

The Role of Commitment Mechanisms in Terrorist Radicalization: Terrorist

Utopias

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Abstract (revised):

Religious terrorist groups that are motivated by an apocalyptic worldview often promise a future utopia to their followers. The study of commitment mechanisms in utopian communities by Kanter (1968, 1972) and Burke and Reitzes (1991) can shed light on the processes by which radicalization occurs at various stages of involvement in terrorism. Kanter argued that commitment mechanisms adhere a person's self-identity to a social organization by fostering continuance, cohesion, and/or (acquiescence to) control. Burke and Reitzes, on the other hand, argued that commitment mechanisms bind a persons' self-identity to an ideology, which explains why persons may float in membership from group to group. By examining a broad range of terrorist groups, including the Christian Identity group Covenant, Sword, and Arm of the Lord, Aum Shinrikyo, and ISIS/ISIL, I show that both explanations of commitment are helpful in analyzing cross-cultural examples of terrorist radicalization.

As more and more researchers realize, grasping the subjective appeal of radical religious ideology is crucial to analyzing the phenomenon of radicalization properly (e.g. Flannery 2015, Juergensmeyer 2003, Lentini and Bakashmar 2007, Sirseloudi 2012, Mulcahy et al 2013). The analyses of religious utopian themes in terrorist ideologies and commitment mechanisms employed in utopian communities can shed light on the processes by which radicalization unfolds, illuminating the initial appeal of the radical worldview, the means that facilitate retention of converts, and motivations for converts to engage in terrorist activity. This can in turn provide insight into effective methods of preventing radicalization and deradicalizing terrorist sympathizers.

1. Radical Apocalypticism and Terrorist Utopias

Recent decades have witnessed the nature of terrorism change dramatically. As opposed to the global situation in the 1970s, today in 2015 a large number of terrorist groups are motivated by religious concerns, including those generating the greatest number of

casualties (Hoffman 2006, 86–88; cf. Laqueur 1977). I have argued elsewhere that the overarching cross-cultural religious and ideological schema that many of today’s terrorists share may be labeled “radical apocalypticism” (Flannery 2015).¹ While each culture appropriates the contours of this reality framework in its own distinctive fashion, the general schema obtains for a wide swath of terrorist groups.²

In the present usage, “apocalyptic” does not indicate the popular meaning of the term as primarily designating a cataclysmic endtime. Instead, as a scholar of religion who studies the phenomenon of apocalypticism from its early origins to its present manifestations, I define “apocalypticism” as: *an orientation to reality that maintains that the divine (or “transcendent”) realm has sent a revelation to a select few persons, the righteous, disclosing the divine view through a transformative or meaningful experience. This revelation affirms that evil forces rule the mundane realm that the righteous now inhabit, but someday there will be divine intervention that will dramatically change the operation of the cosmos by overcoming this evil, allowing the righteous to partake more fully of the divine reality* (Flannery 2015, 2–3; Collins 1979; Hanson 1962; Rowland 1982). In this reality framing, the righteous suffer under the present rule of evil, but this plight is only temporary. The anticipated future transformation may or may not involve a catastrophic

¹ This is not to say that all terrorist groups today partake of radical apocalypticism as a reality framework, since there are still regional and ethno-national terrorist groups that lack this cosmic worldview. However, radical apocalypticism also has secular variations, in which a “higher principle” or “grander order” replaces the divine, e.g. nature, the white race, aliens, or a universal moral order (Flannery 2015).

² By this definition, radical apocalyptic terrorist groups include religious as well as non-religious ideological terrorists, such as so called “eco-terrorists” or terrorists who bomb abortion clinics.

end to the world (eschatology), but it does typically involve a dramatic, profound change to history as we know it, functionally creating a new world. Typically, apocalypticists believe that this future change will right a cosmic wrong that presently affects an entire region, nation, or cosmos (Sacchi 1990; Flannery 2015, 3).

This framework describes both peaceful and violent/radical forms of apocalypticism. Unlike the peaceful variety, radical apocalypticism adds four reality propositions to this apocalyptic framework, namely that: 1) the apocalyptic group's/individual's actions can trigger the intervention of divine reality in the endtime, 2) "evil" is identified as some concrete person or group that is irredeemably corrupted, 3) only the apocalyptic group/individual has ongoing authoritative revelation or a definitive new interpretation to understand the meaning of world events and the significance of the unfolding times, and 4) violence is viewed as sacred, divinely sanctioned, and redemptive (Flannery 2015, 59–83).

Since the worldview of radical apocalypticism envisions the complete establishment of a divine and just political order, at its very core it envisions a utopian future. Many radical apocalyptic groups also seek to establish a temporary, smaller utopia that exists at odds with the present dominant society as an incipient version of the divine realm that will eventually exercise cosmic dominion.³ This tradition hearkens all the way back to early

³ I use "cosmic" here in relative terms, functionally scaled to the ideology in question. For instance, many Christian Identity adherents think of the United States of America (with a lowercase u) as equivalent to the covenantal Promised Land / Paradise. The telos of their theology is often the conception that that entire region will revert to the control of divinely appointed white, Anglo-Saxon-Germanic-Nordic peoples, which is functionally

Israelite/Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions, which envisioned the precursor to the future cosmic utopia in the form of the temporary restoration of, respectively, the messianic Davidic kingdom (Jer 23:5–9; Isa 9:2–7, 11:1–16), Christ’s millennial kingdom (Rev 20:4), the Sunni Islamic Caliphate in its early golden days or, in Shia Islam, the brief rule of Imams who possess the divine light.⁴

That this utopian ideal persists in radical apocalyptic terrorist groups today is well illustrated by a diverse sampling of three terrorist groups, the American Christian Identity based Covenant, Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), the Japanese doomsday group Aum Shinrikyo (Aum), and ISIS/ISIL.⁵

In the early 1980’s, CSA began as Zarephath-Horeb church, which sought to retreat from society in a utopian Christian community in rural Arkansas in a fellowship of “clean living” and biblical fidelity that pleased God until the arrival of the endtime, which would be soon (Noble 1998, 101; Bartlett 2013). Here, the members lived according to God’s laws as they perceived them to be revealed in the Bible, structuring their days around prayer, singing, Bible study, confession, eating healthy food that they grew themselves, and adhering to strict sexual and moral purity codes (Stern 2003, 15; Noble 1998, 44–5,

broad enough to qualify as “cosmic” in the sense of God’s purposeful reclaiming of His land and people. Little thought is given to the ahistorical period after this. See Flannery 2015, 143–85.

⁴ Of course, the number and identity of the Imams, beginning with Ali, depends on the particular sect of Shi’ite Islam at hand.

⁵ Much more can be said about each group from the analytical perspective of commitment mechanisms than I have space to address adequately here, but I hope that my overview using the breadth of these examples will serve to illustrate the potential of this approach.

67, 101). Eventually, their leader James Ellison introduced racist Christian Identity teaching to the group, along with the command to prepare militarily as Christian survivalists for the impending battle Armageddon (Noble 1998, 67–95; Barkun 2007, 103–106; Flannery 2015, 144–55). CSA members later engaged in military exercises and eventually trained some 1,200 sympathizers in militia style military combat in the “Endtime Overcomer Survival Training School” as preparation for an impending race war against “mud people” of color, Communists, and the U.S. authorities (Noble 1998, 73; Flannery 2015, 76, 79; Juergensmeyer 2003, 34).

CSA members welcomed the war, since they believed it led toward God’s government and the collapse of evil “Babylon” (Noble 1998, 87, 101, 135; Juergensmeyer 2003, 34). Their theology held that although Armageddon would usher in a time of profound tribulation, these military trained, white supremacist Christians would survive in part because of the preparations they had made in their utopian community, in which they had stockpiled food as well as a cache of armaments, including: 50 hand grenades, 1.5 lbs of C4 explosives, a homemade tank, 155 gold coins, one M72 antitank rocket, 94 long arms, 30 handguns, 35 sawed-off shotguns and machine guns, one heavy machine gun, and, perhaps most frightening, a large 30 gallon drum of potassium cyanide (worth about \$567,000 on today’s market) (Stern 2003, 10–11). In their belief system, Armageddon would be followed by the arrival of the millennial kingdom of God, which they would help rule due to their training in their perfect utopian community (Flannery 2015, 154–55; Wilson 2008; Noble 1998, 135). Eventually, some of them, including Ellison, progressed from preparing for surviving Armageddon to trying to trigger it by preparing

to poison the water supplies of Chicago and D.C. with potassium cyanide, bring down the electrical grid, and blow up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, a plan that later inspired Timothy McVeigh (Noble 1998, 85, 134–135; Flannery 2015, 155; Bartlett 2013, Wilson 2008).

Another utopian religious group that sought to trigger Armageddon was Aum Shinrikyo, which many remember as the Japanese doomsday group that placed sarin gas on subway cars in Tokyo in March 1995. Twelve people were killed and about 6,000 were injured, some of them severely and for life (PSIA 1996, 5). This event was just one of many attempts by the elite disciples of the group to exercise mass killings, which they prepared for by manufacturing and often releasing a host of biological and chemical weapons (Lifton 2000, 39–41; Flannery 2015, 215–17). They also attempted to procure a nuclear device and develop a laser weapon to inflict mass casualties across the globe (PSIA 1996, 6–7; Lifton 2000, 186–187).

The Aum *shukkesha*, or renunciants, formed a utopian community led by their guru Asahara Shoko, who claimed to be an incarnation of the Hindu god Siva, the god of light of destruction. This self-identification allowed Asahara to exercise total control over his closest disciples, who – at the highest level of a strict spiritual hierarchy – agreed to live in filth and communal simplicity under the most rigorous physical and mental constraints. Like the members of CSA and ISIS, their goal was to be as pure as possible in preparation for their eventual role in a global utopia that would be inaugurated by WWII. Aum’s core premise was that “the guru is the truth” (*guru wa shinri desu*),

which was identifiable with the group itself, named Aum Shinrikyo or “Supreme [sound of the universe] Truth” (Reader 2000, loc. 914). The followers of Aum strove to merge with Asahara himself through rituals, meditation, and other practices. They sought to become his clones (*guru no kuronka o sura*) by erasing their own brain waves and thought patterns through mental training and by meditating while wearing the “Perfect Salvation Initiation” or PSI headgear, a set of electrodes that emitted electric power that supposedly synchronized the Master’s brainwaves with those of the initiate (Lifton 2000, 23–24, 51, 70–71; Reader 2000, loc.616). A few nuns merged with the guru through having sex with him in “tantric initiations,” but most others in the community had to remain celibate (Lifton 2000, 97). Elite Aum disciples or “Armageddon warriors” made plans to build Shambhala “lotus villages” (including a nuclear fallout shelter) in which, as clones of the guru, they would survive the nuclear WWII and Armageddon (Wessinger 2000, 139–143; Reader 2000, loc. 4498; Lifton 2000, 84, 198; Flannery 2015, 221). Hence, for Aum’s members utopia was a survivalist version of Shambhala, the Tibetan Buddhist kingdom of bliss, in which they would live extraordinarily long lives in the form of clones of their guru (Lifton 2000, 11–43; Reader 2000, loc. 2287). By at least 1990, the focus of the elite disciples in Aum Shinrikyo had changed from preparing for WWII to trying to trigger it by instigating war between the U.S. and Japan (Lifton 2000, 187).

Somewhat similarly, ISIS now claims to be installing a micro-version of the perfect world that will ensue after the Hour of Judgment, in which Allah will judge the righteous

and wicked and reward or punish each person accordingly.⁶ The leadership of ISIS claims their conquered territory is the *khalifa* or Caliphate, which reinstates a Muslim institution that has been missing entirely since 1924. Beyond this, though, ISIS believes their Caliphate is a pure religious Muslim state run under sharia law, uniting true believers (all Sunni Muslims) in a way that has not happened since the earliest glory days of Sunni Islam. They also cast it as the eschatological Caliphate akin to the Christian millennial kingdom, framing historical Islam like bookends.

The current leader of ISIS, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, apparently either claims to be or is heralded by others as the Mahdi. The role of this endtime figure differs greatly in Shia and Sunni Islam. In general, in Sunni Islam the Mahdi must fulfill three conditions: he will be an adult Muslim male descended from the Quraysh tribe, to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged, he will exhibit mental probity and physical and mental integrity, and he will have leadership and authority over a land (Wood 2015). ISIS claims that Al-Baghdadi fulfills all three conditions.⁷

⁶ ISIS is acting on and furthering ideology promulgated earlier by Ayman al-Zawahiri, then second in command of Al Qaeda, as we know from an intercepted letter to Al-Zarqarwi, leader of AQI, pre-cursor to ISIS, in 2005. Al-Zawahiri wrote: “Instead, their ongoing mission is to establish an Islamic state, and defend it, and for every generation to hand over the banner to the one after it until the Hour of Resurrection” (Al-Zawahiri 2005).

⁷ Al-Baghdadi claims familial descent directly from the Prophet’s family. In a documentary showing events at the Al-Fordo Mosque in Raqqa, a speaker stresses to those Sunni Muslims assembled, “Your leader is a descendant of Hussein and the tribe of the Prophet. We ought to love the family of the Prophet. You have to support him by paying your money, sacrificing your life, anything you can do” (Vice News 2014). The crowd, which includes children, responds in unison, “We swear allegiance to the Prince of the Faithful.” They call him “Al-Baghdadi al-Qurashi,” al-Baghdadi of the tribe of Muhammad, or “Al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurashi,” that is, al-Baghdadi of the family of Hussein of the Quraysh tribe (Vice News 2014). Al-Baghdadi arguably, in a radical

Their theologians also preach that there will be a giant battle at Dabiq, Syria between ISIS and the “armies of Rome” (the U.S., Turkey, or some other entity) (Wood 2015), in which those who are slain can expect a special reward in Paradise. Their strategic actions in Syria and Iraq may well be aimed at starting this battle. ISIS theology holds that the faithful who survive will partake of a broadened utopian Caliphate that will rule the world justly. This will last until the coming of the Antichrist (*dajjal*), whom Jesus will kill after he reappears (Wood 2015). Finally, Allah will judge all and will reward true Muslims, i.e. those loyal to ISIS, with existence in Paradise, the ultimate utopia (Flannery 2015, 134).

Despite the profound cultural, political, religious, and military differences between these three groups, there are clear similarities in their overall utopian worldview. CSA, Aum Shinrikyo, and ISIS have all stockpiled weapons and planned or executed mass killings of those whom they deem to be evil. In each case the groups claim that their temporary community is utopian and pure, a training ground for the group’s eventual role in a global, divine kingdom. In each case the groups eagerly engage in violence that they believe would trigger Armageddon (Aum and CSA) or the battle of Dabiq (ISIS), which will be followed by the expansion of their own political/theological rule, culminating eventually in a cosmic utopia in which they have a preeminent spot in the political and ruling system.

context, fulfills the second requirement of physical and mental integrity by leading ISIS/ISIL in strict, brutal implementation of *sharia* law in its “pure” glory, with beheadings and slavery. ISIS/ISIL has fulfilled the third requirement by conquering a wide territory that they proclaim to be the new Caliphate.

For believers, the appeal of this worldview is obvious. For those who feel oppressed in their larger society or who lack meaning in their lives, the radical apocalyptic utopia imparts cosmic meaning and involves them conceptually in a community that is engendered with ultimate responsibility and divine sanction (e.g. Noble 1998, 63, 95). The system divides the world simply into good vs. evil, us vs. them, in a way that makes sense of real or perceived suffering and that affirms the society they feel at odds with deserves complete rejection. It imparts power to their daily actions and promises a future role that restores them to glory and dignity. It also gives theological sanction to revenge.

An examination of commitment mechanisms in utopian societies sheds further light on how each terrorist group sustains its utopian scenario as a “uniquely realistic” worldview for its members (Geertz 1973).

2. Applying Kanter: Commitment Mechanisms and Utopian Terrorist Groups

It may be rather obvious that solidifying commitment to a group or ideology is a necessary step in “successful” radicalization. A few researchers have examined the topic of terrorists’ commitment using models for assessing workplace commitment (Akinsola *et al* 2015, drawing on Meyer and Allen 1997) and drawing on anthropological insights into how fictive kinship networks foster commitment (Qirko 2009, 2013). Still, relatively little has been done to analyze the utopian vision by which commitment is first secured and the mechanisms by which commitment is later sustained and then translated into terrorist activity. Also, the importance of the fact that commitment is made to a radical

religious ideology or to a group whose self-identity is framed by such an ideology is often minimized.

An analysis of *commitment mechanisms* as identified by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1968, 1972) in the context of sociological research on religious utopian communities in America can contribute to illuminating the processes of terrorist radicalization, particularly given the pronounced role that utopian promises often play in the radical political /theological worldview.⁸ As Kanter defines it, “Commitment . . . refers to the willingness of social actors to give their energy and loyalty to social systems, the attachment of personality systems to social relations which are seen as self-expressive” (Kanter 1968, 499). Since radicalization involves “changes in beliefs, feelings and behaviors in the direction of increased support for a political group or cause” (Turcan and McCauley 2010, 19), successful radicalization necessarily involves increasing levels of commitment. This is particularly true when adherents to a radical ideology progress from what Turcan and McCauley call “radicalization of opinion,” which involves feelings and beliefs, to “radicalization of action,” the willingness to commit terrorism (Turcan and McCauley 2010).

Kanter identified the function of commitment mechanisms using a sample of 91 utopian communities founded in the U.S. between 1780-1860. These communities were small, close-knit, isolated to varying degrees, and mostly religious in orientation. She identified

⁸ Kanter also examined these mechanisms in millennialist groups, an outlook that overlaps with, but is not identical to apocalypticism (Kanter Nov/Dec 1972b; Flannery 2015, 5–6).

those lasting at least 25 years, the sociological measure of a generation, as “successful” (Kanter 1968, 502). All of the communities attempted “to establish ideal social orders, but exist within a larger society . . .” hence, all needed to “vie with the outside for members’ loyalties” (Kanter 1968, 502), which also aptly describes the beginnings of the radicalization process in religiously and ideologically based terrorist groups.

Building on the work of Parsons and Shils,⁹ Kanter identified three problems that a member faces when living in any utopian community:

- continuance (Will I continue in the group?),
- cohesion (How much of an affective bond do I feel in the group?), and
- control (How willing am I to follow what the group mandates?).

In order to be successful, a social organization needs to foster some or all of these aspects of commitment – continuance, cohesion, and control – thereby binding a personality system to the social system.¹⁰ The depth of each aspect of commitment determines the success of the group in some way. As Kanter summarizes:

⁹ Parsons and Shils concluded that the element of a personality that causes a person to *continue* in a social organization is *positive cognition*, a cognitive cost benefit analysis in which the pros of staying outweigh the cons of staying. Retention may also depend on attaining a bonding of *cathetic orientation*, or *cathesis*, which fosters *group cohesion* and helps one to feel close to other group members. Finally, a member will only obey the authority of the group if a person has an evaluative orientation that the overall demands of the system are just and good (Parsons and Shils, 1962:4-6).

¹⁰ These three types of commitment bear some similarity to the occupational commitment model developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), which distinguishes between affective (emotional attachment and identification with the organization), continuance (the costs calculated in leaving), and normative commitment (obligation to remaining with the organization). Allen and Meyer’s work, which has become the standard for workplace commitment, drew on Kanter but does not capture the mechanisms in religio-political terrorist organizations as well as does hers (Allen and Meyer 1990, 2–3).

- “Groups in which members have formed *cognitive-continuance* commitments should manage to hold [on to] their members.”
- “Groups in which members have formed *cathetic-cohesion* commitments should be able to withstand threats to their existence, should have more ‘stick-togetherness.’”
- “Groups in which members have formed *evaluative-control* commitments should have less deviance, challenge to authority, or ideological controversy . . .” (Kanter 1968, 501).

Based on Kanter’s model in utopian societies, terrorist groups that are able to foster all three forms of commitment – continuance, cohesion, and control – will likely be very successful in retaining radicalized members. Those able to secure deep control can able motivate converts to commit terrorism. It is important to remember that in a terrorist organization with a radical apocalyptic utopian worldview, the calculation of pros vs. cons that determine *continuance* may be assessed in cosmic or transcendent terms, deep cathetic bonds that determine *cohesion* may be formed over transcendent goals (such as the establishment of a future utopia), and acquiescence to *control* may mean accepting a binding theological interpretation that renders terrorist violence acceptable. The intended audience for the terrorism may be divine.

In the context of actual utopian communities, Kanter identified the specific mechanisms that foster each type of commitment. Examining their presence in the CSA, Aum, and ISIS provides a window into how such groups engage in radicalization and retain their members.

A. Commitment mechanisms of sacrifice (negative) and investment (positive) foster continuance (Kanter 1968, 504).

SACRIFICE: Self-limitations that may include abstinence from gratifying foods or drink (meat, alcohol), abstinence from personal adornment or indulgence, celibacy, austere living conditions (Kanter 1968, 506-507).

INVESTMENT: Investment ties an individual's future/reputation to the success of the organization through committing tangible resources (one's money, property, or profits) or intangibles (time and energy). Other forms of investment include signing over property and taking a financial contribution at admission. Prohibiting non-members from participating facilitates investment, as does the suggestion it is irreversible (Kanter 1968, 506-507).¹¹

At initial levels of radicalization, each of the three terrorist groups without a doubt imposed/impose mechanisms of "sacrifice" that limited/limit physical activities. In the early phase of the CSA, members ate a simple diet, wore simple clothing, practiced celibacy or monogamy, and worked hard to grow and can food in preparation for the time of tribulation. They strove to be as pure as possible in their actions and morals and structured their days according to worship services and a patriarchal social system (Noble 1998, 51, 64–5, 77). New members often found the sacrifices and investment to be highly spiritually satisfying (Bartlett 2013; Noble 1998, 63–4) and these personal sacrifices solidified their commitment to the group and to its leader, Ellison, who only gradually tightened his control (Noble 1998, 123).

Similarly, early Aum initiates made "sacrifices" when they joined Aum for its health and psychological benefits, believing it could cure disease as well as mental unease, and they displayed their dedication with a strict regime of yoga and a pure diet. New members reported that they felt that they awakened to a transcendent world, achieving the Buddhist

¹¹ Kanter's analysis showed that sacrifice is indeed related to the success of utopian communities and that "a higher proportion of successful than . . . unsuccessful groups tend to employ these investment strategies" (Kanter 1968, 506, 516).

enlightened state of *satori*, absolute bliss and freedom, and happiness, *gedatsu* (Reader 2000, loc. 1000). As they progressed in the spiritual hierarchy, the sacrifices became more severe, including eating an austere vegetarian diet and undergoing rigorous yogic postures and rituals (Murakami 200, 308–309).

The sacrifices that ISIS demands also aid in radicalization. Through a variety of means, including social media, sharia law is held up as the ideal. Like Al Qaeda and AQI before it, ISIS rails against “Western values” of materialism, promiscuity, intoxication, and other activities of the *kuffar* heretics that are equated with U.S. and Israeli domination (ISIS n.d.). Newly radicalized Muslims may thus at first become more observant according to the strict rules of the *sharia* that ISIS (often falsely) claims characterize the *khalifa*.

Hence, all three groups promised/promise positive, healthy spiritual choices at the onset of radicalization that bring satisfaction as part of the inherent challenges of the sacrifices. The personal sacrifices do not deter membership in the organization, but rather enhance radicalization through psychological mechanisms that impart deep value to the organization.¹²

All three groups required/require significant investments of time, energy, property and money. At low levels of investment, sympathizers of CSA, Aum and ISIS made/make

¹² Note that as the sacrifices grow, the investment deepens and it is more and more difficult for a convert to leave the thought system or group, due to cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957).

investments of time, energy and/or money, perhaps worshipping with community members whose values align, reading the group's literature or social media, studying the theology, and making monetary contributions. At deeper levels of investment, they might travel to the CSA compound, as did Timothy McVeigh, attend Aum workshops, or perhaps visit with members of ISIS. Some members of Aum considered Asahara to be so pure that they paid serious money not only to rent the PSI headgear for a month for \$10,000, but also to drink his bathwater for \$1,000 or his blood for \$10,000, which it was claimed, had a unique DNA (Lifton 2000, 23–24, 51, 70–71). Moreover, all three limited/limit participation to members and viewed/view those outside of their networks with suspicion, indicating an early investment of personal identity that attached to group identity. All of this paves the way to a deeper renunciation of family and society to follow.

While the events that unfolded with CSA and Aum occurred before the age of the internet, today sympathizers of Christian Identity theology, Aum's theology, or ISIS' propaganda do not even need to locate a physical community or persons to make profound investments of time, energy, money, or self-identity. They can tune in 24/7 to websites featuring the theology, watch videos, or read literature put out by the group, since the internet provides a virtual community. If Durkheim insisted that religion was the effervescence of society, that society can now be scattered across the globe.¹³

¹³ All three terrorist groups made/make smart use of media. CSA gleaned its Christian Identity theology from books, and today Christian Identity theology, especially its racist "seedline" theories, flourishes on the internet in the form of books, tapes, and training courses (Barkun 1997, 150; KIM 2014). Aum created manga, or Japanese anime style comic books to spread its message (Lifton 2000, 36). Today Aleph, the new name for

B. Commitment mechanisms of renunciation (of other ties) and communion (with members of the group) foster cathetic ties and cohesion (Kanter 1968, 507).

RENUNCIATION: As outlined by Kanter, mechanisms of renunciation in utopian communities include:

Insulation: geographical or physical isolation, institutional completeness (we provide you with everything), negative attitudes towards outsiders (evil, wicked), failure to celebrate others' holidays or read their newspapers, having a distinctive language, jargon, special dress or uniform, rituals that reinforce distinctiveness and renunciation, including purity rituals (Kanter 1968, 508).

Cross-boundary control: members rarely leave the community, rules limit relations with outsiders,

Dyadic renunciation: either celibacy or free love (functionally similar in forbidding individualistic ties within the group),

Renunciation of family: renouncing family ties in favor of group ties, parent-child separation, families did not share dwelling units (Kanter 1968, 509).

COMMUNION: Communion is fostering the “we-feeling” or “we-consciousness” (509), which imparts members with “determination to continue in the face of obstacles” (Kanter 1968, 510, quoting Turner and Killian 1957:442). Various mechanisms foster this feeling of communion, including “homogeneity of religious, class, and ethnic background, as well as prior acquaintance; communistic sharing . . . ; communistic labor, which emphasizes joint effort . . . regularized group contact, via communal dwellings and dining halls, limited opportunity for privacy, and frequent group meetings . . .” (Kanter 1968, 510; Boisen 1939; Blumer 1953).

The mechanisms of renunciation identified by Kanter are clearly present in each of the three terrorist groups we are examining. CSA and Aum members left society to join their compounds and approximately 30,000 converts to ISIS have traveled from other countries to the caliphate. A few examples must suffice of other mechanisms of renunciation. Negative attitudes towards outsiders characterize each group, enforcing boundary control between insiders and outsiders. While in its early stages, CSA members were friendly to neighbors (Noble 1998, 35, 65), they eventually renounced all

Aum, maintains a website (Aleph 2015). ISIS, of course, is famous not only for its use of social media jihadist blogs and recruitment videos that circulate the internet, but also for the beheading videos meant to serve as recruitment (ISIS n.d.; Al Hayat 2014).

those outside of the radical Christian right as followers of Satan and witches, including: humanists, “mud people” or people of color, communists, socialists, Zionists, the US government, Jews, the Antichrist, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the Council on Foreign Relations, the mythical Illuminati and the “One Worldless” ZOG, or Zionist-operated government supposedly conspiring to take over the world (Noble 1998, 69, 87). Early on, Aum operated under the theology that outside of the group everyone in the world was suffering from negative karma. As time went on, Asahara named his enemies in a “Manual of Fear,” including Jews who supposedly operate a “World Shadow Government” using Freemasons as puppets to commit genocides, the “Black Aristocracy,” the U.S. government, the Japanese government, the wife of the Crown Prince, Masako, Emperor Akihito, the ambassador of the United Nations, and rival religious leader Ikeda Daisaku of Soka Gakkai, whom he tried to have assassinated (Wessinger 2000, 148; Lifton 2000, 42–43). In a similar fashion, ISIS condemns all Shia Muslims, moderate Sunni Muslims, the U.S. and its allies, including Europe, Canada, Australia and Israel (ISIS n.d.). In other words, each of the three terrorist groups renounced or renounce everyone not in their narrow theological circle, limiting contact between outsiders and insiders in part by painting a fearful portrait of the outside world.

CSA and Aum both emphasized renouncing the past as well. Kerry Noble, a former leader of CSA later turned peace activist, describes how group members renounced their former lives by destroying TVs, radios, photos, and even taking off their wedding rings (Noble 1998, 68). Family or friends outside of the community of the larger network of the radical Christian right, were rejected as sinners. Aum *shukkesha* also destroyed or

handed over personal possessions and left their families to live communally in simple, filthy conditions (Murakami 2000, 308–12). In both Aum and CSA, members were at first friendly to neighbors (Murakami 2000, 314; Noble 1998, 125), but work, extended social activities, and meaningful relationships occurred only amongst members (Murakami 2000, 308–312; Noble 1998, 65). As time went on in the life of both communities, boundary control increased and communication between insiders and outsiders decreased.

At a later stage in the life of the CSA, they exhibited dyadic renunciation, with most members either engaging in celibacy or monogamy, while their leader James Ellison claiming a special dispensation from God to marry multiple women (Noble 1998, 117–23). Similarly, Aum also exhibited both elements of “dyadic renunciation” in that most members practiced celibacy while Asahara took on multiple sex partners in a “tantric ritual” that he claimed elevated the women’s chakra energy (Lifton 2000, 23–24, 97, 106, 109–10, 275).

As the CSA community evolved from a peaceful utopia to a more radical one, Ellison also enforced military style haircuts and dress for the men (Wilson 2008; Bartlett 2013). In addition to fostering self-deindividuation (Stahelski 2004), special uniforms foster renunciation of the outside world and communion with the group, which is why Kanter labels this a mechanism of renunciation. Similarly, Aum members wore simple robes that served to distinguish them from society and reinforce cohesion amongst the group,

symbolically recalling the robes dipped in blood of the martyrs in the Book of Revelation (Flannery 2015, 225; Lifton 2000, 48).

More research needs to be conducted in ISIS' methods of fostering renunciation, but some preliminary parallels are evident. Renunciation of family and geographic insulation occurs when newly radicalized members leave their families in secret and travel to Syria or Iraq to fight. ISIS also exercises control over sexuality, promising young Muslim women that they will marry a jihadist and finding wives (or slave wives) for jihadists. As documentaries and propaganda videos makes evident, the jihadists dress in uniforms, renounce their former names by taking on new names, and share a negative attitude towards outsiders (to say the least) (Vice News 2015; Al Hayat 2014).

Communion amongst members of the group is perhaps the strongest positive mechanism that keeps radicalized members in the organization despite (or even because of) severe threats from the outside. While psychologists generally agree that the majority of terrorists are not mentally ill (Post 2007; Weatherston and Moran 2003, Crenshaw 1981), radicalization often targets the marginalized who feel depressed and who are lacking meaning in their lives, promising them a new bond with their radical community (e.g. Noble 1998, 63; Murakami 2004, 346–57). In an ISIS propaganda video one member pleads to those “living in the West” and those “who are depressed,” saying “Oh my brothers, come to jihad and feel the honor we are feeling. Come to jihad and feel the happiness we are feeling” (Al Hayat 2012). The video clearly portrays a “band of brothers” type of intimacy that results from striving for a common cause. Commitment

to a radical ideology or group fosters communion by making members feel they are part of a greater whole, a family (see the language of “brothers” above), and a greater cause. This brings temporary happiness or at least satisfaction through meeting “the need for members’ equality, fellowship, group consciousness, and group dependence” (Kanter 1968, 510). As Noble put it for the CSA, “We were united in our belief that ‘the Body’ [the community] was more important than our own individual desires. ‘The Body’ would take care of each other’s needs” (Noble 1998, 51).

All three groups, CSA, Aum and ISIS clearly fostered/foster this homogeneity and collective labor intentionally, whether it be in the form of white Christians preparing for Armageddon, enlightened clones of the guru preparing biological and chemical weapons to trigger Armageddon, or radical Sunni Muslims (disparate in nationality and ethnicity) coming together as one body to establish and secure the Caliphate in preparation for the Battle of Dabiq. That is, in the context of these terror groups, deep communal bonds result from collective striving in a well-defined plan derived from their radical apocalyptic rendering of reality. The larger cause to which members apply themselves erases their own individuality and makes everything from eating communally to committing terrorism a meaning-bestowing activity. The potency of this communally focused identity is clear in Noble’s comment that: “We believed that God wanted our individualities to die” (Noble 1998, 51).¹⁴

¹⁴ In some individual cases, the force of renunciation can overcome a lack of cohesion. The Aum disciple Hidetoshi Takehashi explained that although he was relatively isolated and lonely in Aum, he continued in the group because “I’d already abandoned everything else. When I entered Aum I burned every photo album I owned. I burned my diaries. I broke up with my girlfriend. I threw everything away” (Murakami 1998, 355).

[[Skip in presentation: *Liturgical rituals are another important mechanism of communion that fosters group cohesion.*

As a sociologist rather than a religionist, Kanter paid scant attention to the role of rituals in fostering communion. She did, however, draw on the work of other scholars who noted that group ritual enhances communion by providing symbols that ensure that ‘the group loyalty is . . . raised to the level of the universal and abiding’ (Boisen 1939; Blumer 1953; Kanter 1968, 510). Analysts often underestimate the immense power of religious rituals to enact a new reality and motivate actions (Rappaport 1999). While the precise rituals involved in ISIS’ radicalization and communal life are unknown to this author, CSA and Aum clearly employed a range of liturgical rituals that promoted a communal feeling through the collective action, symbolism, and repetitive reinforcement. Together, CSA members worshipped, listened to interpretations of Scripture, prayed and sang in a distinctive manner that involved raising their hands, and engaged in communal confessions. Aum renunciants engaged in the same yogic postures or *asanas*, cleansing rituals, and rituals of punishment (including the Christ, Bardo, and *samadhi* initiations). They also sang group songs about “Little Sarin,” the deadly gas (Lifton 2000, 185).]]

Insightfully, Kanter notes that an experience of shared persecution promotes cohesion and can actually strengthen the success of the organization. Persecution can serve as a kind of “social vaccination” (Kanter 1968, 510). Real or imagined, “an experience of persecution welds the group together in the face of a common threat and ‘heightens the

symbolic intensity of a group's values' (Kanter 1968, 510; quoting Turner and Killian 1957: 399).

Perceived persecution is the core subjective experience of the radical apocalyptic worldview. In the view of each of the three groups, the world is enslaved to evil forces that oppress the righteous, i.e. their own group, unremittingly. CSA clearly defended its violence as being just precisely because it claimed that the violence is defensive, in the face of a collective oppression. Even in its plans to blow up the Murrah Federal Building, Ellison justified the potential death of children by saying that "The sins of the fathers . . . are visited upon the children" (Noble 1998, 134–35). Aum framed its violence as a compassionate act of *poa* or murder that freed the victims from their own destructive karma because the enlightened guru absorbed their sins (Lifton 2000, 43, 65–70). Aum's disciples also felt that the apocalyptic end of the world was inevitable in order to eradicate evil that was being perpetrated by Aum's enemies (Murakami 2004, 348–50). ISIS also defends its brutal beheadings as a pious act that defends the victims of U.S. or Israeli aggression (ISIS n.d.).

C. Commitment mechanisms of mortification (negative) and surrender (positive) both secure a person's positive evaluative orientation and foster control (Kanter 1968, 510-11).

MORTIFICATION: Reduces autonomous identity. Mechanisms include confession, self-criticism, mutual criticism, and baring one's soul to the social control of the group. Enhanced by spiritual differentiation (having some members at a spiritually higher level, perhaps due to greater instruction in esoteric doctrines), "formally structured deference to

those of higher moral status,” communal dress,¹⁵ and sharing the same dwellings and meals without privacy (Kanter 1968, 511).

CSA and Aum both excelled in promoting mortification, which “emphasizes the individual’s smallness and reduces autonomous identity” (Kanter 1968, 511). Noble, once second in command of CSA, spoke of the nightly confession in which a member sat in a special chair in the middle of the group to confess any wrong doing or doubting thoughts (sometimes at the prompting of another) (Noble 1998, 51, 95). As the person in the middle confessed his/her sins and asked for help, the person’s will was brought into alignment with the will of the group, which prayed and interceded for the person with God (Stern 2003, 15; Noble 1998, 51). The strong psychological sense of personal disintegration and reintegration into the group is potent in this formulation, so that the external locus of control, the group’s morality, comes to be substituted for the internal wrestlings of the individual. In social psychological terms, self-deindividuation would be complete (Stahelski 2005); as a prophetess named Donna stated, “we would have to be willing to sacrifice much for the good of the group, that only by our fusing together in one body could He accomplish His will in us” (Noble 1998, 51).

Aum’s methods of confession were much more severe than this and subsumed the will of the individual not to the group, but to the guru. Asahara would identify those who acted against the group or who had doubts and require severe rituals such as the Christ initiation, or the Bardo (hell) initiation, which involved mortification techniques such as hanging upside down for extended periods, immersing one’s feet in alternating scalding

¹⁵ Note that some of the mechanisms, as defined by Kanter, foster both cohesion and control.

water and freezing water, taking LSD or other mind altering drugs, chanting for extended periods, and wearing the PSI Perfect Salvation Initiation headgear to synchronize one's brainwaves to the guru's (Lifton 2000, 28, 51, 71, 91–93, 98, 100; Murakami 2001, 297–300). The advanced underground *samadhi* ritual performed by Joyu Fumihiro involved being buried in an airtight container, meditating and slowing the breath in order to survive (Reader 2000, locs. 1893, 2918, 2924–2958). The guru also imposed a test at will, a *mahamudra*, which often seemed bizarre but which was deemed to be for the good of the *shukke*. One disciple was instructed to eat his own feces, while others were instructed to murder doubting disciples (Lifton 2000, 62, 144, 172). Their compliance shows the extent of control that Asahara exercised over the group.

However, it is not helpful to think of the disciples as naïve or weak-minded. Aum members were largely well educated, and by many measures successful, young to middle aged Japanese persons (including doctors, graduate students in astrophysics and virology, a young chemist, a medical student, and a telecommunications specialist with a position in the Japanese space agency) (Lifton 2000, 28–31). Their acquiescence to the guru's control benefitted both Asahara (who was likely a megalomaniac and perhaps a psychopath) (Lifton 2000, 11–43), as well as the disciples, who gained a broader sense of identity and meaning, even bliss, through handing over their psychic control to a larger force (Kanter 1968, 499–500; Hall 1988, 682; Flannery 2015, 229–32).

SURRENDER: Giving up autonomous identity in favor of the will of the group, aided by “institutionalized awe,” which is created and supported by “ideology,” i.e.: “investing of power in persons with particular awe-inspiring qualities, e.g. wisdom, age, spiritualness, inspiration; legitimation of demands made on members by reference to a higher order

principle, e.g., . . . the will of God; . . . imputation of special or magical powers to members by virtue of their belonging; taking as evidence of good standing in the group the possession of magical or special powers; and linking the system to great figures of historical importance” (Kanter 1968, 514).

Kanter argues that “surrender,” the process of attaching one’s identity to a greater power, the group or the group’s leader, facilitates commitment at the level of control within a social organization. When members completely surrendered their decision making capacity and moral compass to the group or its leader in CSA and Aum, quieting their own doubts, they were willing to commit acts of terrorism (Noble 1998, 134–35; Murakami 2004, 349, 353).

The radical apocalyptic worldview, which positions the group as pivotal in the unfolding of the divine plan, clearly imparts to the group’s leaders this kind of “historical importance” and sanction by “a higher order principle,” which is easily enhanced by any claims of special powers, inspiration, or wisdom (Kanter 1968, 514). James Ellison claimed to have prophetic dreams and visions that imparted to him not only revelations about Scripture, but about his special role as leader of CSA (Noble 1998, 60). Later he was anointed as a future king in God’s kingdom (Noble 1998, 135). Asahara Shoko related impressive visions of the god Siva, god of destruction, who ordained Asahara as Abiruketsu no Kikoto, the “god of light who leads the armies of the gods” in the final war to destroy darkness (Lifton 2000, 20, 60, 65, 83). While little is known of Al-Baghdadi, the suggestion that he is the Mahdi gives him an ultimate interpretive finality that can hardly be questioned (Wood 2015).

As Kanter explains, surrender is facilitated by “institutionalized awe” reinforced by “distance and mystery,” accomplished through social structures such as authority hierarchy, physical separation of leaders from members, special privileges for leadership (Kanter 1968, 514). Also enabling surrender is what Kanter calls “an irrational basis for decisions (inspiration, intuition, or magic. . .),” i.e. religious mysticism (Kanter 1968, 514). The insulation of leaders is reinforced by mechanisms for election that are undemocratic, lacking any recall privileges (Kanter 1968, 514).

Certainly, Asahara cultivated this air of “distance and mystery.” Some disciples considered Asahara to be “greater than god, beyond God” (Lifton 2000, 92, 203). Although living in the same building as some of his disciples, he cultivated an air of distinctiveness with separate living quarters and a lavish lifestyle, and coming into his presence was considered to be equivalent to being in the presence of a god. His touch was said to impart a *shaktipat* energy blast that disciples longed for and that they described as blissful (Lifton 2000, 24, 100–101, 167–68). His irrational and inconsistent actions, interpreted as divine tests, only served to secure his control over the group further since his logic was inscrutable. Ellison, too, gradually elevated himself in tone and living situation, increasing greater and greater revelations and going against the will of the collective elders to whom he had once acquiesced (Noble 1998, 123). Eventually a “prophetess” anointed Ellison with oil and proclaimed him a “king in God’s future kingdom,” also anointing Noble as a future prince (Noble 1998, 135). Thereafter Ellison called himself “King James of the Ozarks” (Noble 1998, 137). Endowed by ritualistic

mysticism and a new identity, Ellison exercised control over the direction of the group and steered CSA towards greater acts of terrorism (Noble 1998, 137–47).

While other mortification and surrender mechanisms in ISIS are unknown to this author, the deference afforded to Al-Baghdadi as the Mahdi creates a spiritual hierarchy similar to the extreme power position that Asahara held in Aum Shinrikyo and Ellison held in the CSA. Al-Baghdadi's remoteness from the members of ISIS and public view further promotes the sense of mystery surrounding him.

Kanter also points out that surrender is facilitated by “programming” a “fixed daily routine” and having rules that “reinforce the role of the organization as an order-creating power which is responsible for and gives shape to every aspect of a member's life” (Kanter 1968, 515). Certainly, such control over daily life and behavior is evident in both the CSA and Aum communities, as well as over the jihadists in ISIS, and to a lesser extent, over the whole *khalifa* through the form of strict implementation of *sharia* law.

3. Applying Burke and Reitzes: Commitment and Radical Ideology

Without Kanter's study of commitment mechanisms in utopian groups, it might be counter-intuitive that such factors as leaders' irrationality, claims of magical powers, or special residences would facilitate commitment and secure control.¹⁶ However, as I have

¹⁶ Using the statistical results of Kanter's study sheds even greater light on these mechanisms and provides opportunities for further depth of research. For instance, she concludes that the claim of magical powers occurred in 89% of successful communities and only 15% of unsuccessful ones, and special residence for leaders occurred in 75% of successful and 7% of unsuccessful ones (Kanter 1968, 515).

shown, the utopian radical apocalyptic worldview sheds light on the initial appeal of terrorist ideology, while analysis of the operative commitment mechanisms that foster continuance, cohesion and control help explain how terrorist groups retain their members and push some to “radicalization of action,” the willingness to commit terrorism (Turcan and McCauley 2010).

Nevertheless, it is debatable as to whether commitment is made towards a social organization, as Kanter argued, or whether other dynamics are operative (esp. Kanter Nov/Dec 1972b). Burke and Reitzes (1991) refined Kanter’s thesis from the perspective of social psychology, arguing that commitment is to a self-identity, supported by ideology, rather than to a social group.¹⁷ This profound insight is key to grasping the role that the ideology of radical apocalypticism plays in terrorist networks, beyond the confines of the single group.¹⁸ It explains how members of CSA had floated to it from other forms of “spirit-filled” Christianity and other racist hate groups (Noble 1998, 55–57, 130–32) and how CSA attracted 1,200 plus participants to its Endtime Overcomer Survival Training School who fanned back out to other groups (Juergensmeyer 2003, 34). It also explains why even after the exposure of Asahara as a madman, mumbling in court and proven guilty as a mass murderer, and the arrest of 180 persons in Aum for the sarin

¹⁷ Despite occasional references to identity, Kanter’s emphasis is resolutely on commitment to a social organization, as her study of millennial organizations makes clear (Kanter Nov/Dec 1972b).

¹⁸ In addition, each group strove/strives to impart cosmic or historical significance to their community, both in terms of having a future eschatological role and a link to the past. CSA strove to live like the early church, Aum created a group of clones preparing for WWIII in memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and ISIS claims to have reinstated the aura of the early caliphate. Kanter found this to be a successful strategy, noting that ideology that related the community to figures of historical importance occurred in 89% of successful and only 24% of unsuccessful ones (Kanter 1968, 515).

attacks of 1995, much of the membership at large (numbering some 50,000 persons in Japan and Russia) did not at first believe that Aum was responsible (Reader 2000, loc. 1061). It also explains why after the subway attacks, many of the 1200-1400 renunciants remained in Aum, which was renamed Aleph (Aleph 2015). Similarly, adherents of radical Islamist Sunni theology floated from Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to ISIS, and have been drawn to other groups as well when they feel that the ideology is more pure.

4. Conclusion: Opportunities for Deradicalization

Burke and Reitzes' insight leads us to a refocusing on commitment mechanisms in relation to self-identity and religious ideology that is vitally important in understanding the possibilities of deradicalization. The Christian worldview that was woven into the radical apocalyptic scenario of CSA included the Christian Bible, which speaks often of Jesus' ministry of peace (e.g. Matthew 5–7; Luke 21). Based on his own study of Scripture, even at the height of his power over CSA, Kerry Noble began to reconsider his theology in new terms that he called "Positive Christianity," which no longer envisioned an imminent Armageddon (Noble 1998, 124–25). His doubts about Ellison's leadership grew. During an attempted terrorist act on a gay church he was suddenly deradicalized through a grassroots encounter with gay people whom he saw worshipping in a Christian church in a similar manner to the CSA community (Bartlett 2013).¹⁹ His demonization of the enemy fell away and he diffused the bomb he had smuggled in.

¹⁹ Had he actually detonated the explosives that he carried into the St. Louis church, Noble would have been responsible for the worst act of domestic terrorism to date (Bartlett 2013). Subsequent to his deradicalization, he helped negotiate the surrender of the CSA to authorities (Noble 1998, 167–75).

Deradicalization is even possible for former hard core Aum renunciants. After forming Aleph out of the remnants of Aum, some two hundred adherents followed Fumihiro Joyu and returned to the peaceful Buddhist roots of the ideology to form the group Hikari no Wa, which rejects the violence of Aum and any claims about the impending end of the world (Baffelli 2014, 35).

These examples are important to consider today as some recruits to ISIS have attempted to return home after finding out the grisly side of the caliphate, including enforced slavery and rape of children, murder of innocents, and harsh life under sharia law (Obama August 20, 2014; Sanchez 2014). They have realized that ISIS stands against the Quran's position against aggression and the murder of innocents (2:190–93; 5:32). To date, these deradicalized members are still labeled as terrorists and generally banned from returning to their original countries on account of fears that their de-conversion may not be genuine.

However, the insights of Burke and Reitzes, as well as Kanter, may provide genuine opportunities for deradicalization. One potential path is to secure the core self-identity of the radical converts to peaceful theologies by illustrating the deviance of radical apocalypticism from the peaceful traditions of the parent religions: Christianity in the case of Christian Identity theology, Buddhism in the case of Aum/Aleph/Hikari no Wa Na, and Islam in the case of ISIS. A clear understanding of the differences between peaceful apocalypticism and radical apocalypticism is crucial in such deradicalization efforts. On the other hand, since all the terrorist groups that we have examined have

framed their utopian societies in contrast to the evil society at large that they believe oppresses them and others, genuine deradicalization will likely not be achieved through shaming, mockery or punishment.

Some cases of radicalization might be prevented by educating susceptible populations about the ways in which groups such as CSA, Aum, and ISIS employ a gradual “foot in the door” approach. Beginning with relatively mild sacrifice and investment in the radical apocalyptic worldview and idealistic aims of the group, the organizations increasingly secure loyalty and commitment through demanding the renunciation of society and family and through sharing labor, rituals, and activities that promote cohesion amongst the members. As time goes on, the leaders exercise greater and greater control as the members subscribe to mortification mechanisms, eventually surrendering their moral compasses and decision-making capacities.²⁰ Educating young people in particular about the tactics and ideology of terrorist groups, including ISIS, may help them understand the mysterious pull that such utopian organizations exert at the outset.

Finally, while the power of the internet to create virtual communities makes these threats even more grave, social media also provides an unprecedented opportunity for education and counter-messaging. To be successful, these efforts must take into account the deep need for greater meaning, religious commitment, and organizational commitment that potential recruits routinely exhibit. Their commitment should be refocused in healthy

²⁰ Furthermore, the gradual increase in the types and scope of violence that CSA and Aum performed may suggest that ISIS’ tactics may increase in both scope and nature.

ways onto positive expressions of self-identity in their larger communities, including by advocating greater fidelity to the peaceful parent religions from which the terrorist ideologies deviate.

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In recent years, terrorist networks have evolved, moving away from a dependency on state sponsorship; many of the most dangerous groups and individuals now operate as nonstate actors. Taking advantage of porous borders and interconnected international systems—finance, communications, and transit—terrorist groups can reach every corner of the globe. Recognition of the importance of root causes and counter radicalization strategies are nascent. The GCT has helped draw some attention to these issues particularly in Pillar I, which focuses on "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism," but huge gaps remain in implementation. Should the United States prosecute terrorists in U.S. federal courts rather than military commissions? The act of terrorism was organized by few or only one person that was not operating with an organized group. Prison systems are also a concern as a place of radicalization and jihadist recruiting; nearly three dozen ex-convicts who attended training camps in Yemen were believed to have been radicalized in prison.[10] The only constant appears to be "a newfound hatred for their native or adopted country, a degree of dangerous malleability, and a religious fervor justifying or legitimizing violence that. State-sponsored transnational terrorism seeks political gains through surreptitious underwriting of terrorist operations performed by surrogate groups. The sponsors go to great lengths to distance themselves publicly from the pernicious operations and the havoc they wreak. The process of radicalization begins with opposition to particular officials and social policies; grows to increasing estrangement from, and eventual rejection of, the whole system, a process fueled by disillusionment, embittering failures, and hostile confrontations with authorities and police; and culminates in terroristic efforts to destroy the system and its dehumanized rulers.