. Coll's illustrative anecdote suggests comparative elite analysis and a

[476] Steve Coll, *The Bin Ladens: Oil, Money, Terrorism, and the Secret Saudi World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 267.

neoliberal-terrorist nexus that remains relatively unexplored in the existing literature. Similarly, the activist scholar Naomi Klein critiques University of Chicago neoliberals in a 'disaster capitalism' framework that echoes the critical counterterrorism analysis of state terrorism.[477] David M. Kotz's analysis of neoliberal capitalism's extractive institutions provides a basis for cross-organisational analysis.[478] Collectively, this research on the political economy of neoliberal capitalism needs to be integrated into a multilevel view. Comparative analysis may reveal common mechanisms and processes of elite identification, circulation, and reproduction in the political economies of neoliberal capitalism and also in terrorist organisations. It might also provide a new and different understanding of financial terrorism.

Asset expropriation is what integrates both the neoliberal capitalist elites and the decision elites in terrorist organisations. Asset expropriation thus involves accumulating inventory and resources from others in order to increase an organisation's scale and mobilisational counter-power. Aum Shinrikyo seized funds and assets from renunciates, followers, and from their families—leading to oppositional protests from family and parent groups. Thus, contemporary terrorist organisations have multiple identities which can be criminal, religious and political in nature: a trend also noted in Michael Kenney's counterterrorism analysis of Al Qaeda's franchise network and narco-trafficking networks.[479] Terrorist decision elites offer a parallel strategy of capital accumulation to the approaches that neoliberal elites use.

Meso-Macro Links: Aspirational Geopolitics and National Strategic Culture

Chapter 2 has outlined a fourth generation of strategic culture scholarship that is situated in the great and rising power rivalry of a multipolar world. This is the macro environment in

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[477] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador USA, 2007).
[478] David M. Kotz, *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberal Capitalism* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).
[479] Michael Kenney, *From Pablo to Osama: Trafficking and Terrorist Networks, Government Bureaucracies, and Competitive Adaptation* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2008).

which terrorist organisations arise, expand, and are possibly defeated. Rising powers may have aspirational geopolitics to challenge the hegemonic and the hierarchical status of great power nation-states. This aspirational geopolitics can be expressed in terms of expansive foreign policy goals, politico-military power projection, and the building of international trade alliances underpinned by the targeted use of economic statecraft. China, Russia, and the United States dominate these discussions but the experiences of other nation-states are also relevant. One recent and important example is Victoria University of Wellington senior lecturer Van Jackson's analysis of the interplay between North Korean strategic culture and the Trump Administration's nuclear disarmament negotiations.[480] Jackson's insights about North Korea's strategic culture and its tradition of strategic thought offers clarity that could also be applied at a meso-level to terrorist organisations.

Aspirational geopolitics provides a potential way to reinvigorate the study of national strategic cultures and to bring in aspects of economic statecraft, defensive and offensive cyber operations, counter-coercion, and hybrid warfare. In particular, aspirational geopolitics would provide a new vantage point on the later period of Jack Snyder's research program about great power dynamics and Ken Booth's articulation of a counter-hegemonic world security framework, both highlighted in Chapter 1. This would enable the integration of the post-first generation research by its founding scholars with the new research agenda in the fourth generation of strategic culture theory-building. Conflict spiral, escalation control, and overreach case studies could be identified where the strategic vision of an aspirational geopolitics leads to unintended consequences and complexities when it is actually implemented by policymakers. Such use of case based reasoning may inform a new

[480] Van Jackson, *On The Brink: Trump, Kim, and the Threat of Nuclear War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

generation of policymakers and could be a resource for crisis decision-making, deliberation, and negotiation.

Aspirational geopolitics can also be understood in a mesocosm sense for the strategic thought of terrorist organisations. Chapter 5 has illustrated Aum Shinrikyo's aspirations regarding its Shambhala Plan and its planned 'shadow government' to overthrow and replace Japanese politico-military institutions. Likewise, similar analysis could be done of Al Qaeda, Boko Haram, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in particular: a more comparative study with a larger-n case universe. This would connect aspirational geopolitics more closely to strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations.

Policy Research: Developing Causal Counterterrorism and Program Evaluation

The University of California professor and computer scientist Judea Pearl's pioneering research on causal models and inference methods could inform the further development of specific causal tests for effective counterterrorism strategies and operations.[481] This would require a strong program evaluation agenda on the effectiveness of existing counterterrorism strategies and operations, including their core assumptions about extremist, militant, and terrorist groups and organisations. Intended versus actual outcomes in counterterrorism operations could be evaluated via post-implementation reviews.

The Bayesian updating of core assumptions and beliefs about terrorist organisations would need to occur regularly. Changes in combat, conflict, insurgency, the terrorist organisations, and the broader socio-political environment would need to be considered. Case-based reasoning could be used to consider cases such as the post-Surge growth of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and its strategic competition with other militant jihadist groups—

[481] Judea Pearl, *Causality* (2nd ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Steven Sloman, *Causal Models: How People Think About The World and Its Alternatives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

where the actual outcomes differed to what counterterrorism policymakers thought would happen. This combination of Bayesian logics, causal modelling, and combat data could help to address intelligence risks like analytic misperception, or anchoring and representativeness biases. It could also inform strategy formulation and evaluation processes in counterterrorism operations where there is an urgent need to assess and to understand threat escalation crises.

A non-terrorism example that addresses the China-United States strategic rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region, the risk of escalation spirals, and the value of understanding both strategic worldviews is Lyle Goldstein's research for the United States Naval War College.[482] Goldstein's knowledge of area studies, multiple languages, primary sources, and respective strategic doctrines also illustrates how Ken Booth's concerns about possible ethnocentrism in United States war colleges (highlighted in Chapter 1's historical discussion of strategic culture) can be addressed for contemporary geopolitical and foreign policy crises.

Policy Synthesis: Implications for Cross-Domain Coercion and Strategic Culture

The theory-building insights of Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 converge on a policy synthesis: the policymaker use of strategic culture as a means to enable the cross-domain coercion of nation-states and non-state actors (including terrorist organisations) from escalating conflicts or from undertaking 'mass casualty' terrorist attacks. This policy perspective re-situates strategic culture in terms of the existing practices and knowledge bases of areas like counterinsurgency; cyber, hybrid, and information warfare; and non-military instruments that include coercive diplomacy and economic statecraft. Collectively, these different areas can be integrated into the framework of cross-domain coercion that is used to combine nuclear, c

[482] Lyle Jared Goldstein, *Meeting China Halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China Rivalry* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015).

onventional military, unconventional warfare, and non-military instruments into a cohesive whole.[483]

Russia is the international exemplar of cross-domain coercion doctrines. Chapter 1 outlined how United States strategists debated the possibility of a 'limited' nuclear war exchange with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The diplomatic context of this debate, which led to the genesis of the first generation theory-building on strategic culture, was the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks in the Nixon, Ford, and the Carter Administrations.[484] However, the USSR and the later Russian perspective differed from what United States policymakers understood it as. Dimitri K. Simes observed in the late Cold War that, "In a paradoxically integrated way, the Soviets pursue deterrence through détente and arms control but simultaneously through a unilateral military effort; they act on the assumption that only a credible war-fighting capability can assure adequate deterrence."[485]

First generation strategic culture then from a USSR perspective was about deterring the United States from a 'limited' nuclear war with it. To do so it needed to show that the USSR had credible counter-strike capabilities if the United States acted on first use in an escalation spiral. The first generation of strategic culture theory-building may in fact have contributed to think tank driven 'mirror imaging' of USSR thought, and even heightening the risk of an escalation spiral by articulating a United States theory of victory in a 'limited' nuclear war exchange. Near the Cold War's end the first generation began to develop a more comparative

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[483] Jon R. Lindsay and Erik Gartzke, eds., *Cross-Domain Deterrence: Strategy in an Era of Complexity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[484] Matthew J. Ambrose. *The Control Agenda: A History of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).
[485] Dimitri K. Simes, "Deterrence and Coercion in Soviet Policy," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (Winter) (1980/81): 91.

view of USSR doctrinal thought but this was not pursued deeply in the strategic culture literature.

Russia's recent innovations in cross-domain coercion deserve further study by United States policymakers wishing to understand these policy instruments. The so-called 'Gerasimov Doctrine' or 'New Generation Warfare' continues an "old Soviet-Russian tradition" which includes an "informational-psychological struggle" to actively shape enemy decision-making; the use of "asymmetrical" and "indirect strategy" to gain cumulative advantage; and the coordination of "non-military", "deception operations", "subversion-reconnaissance operations by special forces", and "space-aerial dominance" that destroys "the ability and the will of the adversary to resist."[486] A further area of cross-domain coercion in economic statecraft and international political economy contexts is the active use of the offshore banking system for tax evasion and cross-border arbitrage in financial markets.[487]

Developing cross-domain coercion capabilities would enable counterterrorism policymakers to more effectively target, disrupt, and possibly pre-empt the growth trajectory of terrorist organisations. To achieve this the United States perspective outlined in Chapters 1 and 2 in the first four generations of strategic culture theory-building needs to be balanced by a deeper understanding of Chinese and Russian strategic doctrines, war-fighting capabilities, and their sophisticated use of non-military instruments, in particular. This would enable policymakers to also deal with the criminal-terrorism nexus and the threat finance capabilities that terrorist organisations possess.[488] Relevant insights from the cultic studies literature noted in Chapter 2 could also be used to develop an understanding of psychosocial stressors and vulnerabilities

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[486] Dmitry (Dima) Adamsky, "From Moscow With Coercion: Russian Deterrence Theory and Strategic Culture," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2017): 39-40.
[487] Anders Aslund, *Russia's Crony Capitalism: The Path from Market Economy to Kleptocracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).
[488] Shima D. Keene, *Threat Finance: Disconnecting the Lifeline of Organised Crime and Terrorism* (Abingdon, Oxon, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2012).

to radicalisation, and to develop scalable counter-coercion capabilities against indoctrinability. To achieve these goals, the fourth generation literature on strategic culture defined in Chapter 2 needs to develop a more cross-comparative focus in a volatile, multipolar world.

Final Words

This thesis highlights the importance of understanding the *telos* or strategic vision and end-goals that terrorist groups and organisations can have. Cultural transmission, social learning, and folklore are all relevant causal mechanisms that enable a terrorist organisation to persist and survive over time, although each can fail under specific circumstances. The adaptability of strategic subcultures provides a more complete picture of terrorist organisations whose internal decision-making is often a black box to counterterrorism, intelligence, and national security analysts. This thesis provides a new answer to the enduring puzzle of how and why some terrorist organisations can grow rapidly and transform from small, clandestine groups into proto-organisations and transnational networks. Their effective terrorist campaigns result in higher casualty rates—which may also have implications for 'terrorism risk' insurance and reinsurance providers.

The theory-building process tracing of terrorist organisations highlights several potential causal mechanisms in terrorist belief adoption and the prioritised decision preference to use violence rather than non-violence. Cultural transmission enables a decision elite, senior leadership, or core nucleus to revive and transmute ideas and ideologies from the past for the contemporary era and current grievances. Social learning helps to transform followers into tactical violence operatives who are radicalised to wage a terrorist campaign using extremist and militant violence. Folklore can attract a follower's attention via deep symbol systems and

may in some individuals create the obsessions that motivate self-radicalised violent extremism.

Decision elites in terrorist organisations who are aware of how these causal mechanisms work can adjust their recruitment, human capital, and resource allocative processes to create and to harness mobilisational counter-power capabilities. Such terrorist organisations have observable momentum-like effects in their growth trajectories: like Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, they can also survive asymmetric combat conditions, and regenerate hydra-like in the face of denial, degrade, and destroy counter-responses or leadership decapitation strategies.

Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway on 20th March 1995 shocked Western counterterrorism analysts: the militant new religious movement had crossed the threshold in a surprise attack to use chemical weapons against Japanese civilians. In response, counterterrorism analysts need to develop effective strategies that address the ideational foundations of potential strategic subcultures in such terrorist organisations. A viable strategic subculture gives terrorist organisations a theory, praxis, and the possible maturation of mobilisational counter-power for persistence and survivability as a more long-term security threat. This mobilisational counter-power is likely to enable and to facilitate more large-scale terrorist attacks that are more probable to result in higher casualty numbers. Conceptualising, understanding, and acting on the potential (or the observed) development of strategic culture and strategic subcultures in terrorist organisations provide counterterrorism analysts precautionary means to prevent future terrorist attacks.

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