

**Warriors and Prophets:
The Role of Charismatic Authority in the Radicalization
Towards Violence and Strategic Operation
of Terrorist Groups**

by

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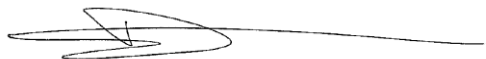
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Author's Declaration

This dissertation consists of material all of which I authored or co-authored: see Statement of Contributions included in the dissertation. This is a true copy of the dissertation, including any final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my dissertation may be made electronically available to the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'D' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

David C. Hofmann

Statement of Contributions

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is co-authored with Dr. Lorne L. Dawson, Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at the University of Waterloo. I contributed approximately 60% of the work on the chapter, and appear as first author. This is in accordance with the inclusion criteria for co-authored material within doctoral dissertations as outlined by the University of Waterloo and the department of Sociology and Legal Studies.

Abstract

In the past four decades, there has been increased multi-disciplinary scholarly interest in the study of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership. However, there is little systematic theoretical and empirical examination of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership in the context of terrorism, despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of charismatic leaders in the formation, operation, and demise of terrorist groups. This dissertation seeks to re-orient and stimulate future scholarship through an in-depth theoretical and empirical analysis of the relationship between charismatic authority, the radicalization towards violence, and strategic operation of terrorist groups. The introductory chapter grounds the subsequent research by providing working definitions of core concepts, reviewing the current literature on terrorist leadership, discussing methods to improve future analyses of terrorist leadership, before ending with a brief consideration of methods, data, and research questions. Chapter 2 is a critical examination of how the current terrorism literature misuses the social-scientific concepts of charisma and charismatic authority. After examining where and how the literature has fallen short, it provides a synthesis of the available multi-disciplinary social-scientific research on charismatic authority, identifies the three common ways in which the concept of charisma is commonly misused in terrorism studies, and explores several challenges and opportunities for future research. Building upon this foundational analysis, chapter 3 contributes to future research by presenting and justifying a theoretical framework for measuring the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups based upon Max Weber's seminal work on legitimate domination (*herrschaft*) and on theoretical insights drawn from the study of charismatic leadership in new religious movements. This framework is then applied to an illustrative case study of the relationship between the presence of charismatic authority and the radicalization towards violence within the far-right terrorist group 'The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord'. Chapter 4 applies the same theoretical framework to a quantitative analysis of the relationship between varying levels of the presence of charismatic authority, choice in operational tactics (e.g., weapon and target choices), and results of attack outcomes (e.g., success rates, lethality) within a sample of thirty international terrorist groups. The concluding chapter provides a synthetic summary of the findings, discusses the contributions of the dissertation to the literature, makes several policy-relevant suggestions, considers study limitations, and outlines avenues for future research.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Gail and Ilan, whose constant love and support allowed me to pursue my dreams. Everything in these pages is a result of your belief in me and your desire to see me succeed and be happy in life. I love you both.

Most of all, this one is for you, Michelle.

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LIST OF ABBREVEATIONS

CBRN – Chemical, radiological, biological, and nuclear weapons
CEO – Chief executive officer
CSA – The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord
CVE – Countering violent extremism
ELN – National Liberation Army of Colombia
FARC – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GIS – Geospatial information systems
GTD – Global Terrorism Database
ISIS – Islamic State in Syria
LTTE – Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
MILF – Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MRTA – Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement
NRM – New religious movement
PCA – Presence of charismatic authority (scale measurement)
PFLP – People’s Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PKK – Kurdistan Worker’s Party
PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization
SNA – Social network analysis
START – The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism
TSAS – Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 – Overview

The 9/11, Madrid train bombings, and London 7/7 terrorist attacks were watershed moments for terrorism studies. As public concern and government funding increased in the aftermath of these events, there was a surge of interest from academics and non-academics alike in various aspects of terrorism. As Andrew Silke (2008a) notes, the publication of books on terrorism exploded after 9/11, from 150 titles in 2000, to 1,108 titles the following year, and 1,767 titles in 2002. Despite the post-9/11 proliferation of terrorism literature, there is a paucity of solid empirical and theoretical work explaining crucial social processes involved in radicalization towards violence and the strategic operation of terrorist groups (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, pp. 809-812; Horgan 2005, pp. 25-27; Sageman 2013; Silke 2001). This is partially the result of methodological and epistemological problems common to terrorism studies, such as the over-reliance on secondary data (Dawson 2014, pp. 67-68; Dolnik 2013, pp. 3-4; Schuurman and Eijkman 2013; Silke 2004, pp. 61-63), the futile attempt to discover a terrorist profile or common psychopathological preconditions (Silke 1998; Silke 2008b; Rae 2012; Victoroff 2005), and the failure to explain why so few individuals engage in terrorism despite the ubiquity of causal factors in large segments of the population (Dawson 2014, pp. 66-67; Horgan 2005, p. 101). In response to these and other persistent problems, sociological approaches have been making in-roads within terrorism studies. More and more scholars have begun to recognize the strengths of the discipline for understanding key social processes within terrorist groups (see, Deflem 2004; Turk 2004; Vertigans 2011).

Partially as a result of sociology's contributions to terrorism studies, previously neglected topics have resurfaced as important areas of inquiry. One such area is the study of leadership in terrorist organizations. Scholars have widely acknowledged that a better understanding of certain qualities of leadership, particularly charisma, is crucial to the development of a comprehensive understanding of how terrorist groups are created, maintained, and end (e.g., Bartlett and Miller 2012, p. 15; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 808; Dawson 2010, p. 16; Gupta 2008, pp. 71, 73; Horgan 2005, pp. 33-34; Neumann 2009, p. 102; Noricks 2009, p. 52; Rasmussen and Hafez 2010, p. 3; Richardson 2006, p. 45; Rinehart 2009, p. 983; Schbley and McCauley 2005, p. 569; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50; Sloodman and Tille 2006, p. 92). Despite this acknowledgement, little theoretical or empirical work has been conducted on leadership in terrorist groups, aside from passing interest within the framework of larger case studies and research (e.g., Nesser 2008; Rasmussen and Hafez 2010; Sloodman and Tillie 2006; Wiktorowicz 2005) and the ongoing debate over the effectiveness of leadership decapitation¹ strategies (Carvin 2012; Freeman 2014; Hafez and Hatfield 2006; Honig 2007; Johnston 2012; Jordan 2009 and 2014; Langdon et. al. 2004; Mannes 2008; Morehouse 2014; Price 2012; Wilner 2010). As it stands, the literature on terrorist leadership tends to be focused on superficial descriptions of "what" leadership is, and does not adequately explain *how* and *why* leaders move their followers to engage in acts of terrorism and political violence (see, Hofmann and Dawson 2014; Hofmann 2015a). This lacuna in knowledge potentially overlooks a crucial subject area that can contribute to our comprehension of how terrorist groups are created, operate, and eventually end. It warrants further study in order to better understand how terrorist leaders are important to their

¹ Leadership decapitation, also known as *targeted killing* or by its more pejorative usage *targeted assassination*, refers to the coercive counter-terrorism strategy that aims to disrupt terrorist and other illicit organizations through the killing or arrest of key leaders.

groups, and how governments and security agencies can and should address issues of leadership within larger coercive and non-coercive counter-terrorism strategies.

Terrorist leadership comes in many different forms: operational, ideological, religious, secular, top-down, grass-roots, transactional, transformational, and so on. Each of these manifestations requires in-depth study if we are to begin understanding the complexities of the leader-follower relationship within terrorist organizations. However, within the limited scope of this dissertation, I begin delineating and exploring the impact of *charismatic* forms of leadership on the radicalization towards violence and strategic operation of terrorist groups, rather than attempting to comprehensively analyze the multitude of different fashions in which leadership can appear across different types of terrorist organizations and ideologies. At this early stage in the study of terrorist leadership, my choice to narrow the research focus to charismatic leadership is logical. There is an abundance of current and historical examples of charismatic terrorist leaders such as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of ISIS, Osama Bin Laden of al-Qaida, Vellupillai Prabhakaran of the LTTE, Abdullah Öcalan of the PKK, Shoko Asahara of Aum Shinrikyo, Andreas Baader of the Red Army Faction, Hasran Nasrallah of Hezbollah, Joseph Kony of the Lord's Resistance Army, Abimael Guzman of the Shining Path, and so on. These many prominent examples have caused terrorism scholars, at either an overt or intuitive level, to recognize the probable influence of charismatic leaders upon the formation, operation, and dissolution of terrorist organizations (e.g., Crelinsten 2009, pp. 36-37; Crenshaw 2011, p. 93; Dawson 2010, p. 6; Gupta 2005, p. 19; Hamm 2002, p. 288; Hamm 2013, pp. 65-66, 113; Hassner 2011, p. 699; Hoffman 2008, p. 137; Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 38, 108; Kepel 2004, p. 256; Khosrokhavar 2004, pp. 219-224; Khosrokhavar 2013, p. 289; Kirby 2007, p. 418; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011, pp. 14, 53, 70, 124; Moghaddam 2005, pp. 165-166; Neumann

and Rogers 2007, p. 94; Noricks 2009, p. 52; Pargeter 2008, p. 36; Price 2012, pp. 17, 22; Richardson 2006, p. 45; Sageman 2004, pp. 64, 104, 116-117, 139; Stern 2003, p. 15; Silber and Bhatt 2005, p. 50; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107). Despite this recognition, the scholarly literature on charismatic leadership within terrorist groups remains woefully underdeveloped. Much of the terrorism literature has failed to tap into the strengths of the social-scientific concept of charisma, and has overwhelmingly relied upon an analytically unhelpful colloquial definition (i.e., someone who is personally and socially attractive) in their descriptions of various terrorist leaders (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 349-350). To date, we know little about how charismatic terrorist leaders influence the formation and operation of their groups, despite multiple accounts of their charismatic qualities, the extreme veneration of their followers, and their observed importance to the operational and ideological well-being of their groups (e.g., Holtmann 2014; Kaplan 2007, pp. 563-564; Stern 2003, p. 15; Van de Voorde 2005, pp. 185-186; Varon 2004, p. 71; Vinci 2007, p. 349).

Despite this gap in knowledge, there is a robust body of literature upon which to build the study of charismatic terrorist leadership. The broader research on charisma is multi-disciplinary, and has been studied by scholars of sociology, religious studies, management science, political science, anthropology, psychology, and other social-scientific disciplines (e.g., Bass 1985; Bryman 1992; Conger and Kanungo 1988; Dawson 2006b and 2011; Friedland 1964; Gardner and Avolio 1998; Johnson 1979; Joosse 2006 and 2014; Kets de Vries 1988; Madsen and Snow 1991; Tucker 1970; Willner 1984; Wilson 1975). The existence of a varied and extensive literature on charisma provides a strong theoretical and empirical starting point for its examination within terrorist groups. Each discipline offers unique insights into the dynamics of charismatic leadership. But, I argue that the study of charismatic leadership in new religious

movements (NRMs) is perhaps the most congruous with the context of terrorism and political violence for several main reasons (see also, Dawson 2010; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 360-361). Scholars have noted similar dynamics in both NRMs and terrorist groups, such as social encapsulation, millenarian world-views, cultures of martyrdom, and the presence of charismatic leaders (e.g., Barkun 1994, pp. 247-249; Crenshaw 2011, p. 47; Galanter and Forest 2006; Introvigne 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011, p. 84). The structural, social, and behavioral similarities between certain terrorist groups and NRMs enhances the likelihood that both share certain dynamics involving the establishment, maintenance, and demise of charismatic authority.² This provides ample material with which to carefully cross-fertilize core concepts in NRMs to similar contexts within the study of charismatic terrorist leadership (see, Dawson 2010, pp. 1-3). Scholars of new religions also note that dysfunctional forms of charismatic leadership have been strongly associated with the promotion of violent behaviour in NRMs (e.g., Bird 1993; Dawson 2006b; Hall 2000; Lewis 2011; Reader 2000; Robbins 2002; Wessinger 2000). Although only a minority of NRMs ever progress towards violent action, a nuanced analysis of the available case studies (e.g., Balch and Taylor 2002; Doherty 2001; Hofmann 2011; Lifton 1999; Tabor and Gallagher 1995; Ulman and Abse 1983) may provide unique insight into how and why charismatically-led terrorist groups are formed from larger non-violent social, political, and religious movements. For these reasons, I rely most heavily upon findings gleaned from the study of charismatic leaders in NRMs for the analytical and theoretical portions of this dissertation, although I still extensively borrow from the broader literature on charismatic leadership from multiple disciplines.

² For example, Lorne Dawson (2010) notes that there are significant parallels between who, how, and why people join NRMs and similar processes in the radicalization of terrorists.

Rather than employing the traditional method of writing a comprehensive book-like manuscript I chose to adopt the “three journal articles” format for this dissertation, where three separate publication quality article-length manuscripts are written on a single theme. At the time of submission, chapter 2 has been published in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Hofmann and Dawson 2014),³ chapter 3 has been published in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Hofmann 2015a) and has been published as a working paper in the resource library hosted by the Canadian Network for Research on Terrorism, Security, and Society (TSAS – Hofmann 2015b), and chapter 4 is under review at another scholarly journal related to terrorism. Due to the addition of content based upon the criticism and feedback of committee members and external reviewers, the material presented in the subsequent chapters may differ from the original manuscripts accepted for publication. The full reference information for the journal article versions of each chapter are available in footnotes at the beginning of each chapter or in the list of references.

I begin this dissertation with the current introductory chapter, which presents brief working definitions of charisma, charismatic leadership, charismatic authority, and terrorism. I go on to review the current scholarly literature on terrorist leadership before offering some suggestions on how we might improve future research in this area. I then present a brief overview of the methods and data used during the empirical chapters, before closing with the thesis statement and research questions driving the theoretical and empirical analysis. In chapter 2, I critically analyze how the current literature on terrorism misuses the social-scientific concept of charisma. I lay the foundations for the subsequent chapters by synthesizing the current research on charismatic authority, by discussing the specific ways in which the current scholarship on terrorism has incorrectly applied the concept of charisma, and by exploring areas

³ See Statement of Contributions.

for future research related to charismatic leadership in terrorist groups. In order to stimulate future research, I present and justify a theoretical framework for qualitatively and quantitatively operationalizing the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups in chapter 3. I then apply the theoretical framework to an illustrative case study examining the relationship between the radicalization towards violence and the presence of charismatic authority in the far-right terrorist group, The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA). In order to provide additional empirical insights by using a different methodological approach, in chapter 4 I apply the same theoretical framework to a quantitative analysis of the relationship between the presence of charismatic authority, strategic choices, and attack outcomes of thirty international terrorist groups. I finally conclude with a synthetic and summative chapter that ties together common themes and findings, discusses how the dissertation contributes to the scholarly literature, makes policy-relevant suggestions, considers some of the limitations of the dissertation, and explores areas for future research.

1.2 – Working definitions of charisma, charismatic leadership, and charismatic authority

The multi-disciplinary social-scientific study of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership traces their roots to Max Weber's (1968) work on legitimate domination (*herrschaft*). In his study of how and why certain individuals willingly submit to the control of others, he notes that there are three ideal-types of legitimate authority: (1) traditional, (2) rational-legal, and (3) charismatic. The first two ideal-types are stable and commonplace in day-to-day life. Traditional authority is based upon the recognition of an individual or office's right to exercise power and influence over others that is derived from long-standing tradition and custom (e.g., the elder of a mainstream church, the British monarchy, a tribal chieftain). Rational-legal authoritative

legitimacy is predicated upon the recognition of the power invested in a particular office or bureaucratic structure (e.g., a law enforcement agent, a municipal judge, the CEO of a company).

Charismatic authority, however, is formed in direct opposition to traditional and rational-legal forms of authority. As Weber (1968, p. 48) explains, charisma is:

A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.

In other words, charismatic authoritative legitimacy is based upon the *recognition* of some form of exceptional quality, nature, or power of the leader. Charismatic leaders typically emerge during times of social upheaval and turmoil, when stable forms of authority are seen as incapable of resolving the ongoing crisis (Dawson 2011, p. 120; Weber 1968, p. 19; Wilson 1975, p. 26). Since charismatic authority is rooted in the perceptions of followers rather than in custom, tradition, law, or bureaucracy, ideal-typical charismatic leaders are capable of moving their followers to commit both extraordinary and terrible acts in pursuit of their stated goals. In simpler terms, charismatic authority is based on a highly complex, unstable, but powerfully emotional relationship that is formed between a leader and his or her followers and is unlike anything found within traditional and rational-legal forms of authority. In order to avoid redundancy, these and other key features of charismatic authority are explained in more detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4 (see, sections 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, and 4.2).

As a final consideration, it is worth noting that there are subtle terminological differences between *charisma*, *charismatic authority*, and *charismatic leadership*. The

brief working definition presented at the beginning of chapter 2 (see, section 2.1) explains this in more detail:

For the immediate purposes of this study, *charisma* is a quality attributed to individuals who are thought to possess exceptional abilities, particularly to influence and inspire others, which are not accessible to the rest of us. *Charismatic authority* is a social phenomenon that exists independently of individual leaders. It is an abstract and complex social bond that is based upon followers' recognition of the exceptional, supernatural, or divine nature of a leader. *Charismatic leadership* is the real-world exercise of power that is legitimized by followers' recognition of the charismatic authority of a leader.

The above definitions are reflective of how I use each term throughout the body of this dissertation. While conceptually useful, they only scratch the surface of the depth and complexity of the social-scientific concept of charisma, but are necessary in order to avoid definitional ambiguity.

1.3 – Working definition of terrorism

Despite decades of research on the causes and consequences of terrorism, there has yet to be any scholarly agreement over its definition. As Alex Schmid (2013, p. 42) explains:

Many scholars are sick and tired of discussing the definition issue ... Some people consider the quest for a more perfect definition of 'terrorism' as 'no more than a futile polemical exercise, chasing a chimera' ... Philip Schlesinger, a British sociologist, even argued that 'no commonly agreed definition can in principle be reached, because the very process of definition is in itself a wider contestation over ideologies or political objectives' ... Is it impossible to find an objective and watertight definition that satisfies both legal and scientific criteria? So far, this goal has been elusive.

As a result of this lack of consensus on what exactly 'terrorism' or a 'terrorist act' entails, the vast majority of current researchers adopt their own definitions of the terms. This practice is near ubiquitous, and some of the most prominent studies on terrorism apply their own definitions (see, Schmid 2013, pp. 99-148). As long as the definition presented is logically consistent within the framework of the research and is conceptually tied to the few points of fairly widespread

agreement (see below), it is common for such definitions to be accepted at face value. This, however, makes it difficult to conduct comparative research since definitions of terrorism can be radically different across studies. As well, certain scholars have a tendency to fall into polemical, circular, and semantically unhelpful debates over the veracity, quality, and usage of different definitions of terrorism. When this happens, it can hamper the production of meaningful research on the topic. The definitional debate is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, and the lack of scholarly consensus has contributed to lingering theoretical and methodological problems that continue to plague the study of terrorism (see, Dawson 2014, pp. 66-70; Dexter and Guittet 2014, p. 377; Mintz and Brule 2009, pp. 369-370).

Since the format for this dissertation treats each chapter as a stand-alone work, the manner in which I define terrorism shifts from chapter to chapter. This is due to differences in focus and scope across each study. I do not explicitly outline a definition of terrorism in chapter 2. I assume that the readers of an influential journal like *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* possess a basic understanding of the broader scholarly notion of what terrorism is or is not. At the behest of an anonymous peer-reviewer, in chapter 3 I define terrorism “as threats or acts of violence [meant] to coerce and/or intimidate a political entity or a section of the public in order to further an ideologically, politically, and/or religiously motivated cause” (see, section 3.1). This definition focuses in on the motivations and coercive nature of terrorism, rather than emphasizing the psychological, operational, or retributive nature of terrorist acts. On the other hand, I employ an inclusive and broader definition of terrorism in chapter 4 that is informed by the coding guidelines for the Global Terrorism Database (GTD – see, START 2012). This chapter uses the GTD as the primary source of data for the quantitative analysis of how varying levels of the presence of charismatic authority influences operational behaviors and attack

outcomes within terrorist groups. I am therefore constrained by the definitional guidelines that I used to construct the modified dataset. The GTD's three criteria that define 'terrorist incidents' are as follows: (1) the incident must be intentional; (2) the incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence; and (3) the perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors (START 2012, p. 6).

While definitional consensus remains elusive, I take for granted a small number of generally accepted assumptions among terrorism researchers. The first is that the scholarly concept of terrorism is distinct from its moral-pejorative usage by radicals, politicians, and the media (see, Crenshaw 2002, p. 406; Hoffman 2008, pp. 1-3; Richardson 2000, pp. 209-219). In other words, 'terrorism' is something more than just an emotionally charged label used to identify the perceived illegitimate use of political violence. With few exceptions, scholars recognize that the choice to engage in terrorism is not an irrational act, but rather, a coercive strategy employed by both state and non-state actors attempting to achieve some form of political, social, and/or religious change (Crenshaw 2002, p. 408; Crenshaw 2011, pp. 23, 111-123; Hoffman 2008, pp. 2-3; Horgan 2005, pp. 17-22). This distinction is near-universally accepted, since to do otherwise questions the very foundations of the ability of terrorism scholars to conduct meaningful empirical and theoretical research.

Another assumption that I adopt is that the choice to engage in terrorism is not the result of individual psychopathology (Horgan 2005, pp. 49-53; Silke 1998; Victoroff 2005). Although there is a common-place tendency among politicians, the media, and academics unfamiliar with terrorism studies to point to the "mental instability" of terrorists (e.g., Greenfeld 2013; Richmond 2015), there is little empirical evidence to support these claims. As John Horgan (2005, p. 51) aptly notes:

The presence of pathological egocentricity commonly found in psychopathic individuals seems to conflict with some of the required characteristics sought after by terrorist leaders of their members – high motivation, discipline and an ability to remain reliable and task-focused in the face of stress, possible capture and imprisonment.

In simpler terms, due to the need for security, secrecy, and discipline in terrorist groups, mentally-ill individuals make poor recruits and are therefore avoided when possible. This observation has been substantiated by multiple empirical studies (see, Silke 1998, pp. 53-54; Silke 2008b; Victoroff 2005), and as a result it is commonly accepted that “the outstanding common characteristic of terrorists is their normality” (Crenshaw 1981, p. 390).⁴ This finding is also tied to the widely accepted assumption that there is no such thing as a ‘terrorist profile,’ and that the hunt to discern common terrorist personality traits is generally a waste of time and effort (Crenshaw 2011, p. 44; Horgan 2005, p. 62; Rae 2012). As a result of overwhelming empirical evidence, behavioral research has shifted from the futile attempt to identify a psychopathological cause or terrorist personality, to social-psychological and sociological explanations of radicalization towards violence.

As a final note, the use of the term ‘terrorism’ throughout this dissertation refers specifically to non-state actors or insurgents who engage in asymmetric warfare and violence, and purposefully excludes acts of state terrorism from the analysis. The reason for this is outlined in detail in chapter 4:

The decision to exclude state terrorism ... [is] due to the nature of the authority relationships examined ... Charismatic authority within small and clandestine groups is based on according power to an individual who actively challenges and seeks to replace established social norms and governance, while “charismatic” political leaders typically operate within the bureaucratized structure of traditional or rational-legal authority. In other words, the charisma attributed to “likeable” political leaders is superficial and is not the same sort of intense and personal bond formed between a “pure” charismatic leader

⁴ The exception to this is the reported incidence of higher levels of mental illness among lone-actor terrorists. A study by Gill et. al. (2014, p. 428) reports that 31.9% of their sample (N = 119) had a history of mental illness, which is significantly higher when compared to known demographic and mental health information from individuals engaged in other forms of terrorism.

and his or her followers (see, Bendix 1977, pp. 298-307; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, p. 349). There are very few politicians who are venerated by followers in the same manner as highly charismatic terrorist leaders (see, section 4.3.a).

By no means does this exclusion suggest that charismatic and other forms of leadership play no role in the commission of state terrorism. But, the limited scope of this dissertation necessitates that this line of inquiry be developed further in future research (see, section 5.4).

1.4 – Working definition of radicalization

Much like the definition of terrorism, there is a certain amount of ambiguity concerning what radicalization is, and how it occurs (see, Hornqvist and Flyghed 2012; Neumann 2013). In his definitive analysis on the topic, Mark Sedgwick (2010) aptly argues that there are serious concerns and issues with how the concept of radicalization is applied by academic scholars and policy-practitioners. He notes that the myriad of ways in which the term is used has led to confusion over what exactly ‘radical’ is or is not. This definitional issue continues to linger in the social-scientific study of terrorism, and therefore needs to be addressed in some form in this research. In order to accomplish this, I use three of Sedgwick’s main criticisms surrounding the concept of radicalization to frame how I employ the term.

To begin, Sedgwick (2010, pp. 482-484) notes that there are tensions between what he identifies as general philosophical, analytical, and official attempts to define radicalization. Philosophical definitions focus on classical notions of rebellion and organized opposition to authority, but tend to be too sweeping and general to be of much use to modern issues involving terrorist radicalization. Analytical definitions, Sedgwick points out, are surprisingly rare. For the most part, scholars tend to rely upon common-sense notions of what a radical is or is not. Official definitions vary widely across countries, and are even further subdivided by conflicting

definitions across national security agencies. In this research, my use of the concept of radicalization is informed primarily by analytical definitions taken from previous empirical and theoretical studies (see, King and Taylor 2011; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011; Sageman 2004; Sageman 2008; Wiktorowicz 2005). Taking what I deem to be the best elements of the existing analytical definitions, I conceive of radicalization as *a non-deterministic process whereby individuals or groups come to actively support or participate in terrorist violence.*

Another of Sedgwick's key arguments is that the term 'radical' implies the existence of some form of definitional continuum. Yet, as he aptly points out, it is not clear what exactly this continuum entails. For the most part, radical groups and causes end up being lumped on either end of a poorly defined spectrum, without properly defining the cut-off line between 'radical' and 'moderate'. This is because this cut-off line "... is presumed to be self-evident, and because the continuum ("with-us-or-against-us") is also presumed to be self-evident" (Sedgwick 2010, p. 482). In simpler terms, many scholars rely on commonsensical notions of what a 'radical' is or is not when employing the term in their research. To avoid this erroneous usage, I purposefully use the term *radicalization towards violence* rather than the more commonly used *radicalization* or *violent radicalization*. This is to reflect the fact that the process of radicalizing towards violence is non-deterministic, slow, progressive, and occurs on a spectrum. But, most importantly, it provides a distinct cut-off point on the spectrum between 'moderate' and 'extreme' radicalism. By defining the end-point for radicalization as the commission of an act of violence, I classify groups or individuals as 'radical' based upon how likely they are to engage in violence.

Lastly, Sedgwick notes that the concept of radicalization is applied differently depending on the concerns of three official or semi-official contexts: the security agenda, the integration agenda, and the foreign policy agenda. The security agenda "is concerned with radicalization

primarily to the extent that it constitutes a direct or indirect threat to the security of the state or of individual citizens of the state” (Sedgwick 2010, p. 485). The integration agenda focuses upon radical individuals who act in opposition to nationally normative values. The foreign policy agenda focuses primarily upon interactions between friendly and enemy states. Since portions of this research were funded by Public Safety Canada, my use of the term ‘radicalization’ inevitably leans towards concerns that fall under the aegis of the security agenda. It therefore conceives of and uses the concept of radicalization as a means to identify groups which are or may one day be a threat to national and international security.

1.5 - How is leadership conceptualized and used in terrorism studies?

While I focus on charismatic forms of terrorist leadership within this dissertation, it is important to understand how the terrorism literature conceives of and employs the broader concept of leadership. Scholars have long recognized that leaders are crucial to the success of many different types of social and political movements (e.g., Klandermans 1992; McAdam 1982, p. 47; Tarrow 1998; Willner 1984; Zald and Ash 1966). Yet, in the words of James Burns (1978, p. 2), “leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.” Despite the existence of a varied body of literature on leadership, there has been little theoretical advancement and there remains a paucity of conceptual models and frameworks that can comprehensively explain the dynamics of leader-follower relationships across the myriad of disciplines interested in the phenomenon (Burns 1978, p. 3; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 190). This weakness extends to terrorism studies, where relevant theoretical and empirical studies also remain sparse (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 808; Dawson 2010, pp. 14-16; Gupta 2008, p. 71; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 362-363; Hofmann 2015). With few exceptions, the

current terrorism research is limited to passing interest in the dynamics of leadership within the frameworks of larger case studies (e.g., Juergensmeyer 2003; Nesser 2009; Stern 2003), or has been blinded by ‘great (wo)man’ theories of leadership which emphasize the importance and magnitude of individual leaders while often downplaying the greater socio-political context within which terrorist groups operate (e.g., Robinson 2011; Young 2004). Efforts to theorize terrorist leadership are also hampered by the fact that many of the current observations are made in isolation from one another, and often use different definitions and methods of measuring leadership.

Despite these limitations, there have been some promising preliminary insights. Multiple scholars of terrorism have noted that leadership is an important component in recruitment and radicalization towards violence (e.g., Horgan 2005, pp. 33-34; Nesser 2009, p. 88; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 135-138), formation of group ideology (e.g., Gentry 2004, p. 278; Maynard 2014, p. 827), and strategic operation (e.g., Rasmussen and Hafez 2010, pp. 3-4; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50). It is clear from the existing literature that terrorist leadership warrants further study. But, for the most part, terrorism scholars have fallen prey to the same pitfalls that have stymied broader efforts to theorize different forms of social and political movement leadership. The scope and nature of the influence exercised by terrorist leaders has yet to be comprehensively analyzed, and this, in turn, has made the creation of quality theories and models difficult. A robust understanding of the complexities involved in terrorist leadership may prove to be pivotal to efforts aimed at executing effective coercive counter-terrorism strategies such as leadership decapitation, and informing effective countering violent extremism (CVE) and de-radicalization programs. But, until it is rigorously analyzed, truly practical applications will remain out of reach.

While the interest in leadership in terrorism studies is relatively new, it has been extensively examined by scholars of management studies, psychology, anthropology, new religious movements, sociology, political science, and other disciplines (e.g., Barker et. al. 2001; Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio 2006; Bryman 1992; Burns 1978; Couch 1989; Conger and Kanungo 1988; Dawson 2011; Friedland 1964; Hofmann and Gallupe 2015; Joosse 2006; Nepstad and Bob 2006; Pillai et. al. 2001; Rustow 1970; Selznick 1984; Slater 1995; Venkatesh 2008; Wilson 1975). Despite this broad multidisciplinary interest, there is a curious lack of cross-fertilization between research on terrorism and the existing body of knowledge on leadership (Dawson 2010, pp. 2-3). In the rare cases where some form of cross-fertilization does occur, terrorism scholars tend to turn to one of three theoretical paradigms in order to make sense of the dynamics of leadership: social movement theory, organizational theory, and charisma. The contributions and limitations of each of these paradigms will be elaborated upon in the following sub-sections.

1.5.a – Social movement theory

Social movement theorists have long recognized that leadership is a crucial component in resource mobilization, framing, and movement outcomes (Aminzade et. al. 2001; Barker et. al. 2001; Morris and Staggenborg 2007). However, the available research on leadership in social movements is somewhat limited (Barker et. al. 2001; Ratcliff 1984, pp. ix-xvi), and social movement scholars have noted that certain aspects of movement leadership have yet to be adequately theorized (e.g., Aminzade and McAdam 2001, p. 15; Melucci 1996; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 171; Nepstad and Bob 2006; Reger 2007, p. 1303; Ryan 2001, pp. 196-197). Furthermore, much of the research on social movements for the past fifty years has tended

to neglect right-wing and violent groups, focusing instead on progressive and left-wing social movements (Wiktorowicz 2005, p. 16; Wright 2007, p. 23). This trend has been slowly changing in the aftermath of the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks, and social movement scholars have and continue to make important contributions to our knowledge in areas such as terrorist radicalization (e.g., Cross and Snow 2011; Della Porta 1988; Della Porta and LaFree 2012; Wiktorowicz 2005; Wright 2007) and the mobilization of terrorist movements (e.g., Della Porta 1995 and 2013; Gentry 2004; Llera et. al. 1993). But, unfortunately, the social movement literature has yet to adequately address the full range of the influence of terrorist leaders. When the issue does get raised, it tends to focus narrowly on how terrorist leaders seize political opportunities (e.g., Wright 2007), frame grievances (e.g., Wiktorowicz 2005), or mobilize collective action (see, Gupta 2008, p. 71). For example, Stuart Wright (2007, pp. 44-96) credits certain key leaders with the re-emergence of American right-wing extremism through the successful blending of Christian Identity ideology with grievances held by guns-rights movements, tax protestors, and mid-western farming organizations suffering from the 1980's Farm Crisis. However, little attention is paid to how leaders actively contribute to the cornerstone of Wright's argument, the "opportunity/threat" spiral: a highly charged "warfare" frame adopted by right-wing Patriot actors which is exacerbated by the increased militarization of law enforcement (Wright 2007, pp. 34-38). The precise dynamics of leadership are similarly glossed over or overlooked in many other social movement studies that examine terrorism (e.g., Cross and Snow 2011; Della Porta 1995; Gentry 2004). This lacuna in knowledge may be the result of the continuing struggle to adequately understand leadership in social movements, the lack of appropriate meso and micro-level data on leadership dynamics within terrorist organizations, or a reflection of certain scholars' lack of background in leadership studies. The tendency of certain social movement

theoretical approaches to under or over emphasize human agency and structural opportunities may also polemically downplay or exaggerate the importance of leadership within organizations (Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 173). While important first strides have been made by social movement theorists examining various aspects of terrorism, much of the current research has fallen prey to the same pitfalls that have hampered research on leadership in other types of organizations and movements. As a result, social movement theories have only peripherally contributed to our knowledge on terrorist leadership.

1.5.b – Organizational theory

Organizational theory (e.g., Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio 2006; Bryman 1992; Burns 1978) is an additional paradigm which is particularly favored by political scientists interested in terrorism. Based upon the premise that leadership plays an important role in corporations and profit-driven groups, management scientists have been studying different types of leaders and how they affect important variables within their organizations, such as productivity and morale. Two general categories of leadership in organizational theory have been identified. The first is transactional leadership, where leaders outline and clarify task requirements for subordinates. As Bernard Bass (1985, p. 13) explains, these types of leaders manage the day-to-day aspects of workers by focusing on the process itself and not the larger issues facing the organization. An example of a transactional leader is the shift manager at a production factory, or a middle-manager at a finance company. The second form of leadership is transformational, which seeks to actively change the needs, motivations, and worldviews of followers to suit broader organizational goals. Some paradigmatic examples of transformational leaders are Steve Jobs (Apple) or Lee Iacocca (Chrysler), whose leadership helped revolutionize the way consumers and employees thought

and felt about their products. In simpler terms, transactional leaders are operationally-oriented, while transformational leaders are ideologically-oriented.

Organizational theories of leadership tend to be primarily used by scholars of leadership decapitation in their arguments for and against the effectiveness of the strategy (e.g., Freeman 2014; Johnston 2012; Price 2012). Research of this nature has provided useful insight into the influence of top-level leaders on strategic behaviors of terrorist groups. However, there is a certain level of incongruity between organizational theory and the realities of terrorist leadership. For the most part, organizational theories of leadership are crafted to explain behaviours in peaceful, profit-oriented, and hierarchical organizations. When applied to the context of terrorism studies, there is the implicit assumption that leaders within terrorist groups share the same characteristics as their corporate counterparts. Yet, that is clearly not the case. Almost universally, corporate leadership structures rely on rigid, hierarchical frameworks – there is a clear pyramid of authority, with entry level employees at the bottom and the CEO at the top. However, “new” forms of terrorism tend to be structured as decentralized networks where leader-follower dynamics are typically premised on affective or relational ties (see, Neumann 2009; Sageman 2004 and 2008). There are also differences in the quality of relationships between leaders and followers. The securitized environment in which terrorist groups function is conducive to highly emotionally-charged leader-follower relationships (i.e., Marc Sageman’s (2004, p. 101) “bunch of guys” theory), whereas corporate leaders typically interact with followers in a regimented, bureaucratic setting that generally keeps personal and professional worlds separate. Organizational theories of leadership also contribute little to ongoing research on the influence of ideological leaders on lone-actor terrorists - those who plan and execute attacks outside of the influence of an immediate and regimented group structure. In sum, while

they offer some unique and interesting macro-level insights, findings from terrorism research that use organizational theory are somewhat limited by the differing nature of terrorist groups and hierarchical corporate organizations.

1.5.c – Charisma

The third leadership paradigm used by terrorism scholars involves invocation of a particular leader's charisma in discussions of their ability to recruit, radicalize, and lead their groups (e.g., Carlisle 2007, p. 1058; Chaliand and Blin 2007, p. 287; Hamm 2002, p. 288; Nesser 2011, p. 177; Rinehart 2009, pp. 958-959; Sloodman and Tille 2006, p. 91). However, as Hofmann and Dawson (2014, pp. 355-360) argue, the concept of charisma tends to be widely misused by terrorism scholars (see also, Ingram 2013, pp. 1-3). They note that current research fails to tap into the analytical utility of the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership, and is largely limited by the adjectival (i.e., labelling leaders as 'charismatic' to superficially convey their likeability) and tautological usage (i.e., treating charisma as both the cause and effect of radicalization) of the popular conception of charisma. Furthermore, many radicalization studies 'flirt' with the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority, hinting at or briefly discussing it within the framework of their larger research. But, for the most part, these studies fail to adequately address the role of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership in any depth within their analyses.

In addition to the widespread misuse of the social-scientific concept of charisma in terrorism studies, the importance of charismatic authority within terrorist organizations is often brushed aside by terrorism scholars who are ill-at-ease with its religious or religious-like aspects (e.g., Jordan 2009, pp. 726-728; Pape 2006, pp. 87-90, 178). This, as Hofmann and Dawson

(2014, p. 352) observe, may be the result of a lingering bias among post-enlightenment scholars, who “are trained to search for a more primary cause or motivation” when confronted with intense religious rhetoric, but present “little in the way of specific argument [when] making this crucial assumption.” By failing to properly account for the influence and effects of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership in terrorist groups, a potentially important area of inquiry in the study of terrorist leadership continues to be overlooked.

In simpler terms, the vast majority of research on terrorism that references ‘charisma’ tends to employ it in a colloquial sense as an analytically unhelpful demonstrative or explanatory device. Furthermore, much of the current research displays superficial knowledge of the complex dynamics involved in the formation and maintenance of the charismatic bond between leaders and followers (see, Barker 1993; Dawson 2002; Dawson 2006b; Gardner and Avolio 1998; Hofmann and Dawson 2014; Hofmann 2015a; Joesse 2006 and 2014; Friedland 1964; Wallis 1982; Weber 1968). This suggests that there is a large gap in knowledge of how *truly* charismatic terrorist leaders may influence various social and strategic processes within their groups.

1.6 – How can we improve the study of terrorist leadership?

There have been some promising studies that have made important first steps towards comprehending the convoluted nature of terrorist leadership (e.g., Abrahms and Potter 2015; Freeman 2014; Garfield 2002; Hofmann and Dawson 2014; Hofmann 2015a; Ingram 2013; Marion and Uhl-Bien 2003; Milla et. al. 2013; Oots 1989; Ranstorp 1994; Rinehart 2009; Weinberg and Eubank 1989). Despite these efforts, we still do not have a solid understanding of the terrorist leader-follower relationship and its influence on various ideological, strategic, and behavioral aspects of organizations and their members. Given the recognized importance of

leaders to the creation of group ideology, strategic operation, and organizational success, research on terrorist leadership may prove to be pivotal in enhancing what we know about radicalization towards violence, how terrorist groups operate, and how they can be stopped. But we cannot know for certain if this is the case until additional robust empirical and theoretical research is conducted. To this end, I have identified at least five “lessons learned” from the wider literature on leadership and the strengths and weaknesses of the current literature on terrorist leadership that can help inform effective and efficient future research:

- (1) The study of leadership is multidisciplinary and future research should seek to cross-fertilize important concepts from the wider literature into the context of terrorist organizations*

The dynamics of leadership, like most complex social-scientific concepts, rarely presents itself as a singular, easy-to-comprehend phenomenon. As the existing scholarly literature demonstrates, there are many different types of leaders and many different ways of theorizing leadership. However, for the most part, the broader terrorism literature has failed to properly cross-fertilize important concepts from other disciplines into their analyses, preferring instead to “reinvent the wheel” by ignoring the pre-existing research (Dawson 2010, pp. 3-4). In order to make meaningful strides, the study of terrorist leadership should not fall prey to this trend. In other words, we need to examine terrorist leadership in all of its permutations and make a concerted effort to draw insights from the wider literature on leadership dynamics. Needless to say, this is a monumental task that will require numerous robust empirical and theoretical analyses which build upon the contributions of studies on leadership from sociology (e.g., Barker et. al. 2001; Friedland 1964; Selznick 1984; Slater 1995; Weber 1968), social anthropology (e.g., Venkatesh 2008; Wilson 1975; Wolf 2000), management sciences (e.g., Bass 1985; Burns 1978; Conger

and Kanungo 1988; Gardner and Avolio 1998), social psychology (e.g., House and Howell 1992; Katz and Kahn 1978), political sciences (e.g., Madsen and Snow 1991; Willner 1984; Young 1991), the study of new religious movements (e.g., Barker 1993; Dawson 2011; Wallis 1982), and other related social-scientific disciplines. Not every insight from the wider literature on leadership will be applicable to the context of terrorist organizations. However, careful and nuanced application of findings from across multiple disciplines is likely to greatly enhance our knowledge on the social dynamics of leadership within terrorist groups and prevent scholars from wasting time and effort re-discovering findings that have already been robustly analyzed elsewhere.

(2) Different types and styles of leadership can be present across strata and clusters within groups

The existing research literature on leadership in terrorist groups has near-universally focused upon “top” leaders (i.e., the most senior leadership figure within a group), and has largely failed to adequately address the contributions of mid-to-low level leaders to the behavioral and strategic aspects of their groups (see, Hofmann 2013; Ingram 2013; Johnston 2012; Jordan 2009; Langdon et. al. 2004; Price 2012; Rinehart 2009). As the broader research literature demonstrates, varying types of leadership can emerge across different strata and clusters within both hierarchical and de-centralized organizations (Barker et. al. 2001, p. 15; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 176; Hofmann and Gallupe 2015, p. 133; Varese 2013). Leadership can even manifest in covert and unexpected ways within organizations that explicitly adopt a collective or “leaderless” structure (Freeman 1972; Purkis 2001). In simpler terms, aside from the most extreme authoritarian groups, multiple levels and styles of leadership are likely to be

present within organizations, and they may even require it in order to succeed in their goals (Aminzade et. al. 2001, pp. 152; Goldstone 2001, pp. 156-158). The failure of the existing research to properly account for multiple levels and styles of terrorist leadership is indicative of a large gap in knowledge on how terrorist leaders may influence important social and strategic aspects across different levels and clusters within a singular group. While the study of “top” terrorist leaders has its place in the literature, future research needs to purposefully attempt to analyse and integrate the effects of multiple levels of leadership within terrorist organizations if we are to truly begin developing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

(3) A comprehensive understanding of terrorist leadership requires mixed, multi-methodological, and comparative approaches

Much in the same way that a multi-disciplinary approach to analyzing terrorist leadership is required in order to properly understand its multiplex nature, future research on terrorist leadership will require the use of a variety of different methodological and epistemological approaches. The research on terrorist leadership that has been conducted to date has largely suffered from a failure to consider the benefits of mixed or multi-method approaches. For example, with few exceptions (e.g., Freeman 2014; Morehouse 2014; Wilner 2010), empirical studies of terrorist leadership decapitation have largely focused on large-N quantitative analyses of its effectiveness as a strategy (e.g., Hafez and Hatfield 2006; Johnston 2012; Jordan 2009; Mannes 2008; Price 2012). While these studies have undoubtedly enhanced what we know about the effects of leadership decapitation on terrorist organizations, the failure to conduct sufficient comparative or mixed-methodological research that hybridizes findings from macro, meso, and micro-level analyses has effectively contributed to the division of scholars into two camps “for”

and “against” the effectiveness of the strategy, based largely upon methodological and epistemological criticisms (e.g., Carvin 2012, p. 549; Johnston 2012, pp. 48-49; Jordan 2009, p. 726; Price 2012, pp. 12-13). If future research on terrorist leadership is to avoid a similar contentious situation, we should be mindful of employing mixed or multi-methodological approaches to ensure that the subtleties and nuances of the phenomenon are not lost in unidimensional analyses. Well-crafted comparative research and meta-analyses that synthesize findings from a variety of methodological approaches are required in order to identify common conclusions, outcomes, and elements related to terrorist leadership.

In addition to mixed and multi-method approaches, efforts should also be made to include other modes of inquiry aside from ‘traditional’ quantitative and qualitative methods, such as social network analysis (SNA) and geospatial information systems (GIS) analysis. Both SNA and GIS methods have yet to be consistently applied to the examination of terrorist leadership. As a result, we may be missing crucial insight into how terrorist leaders influence social behaviors and strategic choices within their groups. Since SNA approaches are concerned with relational (i.e., social ties, organizational membership, and so on) data, it is well suited for the multi-level measurement of activities, importance, and influence of various types of leaders at different levels or clusters within terrorist organizations. GIS analysis, which involves the examination and manipulation of spatial or geographic data, has the potential to provide useful information on trends and preferences of terrorist groups by correlating their strategic and behavioral choices with the physical locations of terrorist events and attacks. Future research on terrorist leadership could greatly benefit from both of these methodological approaches.

(4) *We need to develop nuanced theories of leadership that take into account the larger social, political, cultural, and religious contexts of terrorist groups*

Individual terrorist groups vary greatly in terms of their ideology, political grievances, goals, cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and so on (Dawson 2014, pp. 68-70; Horgan 2005, pp. 30-32). Terrorist groups are also invariably affected by the larger socio-political contexts in which they are formed, radicalize, and operate (Della Porta 1995, pp. 83-85; Della Porta 2013, pp. 18-22). Since terrorist organizations do not operate in a social vacuum, there are likely to be significant differences across groups in terms of leadership-style, the role of leaders in the day-to-day ideological and strategic operation of their groups, and the genre of relationship between leaders and their followers. For example, the methods, motives, and actions of a Sri Lankan ethno-nationalist terrorist organization like the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and their extreme veneration of their leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, cannot be seamlessly conflated with a group like the Lebanese Islamist⁵ terrorist group Hezbollah and their leader, Hasran Nasrallah. Given the social, political, religious, and cultural differences in which these two terrorist groups formed and operate, it not feasible to expect that their leadership styles and methods are completely congruous with one another. In other words, the heterogeneous nature of terrorist groups makes it unlikely that there is a ‘grand unified theory’ of terrorist leadership that can be used to universally explain the phenomenon across different types of terrorist groups. This does not mean that comparison of leadership dynamics across different terrorist groups is impossible. Rather, when these comparisons are conducted, they *must* account and control for

⁵ The term *Islamist* is terminologically distinct from *Islamism*, *Islam*, or other broader terms related to individuals or groups belonging to the Muslim faith. *Islamist* refers specifically to the extreme radical and often violent branch of fundamental Islam embraced by Sunni Salafist-Jihadist groups (e.g., Al-Qaeda, ISIS) and similar Shiite terrorist organizations (e.g., Hezbollah).

larger social, political, religious, temporal, and cultural differences (see, Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 174).

(5) We need to develop theoretical frameworks and metrics that allow for the operationalization of theories of terrorist leadership

In order to ensure the creation of robust and replicable empirical research, efforts should be made to develop theoretical frameworks, metrics, and methods that allow for the operationalization and measurement of terrorist leadership in all of its manifestations (see, Freeman 2014; Hofmann 2015a; Ingram 2013). Needless to say, attempts at operationalizing terrorist leadership should take into account the previously discussed “lessons learned” by tapping into the wider literature on leadership dynamics, examining multiple levels and styles of leadership, employing multi and mixed methodological approaches, and controlling for the larger social, political, cultural, and religious contexts of the terrorist groups being analysed.

Efforts to operationalize terrorist leadership will allow for the eventual emergence of sound theories that can inform effective coercive and non-coercive counter-terrorism strategies. The communal exercise of presenting and re-working carefully crafted measurement tools that are grounded in solid theoretical and methodological approaches will ensure that analytic methods will continually improve in terms of the reliability of their measurements and validity of their findings. It will also allow terrorism scholars to approach questions of leadership from common conceptual and theoretical ground. This will help facilitate more straightforward comparative studies, and may prevent needless rifts between scholars who may differ on the definition and application of certain concepts involving leadership.

The creation of theoretical frameworks and methods that operationalize theories of leadership will also help curb subjective and potentially misinformed usage. A salient example is Robert Pape's (2006, p. 178) single paragraph dismissal of the influence of charismatic leadership on suicide-bombing tactics:

These groups all had charismatic leaders. However, charismatic leadership alone is far too common among the numerous political, economic, religious, social and other groups that exist in every community to provide a sufficient explanation for such extreme willingness of individuals to follow a leader's direction to destroy themselves. Moreover, most people in any society are subject to the influence of multiple charismatic and persuasive leaders; often they are exposed to the influence of a number of such leaders - in schools, churches, and workplaces, and in their families - within the span of a few weeks. Hence, the simple fact of charismatic leadership does not explain why particular people followed a specific leader at a given moment to such an extreme.

Pape's point is based upon a simplistic argument that highlights the ubiquity of "charismatic" individuals in society. His stance shows little knowledge of the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority (see, Barker 1993; Dawson 2010, pp. 14-17; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 349-355; Friedland 1964; Wallis 1982; Weber 1968; Wilson 1975). It ignores the fact that the type of extreme charismatic bonds that are found in certain totalistic groups (i.e., NRMs, terrorist groups, radical political movements) are not the same as the colloquial concept of charisma, which is nothing more than a synonym for a diffuse notion of attractiveness or likeability. Without the appropriate tools to understand the various ways in which different types of leadership have real-world effects on the formation, operation, and demise of terrorist organizations, similar types of incorrect common-sense statements will remain unchallenged and unquestioned. As a result, these offhand dismissals may cause scholars to overlook potentially crucial insight into the type, nature, and strength of the influence of terrorist leaders upon behavioral and strategic aspects of their organizations.

The end goal of future research on terrorist leadership should be the creation of robust theories and the refinement of tools that help with its operationalization. Building upon the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarly literature on terrorist leadership, I seek to accomplish this end through an in-depth theoretical and empirical examination of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership within terrorist groups. I address many of the aspects of the “lessons learned” outlined above in the subsequent chapters, and I argue that the insights and tools outlined in this dissertation are necessary first steps in the production of future research on charismatic terrorist leadership.

1.7 – Methods

In order to provide multi-methodological insight into how the presence of charismatic authority may influence the radicalization towards violence and strategic operation of terrorist groups, I purposefully employ both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the empirical chapters of this dissertation. However, due to the format adopted by this dissertation, specific information about the methods used during research are covered in detail within each separate empirical chapter (see, sections 3.4 and 4.3).

1.8 – The nature of the data used

As Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010), Adam Dolnik (2013) and Lorne Dawson (2014) note, there are significant safety and security issues with obtaining primary data from active or incarcerated terrorists. The secretive nature of domestic and international counter-terrorist and intelligence operations can create an almost insurmountable ethical and practical barrier for academics interested in obtaining primary data. There are also numerous legal implications in approaching

suspects accused of terrorism related offenses who are undergoing legal-prosecution and are wary of divulging sensitive information that may potentially have a negative effect on their trial. As a result, I unavoidably tend to rely on secondary and open-source data (news and media documents, scholarly studies, court documents, datasets based on open-source information, etc.). In order to partially compensate for the quality of data, I attempted to employ data from primary accounts (autobiographies, transcripts from law-enforcement interrogations, documents written by the groups being analyzed, and so on) as much as possible. In addition, I attempted to maximize the validity of the secondary and open-source data through triangulation methods, which involves meticulously cross-referencing information across as many types of available sources as possible (see, Jick 1979; Olsen 2004). I discuss the implications of the limitations of data further in sections 4.6.a and 5.3.

1.9 – Thesis statement and research questions

Building upon the “lessons learned” discussed in section 1.5, in this dissertation I present and develop the thesis that certain social, political, cultural, and religious factors involved in the creation and maintenance of charismatic authority are likely to have a meaningful effect on the process of radicalization towards violence and the strategic operation of terrorist organizations. I seek to begin theoretically and empirically exploring the extent of this relationship by asking the following four research questions:

1. How does the current literature on terrorism (mis)use the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority?
2. How can we operationalize the social-scientific concepts of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership in a manner that allows for robust and replicable empirical research within the context of terrorist organizations?

3. What empirical evidence can be offered to better our understanding of the relationship between the presence of charismatic authority, the radicalization towards violence, and the strategic operation of terrorist organizations?
4. What are some of the challenges and opportunities for future research related to charismatic terrorist leadership?

I explore the first and fourth research questions in chapter 2 by synthesizing the social-scientific research on charismatic authority and critically analyzing how the wider terrorism literature (mis)uses the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority. I lay the foundation for the subsequent chapters by identifying a recurrent problem in the terrorism literature, discussing what we know about charismatic authority from other disciplines (particularly from the study of NRMs), and identifying important areas of inquiry for future analyses of charismatic terrorist leadership. I then address the second, third and fourth research questions in chapters 3 and 4 by justifying, presenting, and applying a theoretical framework meant to assist in the qualitative and quantitative measurement of the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups. After outlining the theoretical framework in chapter 3, I then apply it to a qualitative case study that examines the relationship between charismatic authority and the radicalization towards violence in the right-wing terrorist group, The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord. In chapter 4, I use the same theoretical framework to quantitatively examine how varying levels of the presence of charismatic authority may influence the operational choices and attack outcomes of a sample of thirty international terrorist groups selected from the Global Terrorism Database (START 2012).

1.10 – Conclusion

The review of the scholarly literature and the conceptual discussion on future directions for research on terrorist leadership presented above demonstrates the pressing need for more

theoretical and empirical research that examines *how* and *why* terrorist leaders matter to their groups. I argue that addressing this gap in knowledge may prove to be pivotal in helping researchers develop deeper and practical knowledge in key areas such as terrorist radicalization, the strategic behaviors of terrorist organization, and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism initiatives. I aim to begin addressing this lacuna through the theoretical examination of *charismatic* terrorist leadership, and the provision of important first empirical insights and findings into how these types of leaders may influence the radicalization towards violence and strategic operation of their groups. My hope is that this dissertation will provide the theoretical basis and tools necessary for future empirical research in this area, which in turn, will provide the data necessary for the development of sound theories of charismatic terrorist leadership that can be of practical use to governments and security agencies tasked with preventing and combatting the threat of terrorism.

Chapter Two

The Neglected Role of Charismatic Authority in the Study of Terrorist Groups and Radicalization⁶

This purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundations for future theoretical and empirical analysis of charismatic authority in terrorist groups. With little previous scholarly analysis devoted to understanding the dynamics of charismatically-led terrorist groups, I critically examine how the social-scientific concepts of charisma and charismatic authority are being widely misused in terrorism studies. After providing a synthesis of the social-scientific research on charismatic authority, I identify the three major ways in which it is being misused and overlooked in the literature on terrorism: adjectivally, tautologically, and by ‘flirting’ with core concepts of charismatic authority. I then conclude with an exploration of challenges and opportunities for future research concerning charismatic authority and charismatic leadership.

2.1 – Introduction

In the following graphic passage from *Terrorists in Love* (2011, p. 93), Ken Ballen describes the first meeting between Malik, a young terrorist recruit from Afghanistan, and Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of the Afghan Taliban:

Now, God alone in all His wisdom must have led him, because he no longer remembered where he was or even who he was. All he could recall was, as he thought he fell forward, he coughed. Then somehow he was pulled upright. It was as if God’s Hand had reached from behind and caught him by the back of the neck, yanking the fallen boy toward Heaven. Suddenly Malik was wrapped by Mullah Omar’s arms. Held in his embrace, Malik felt every thread from the Blessed Cloak of

⁶ This chapter has been published in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. See: Hofmann, D.C., & Dawson, L.L. (2014). “The Neglected Role of Charismatic Authority in the Study of Terrorist Groups and Radicalization,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 37, 348-368. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2014.879436>

the Prophet touching his skin, absorbed inside him by his own sweat. His nose too drew in the perfume of the Prophet Muhammad that Mullah Omar wore, a scent of musk and camphor. The sacred scent went straight through his nostrils to fill his lungs and every breath Malik would ever take, before the tears that formed in his eyes touched the skin that touched the Holy Cloak, racing through his blood until they pumped inside his very heart.

While Ballen may have exercised a certain poetic licence in his depiction of this event, the passage captures the mysterious, exciting, and transcendental aspect of the experience well. For Malik, Mullah Omar is more than a man, more than just an inspiring leader. He is the one capable of wearing the Blessed Cloak of the Prophet, a holy relic that symbolizes his righteousness and divine anointment. The cloak simultaneously confirms and confers a special legitimacy on the power of Mullah Omar to move and command others in ways that implicitly exceed the powers of other kinds of leaders. This special type of authority has a name that most will recognize and scholars of terrorism have used widely: “charismatic.” Mullah Omar is a paradigmatic example of a charismatic leader. But the frequent use of this term in discussions of terrorist leaders, and as a contributing factor in the radicalization of terrorists, is suggestive at best. The literature to date displays little in the way of adequate comprehension of the existing social-psychological and sociological understanding of this concept and its real analytical significance. As a result an important opportunity is being missed to learn more about the exceptional leadership and group dynamics of violent extremist groups.

Originally formulated by Max Weber (1968), charismatic authority is a form of “legitimate domination” exercised by an individual who is perceived to possess divinely given or inspired abilities, though this key feature is often overlooked in discussions of charismatic leaders in terrorist groups and otherwise. Much like the ongoing debate over the definition of terrorism, *charisma*, *charismatic authority*, and *charismatic leadership* are difficult concepts to define, and the situation is made worse by the wide spread and vague use of the word in

contemporary popular culture. For the immediate purposes of this study, *charisma* is a quality attributed to individuals who are thought to possess exceptional abilities, particularly to influence and inspire others, which are not accessible to the rest of us. *Charismatic authority* is a social phenomenon that exists independently of individual leaders. It is an abstract and complex social bond that is based upon followers' recognition of the exceptional, supernatural, or divine nature of a leader. *Charismatic leadership* is the real-world exercise of power that is legitimized by followers' recognition of the charismatic authority of a leader. These working definitions only hint at the full complexity of this social phenomenon.

Scholars in multiple disciplines (e.g., history, sociology, psychology, religious studies, political science, and management science) have been studying charismatic leadership and charismatic authority for decades (Bryman 1992; Conger and Kanungo 1988, pp. 325-336; Couch 1989; Howell and Shamir 2005; Madsen and Snow 1991; Pillai 1996; Willner 1984; Wilson 1975). But any attempt to address the mystery of charisma is hampered by a paradoxical aspect of the usage of the term today. On the one hand, charisma is treated as a valued social resource that is courted and rewarded in almost every facet of social life: religion, politics, education, business, and the military. On the other hand, colloquial references to charisma are so ubiquitous that the concept has become divorced from its original meaning, with every other politician and popular celebrity being dubbed charismatic. Charisma has been co-opted as a synonym for superficial attractiveness with a hint of mysterious allure. The resultant "banalization" of the term has sapped the concept of much of its analytical value (see, Merton 1968, p. 30). Yet in the study of terrorism there are many moments when researchers call on the notion as the most apt descriptor, capturing the amorphous special qualities of a leader, or the relationship between a leader and his or her followers, to help account for the formation, appeal,

and success of an insurgent or terrorist group (e.g., Gupta 2008, pp. 71-76; Nesser 2009, pp. 96-97; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 25-26, 127).

The vague everyday usage of charisma fails to provide a sufficient sense of what really distinguishes a charismatic leader. As Lorne Dawson (2010, p. 16) aptly highlights: “To simply acknowledge that a certain terrorist leader is or was charismatic, as [Jessica] Stern does several times in *Terror in the Name of God* (2003), or to stress in general that charismatic leadership is pivotal to terrorist success, as the NYPD report (Silber and Bhatt 2007) does, is intuitively enlightening, but not very helpful analytically.” With the repeated acknowledgement of the significant role charismatic leaders and authority may play in the radicalization process (e.g., Bartlett and Miller 2012; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 808; Dawson 2010, pp. 71, 73; Neumann 2009, p. 102; Noricks 2009, p. 52; Rinehart 2009, p. 9831 Schbley and McCauley 2005, pp. 569-570; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50), we should seek to ground the usage in a better grasp of the relevant social scientific literature. This chapter proposes to begin doing so by offering a brief synthesis of social scientific research on charismatic authority, particularly from the related literature on new religious movements, providing a critical analysis of how charismatic authority is being misused and overlooked in terrorism studies, and exploring the challenges and advantages of developing the concept in research on terrorist groups and the process of radicalization.

2.2 - What is charismatic authority?

In an oft quoted passage Weber (1968, p. 48) defines charismatic authority as:

A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to

the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.

Weber's interest in charisma is grounded in his overall concern with the three ideal-typical forms of legitimate domination: *traditional*, *rational-legal* and *charismatic* authority. Traditional authority demands obedience to an individual or office by virtue of tradition or custom, such as in a monarchy or chiefdom. Rational-legal authority is vested in an office or position found within the legally established order, like a sheriff or an elected official. In sharp contrast to the other forms of legitimate domination, charismatic authority is not owed to an office by virtue of law or custom, but to particular individuals whom Weber (1968, p. 19) describes as "holders of specific gifts of body and spirit." These charismatic individuals operate outside the norms of rational society. As opposed to the traditional or legal claims of legitimate domination, charismatic authority bases its claim solely on the apparent personal charisma of a leader. Unlike traditional and rational-legal forms of authority, charisma is free from conventional societal or traditional constraints and is virtually unrestricted in its scope (Barker 1993, p. 182; Dawson 2011, p. 118). While an elected official is beholden to the law and a chieftain of a tribe is bound by custom, the charismatic leader "knows only inner determination and inner restraint" (Weber 1968, p. 20). This freedom from every-day routine prompts Weber to describe charismatic authority as a revolutionary force crucial for social change. In Bernard Bass' (1985, p. 37) words, "charisma carries with it a challenge to the old order, a break with continuity, a risky adventure, continual movement, ferment, and change." By virtue of their unfettered authority, the charismatic leader is capable of imposing a personal vision and goal upon those willing to recognize their charisma. As Weber (1968, p. 51) explains, the charismatic leader says to his or her followers: "It is written... but I say unto you...".

2.2.a - Charisma and religion

For Weber the ideal-type of charismatic authority, “pure charisma,” is inherently religious.⁷ The charismatic leader’s gifts and powers are perceived to be divine in origin. Correspondingly, most charismatic leaders view their missions as God-given, or at the very least divinely inspired (Weber 1968, p. 22). This is manifestly the case in most instances of Islamist extremism. When such charismatic leaders fail to live up to the expectations of their followers it is invariably thought that they have been abandoned by the gods or God (Weber 1968, p. 23). Even when charismatic authority manifests in secular contexts an ineluctable religious aspect remains. Reflecting on the broader case literature dealing with specific charismatic leaders, Dawson (2010, p. 15) explains:

In specific instances the leaders may or may not be thought to have special powers, even magical ones, but their words and deeds are understood in an essentially mythological frame. They are given a symbolical significance that involves at least implicit reference to the transcendent or sacred.

Charismatic authority tends to be intimately tied to religion, if only in inchoate forms and the relative neglect of charisma as a focus for research in terrorism studies may well stem, in part, from the secular background and proclivities of most of the scholars in the field. They are ill-at-ease with the strident religious aspects of the worldviews of jihadi terrorists and others (e.g., Aum Shinrikyo). In the face of intense religious rhetoric they are trained to search for a more primary cause or motivation (e.g., McCauley and Moskalenko, pp. 81-84, 139-140; Pape 2006, pp. 87-90, 178; Roy 2008, pp. 19-21; Seegmiller 2007). A close scrutiny reveals, however, that little in the way of specific argument is usually offered for making this crucial assumption

⁷ The use of ‘religion’ in this context does not pre-suppose that members of terrorist groups need formal religious affiliation in order to attribute authority to a leader. It therefore refers to both institutional and non-institutional forms of religious activity, belief, and dedication.

(Dawson 2014). Other scholars have pushed back against this trend (e.g., Atran 2010; Chaliand and Blin 2007; Dawson 2010; Jones 2008; Juergensmeyer 2003; Neumann 2009), and the religious, or at least quasi-religious, nature of charismatic authority is not grounds, implicitly or explicitly, for overlooking the systematic study of its role in the process of radicalization, hand-in-hand with the other political, social, and psychological aspects favored by most scholars.

2.2.b - The charismatic bond and the social processes of the attribution of charisma

Unfortunately, Weber's description of charisma is somewhat muddled (Friedland 1964, pp. 18-26; Joosse 2014). As a result, certain definitional ambiguities and tensions have entered into the academic literature. The crux of the problem is that Weber (1968, pp. 48-49) defines charisma as a "certain quality of an individual personality" while simultaneously asserting that "it is the recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma." Charismatic authority is validated by *others* who recognize certain qualities associated with charisma in a leader. In other words, charismatic authority is something that is *attributed* to a leader, and not something the leader possesses (Barker 1993, pp. 183-186; Dawson 2011, p. 116; Friedland 1964, p. 20-21; Wilson 1975, pp. 4-5). Scholars have argued that charismatic leaders display certain consistent behaviours which seem to help prompt attributions of charisma, and they have begun to systematically document these behaviours. But the dominant view is that much more is involved in the attribution of charisma than leaders behaving in certain ways.⁸ Many people strive to be charismatic, but few succeed in winning the intense devotion that distinguishes this kind of leader from others (Dawson 2002; Dawson 2011; Wallis 1982).

⁸ For a good overview of this issue see the section on "Behavior Prompting the Attribution of Charisma" (pp. 16-20) in Dawson (2006b).

The general consensus among scholars is that the focal point of research should be the *relationship* between the charismatic leader and his or her followers and not the individual psychological qualities of the leaders (Barker 1993; Bass 1985; Dawson 2002; Dawson 2006b; Gardner and Avolio 1998; Friedland 1964; Joosse 2014; Wallis 1984; Wallis 1993). This relationship, also known as “the charismatic bond,” is socially constructed through a complex process of negotiation. It rests on an exchange of mutual needs, where the charismatic leader is granted authority by the followers in return for recognition, affection, and reinforcement of worth (Wallis 1984, pp. 26-27). The essential reasonableness of this exchange is stressed in the literature on charismatic authority, and much like in terrorism studies, psychopathological and brainwashing explanations of the nature and appeal of charismatic forms of authority are widely discredited (Barker 1984; Barker 1993; Dawson 2002, pp. 80-81; Dawson 2006b, pp. 11-16; Dawson 2010, pp. 2-3).

With the charismatic bond identified as the primary focus of study, the relevant academic literature on charismatic authority in the study of new religious movements has concentrated increasingly on three “overlapping yet analytically distinguishable social processes” (Dawson 2011, p. 114). The first process examines the macro-sociological conditions giving rise to charismatic authority. The second process is the social construction and management of charismatic authority, examining why followers commit to a charismatic leader, as well as the methods for maintaining that authority once granted. The final process is the “routinization of charisma,” to use Weber’s term, which includes the conditions and motivations leading to the transformation of charismatic authority into more stable forms of traditional or rational-legal authority. All three social processes are very pertinent to the study of the origins, nature, and demise of terrorists groups. But given the limitations of this discussion, this chapter emphasizes

the process of the social construction and maintenance of charismatic authority. This is perhaps the most pertinent topic for analyses of the process of terrorist radicalization, given the emphasis of current radicalization models on affective ties and small group dynamics.

2.2.c - Conditions giving rise to charismatic authority

Historically, Weber (1968, p. 19) notes, “in times of psychic, physical, economic, ethical, religious, political distress” the natural leaders have been charismatic ones. Indeed, we do not need to exercise much imagination to think of instances in Western history where crises are correlated with the strong influence of charismatic leaders. At the center of almost every major historical crisis stands a figure like Joan of Arc, Martin Luther, Napoleon Bonaparte, Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Juan Peron, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and so on. The majority of scholars agree with Weber that it is crises which catalyze the emergence of charismatic authority by setting the social context that shapes an audience susceptible to the influence of charismatic leaders (e.g., Bass 1988, pp. 55-57; Dawson 2010, pp. 8, 15-16; Dawson 2011, pp. 119-124; Friedland 1964, pp. 22-24; Kets de Vries 1988, p. 238; Madsen and Snow 1991, pp. 14-23; Tucker 1970, pp. 80-86; Wallis 1982, p. 170; Wilson 1975, pp. 26-31). Charismatic leaders may seize upon pre-existing crises in order to establish the charismatic bond, or they may take an active hand in stimulating the perceptions of crisis among potential followers in order to make social conditions favorable for their emergence (Bass 1988; Boal and Bryson 1988; Ingram 2013, p. 33).

In a survey of the research literature Dawson (2011, pp. 121-123) identifies five more specific factors that must be taken into consideration in accounting for the emergence of charismatic authority. Three are situational factors which encourage the attribution of charisma

to a leader, and two are more explicitly strategic, focusing on how truly charismatic leaders exploit the social crises. There are strategic aspects to all five points, however, which helps to explain why many aspire to be charismatic leaders and only a few succeed. The three situational factors are:

(1) The crisis in question must be perceived as “acute” (over a short period) or “chronic” (there no perception of a quick resolution), but also “ultimate” (bringing complete and irrevocable change). Of course, the leader often plays a role in causing others to see the crisis as ultimate.

(2) The crisis must lead to the breakdown of existing forms of rational-legal and traditional order, or at least threaten such a breakdown. This is part of the “ultimacy” of the crisis, and the leaders may again play a creative role in fostering this view. When traditional, legal, rational and bureaucratic means fail to resolve the crisis, people become “charisma hungry.”

(3) It is easier for charismatic leaders to arise in societies that encourage their appearance. Jesus was able to establish his charismatic authority because the Jews of the ancient near east, and others, lived in a place and time saturated with messianic expectations.

The two more strategic factors are:

(4) The charismatic leader’s message must resonate with a mass audience if he or she is to make a plausible claim to special authority. Preaching pacifism to a warrior culture is

unlikely to work. Rather, “charismatic leaders manage to formulate and express the inchoate sentiments deeply held by the people around them” (Dawson 2011, p. 122).

(5) The charismatic leader must believe they are the only ones capable of resolving the crisis, and, more importantly, convince others this is the case. As Tucker (1970, p. 81) notes: “Charismatic leadership is specifically salvationist or messianic in nature. Herein lies its distinctiveness in relation to such broader and more nebulous categories as ‘inspired leadership’ or ‘heroic leadership’.”

These conditions, and others yet to be discerned, distinguish the emergence of truly charismatic leaders, and not just the pseudo-charisma of popular politicians or movie stars. Intuitively many of them seem applicable to situations in which charismatic terrorist leaders have arisen, as in the case of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, Andreas Baader and the Red Army Faction, Abimael Guzman and the Shining Path, Vellupillai Prabhakaran and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and Abdullah Öcalan and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party. But each case needs to be investigated, and much will hinge on accurately detecting the perceptions of the leaders and their followers.

2.2.d - Social construction and management of charismatic authority

What we are really talking about is the emergence of the charismatic bond. This is the social process where group members gradually come to identify with the leaders and to attribute charisma to them. Much of the insight we have into this process comes from two important case studies of the charisma of Sun Myung Moon, the founder and leader of the Unification Church,

and David Berg, the founder and leader of The Children of God, later called The Family (Barker 1993; Wallis 1982).⁹ The studies are focused on singular cases, but their findings can be cautiously generalized, given the paucity of other comprehensive and comparative research on the social construction of charismatic authority (see, Dawson 2011, pp. 124-127).

In the process of undertaking her extensive field research on the Unification Church, Barker (1993) observed a process of socialization that she called “charismatization.” The majority of people joining the Unification Church do not do so because they already recognize the charisma of Moon. It is only after they have been exposed to Moon’s charisma, in ways identified by fellow members, that new recruits gradually come to accept his charismatic authority. Much like the process of terrorist radicalization, the process of charismatization is a “slippery slope” which does not occur in lockstep, but through a gradual process of increasing devotion to the charismatic leader. Members reinforce their beliefs through daily actions which comply with the norms of the group and celebrate the extraordinariness of the leader. Group members then express their devotion to other members, further reinforcing “the spiral of the legitimation process” (Barker 1993, p. 197). In this way the charisma of the leader is constantly being created and re-created hand-in-hand with the socialization of converts.

As an illustrative example, Barker recalls her attendance at a speech given by Moon at an academic conference sponsored by the Unification Church. The varied reactions from the socialized and un-socialized audience members exemplify the sharp contrast of the effects of charismatization:

Moon was speaking in Korean in what sounded to me like a bellicose tone with ferocious gesticulation; the translation seemed ponderous and uninspiring. After a while, shuffles and murmurs from the main body of the hall suggested boredom and

⁹ Barker’s findings for Moon have been analysed and partially systematized by Dawson (2011), relative to the wider literature on charisma.

embarrassment. Some of my academic colleagues got up and left, one or two in evident distress. Had I not been a sociologist of religion, I might have followed them, but I had become engrossed in observing the Unificationists around me. They were rapt; eyes were aglow, bodies rigid with attention (Barker 1993, p. 185).

Like Barker, Wallis (1982) is interested in the social construction of Berg's charisma among the Children of God. In their respective studies, Barker and Wallis identify many overlapping mechanisms of socialization which contribute to the process of charismatization. They begin by noting that the Unification Church and the Children of God have closed and totalistic environments, where outside influences are carefully controlled and kept to a minimum. Barker (1993) likens it to the authoritarian structures found in other totalistic groups such as the Armed Services or a convent, where members are under constant pressure to conform from both their leaders and peers. With limited access to outside information and alternative influences, and the group's accepted involvement in regulating almost every aspect of life, the importance of the charismatic leader and their goals is amplified. Borrowing a term from Weber, Wallis (1982, pp. 35-36) calls the totalistic group a *gemeinde*: a community or fellowship where the leader and their followers motivate and grant worth to each other through love. In this regard, it is worth noting the importance of love as a force in charismatically led groups. As Len Oakes (1997, p. 161. See also, Jacobs 1984) observes, charismatic relationships are basically about love. Researchers on terrorism have long noted the strong role played by group loyalties and fraternal love in accounting for the extraordinary sacrifices of individual terrorists and perpetuation of groups and causes (e.g., Atran 2010, pp. 33-34; Ballen 2011; Sageman 2004, pp. 1-3, 107-119, 125-130; Sageman 2008, pp. 8, 56, 64, 66-70).

After acceptance into the *gemeinde*, new members are gradually exposed to an esoteric body of knowledge about the charismatic aspects of the leader. These teachings are part of a larger "cult of personality" centered on the charismatic leader. Members are surrounded with

images and tales of the leader, epitomizing him or her as someone to emulate. The charismatic leader is also central to the folk culture of the movement, as stories of the leader's prowess and supernatural capabilities are disseminated. The leader's past accomplishments are aggrandized by the retelling of mythologized biographies. When confronted with external information which seems to discredit or diminish the charismatic leader, followers learn to employ certain rationalizations to protect the leader's special status, and hence their own identity. For example, it is a common and counter-intuitive practice of Unificationists to interpret resistance to Moon's teachings and setbacks as evidence that "Satan has become really worried by Moon's success" (Barker 1993, p. 196).

The process of charismatization depends on creating and maintaining some social and physical distance between the leader and their followers. Too much exposure can be delegitimizing. Some distance, alternatively invites processes of projection (see, Joosse 2006). "While not going so far as to say that the ... distance allows [the leader] to be all things to all people," Barker (1993, p. 197) comments, "it does allow individuals a certain degree of freedom in which to construct an image [of the charismatic leader] that will fit or resonate with their own values and ideals." As a necessary component of ensuring social and physical distance from their followers, the charismatic leader must rely on an inner circle of trusted individuals. The inner circle is given exclusive access to the leader, which elevates their status among the group. The inner circle's increased prestige causes them to have a vested interest in further elevating the charismatic leader's status. As Wallis (1982, p. 38) comments, "to secure recognition for the leader is thus to secure – in attenuated form – recognition for themselves."

Once followers undergo the process of charismatization, the leaders must continue to exert themselves to maintain the charismatic bond, in great and small ways. The impressions

created by almost every interaction with the followers, collectively and individually, must be managed carefully (Dawson 2006b, pp. 16-20; Gardner and Avolio 1998, pp. 32-34). This means charismatic authority, relative to traditional and rational-legal authority, is inherently precarious. Charismatic leaders must perform a careful balancing act, when it comes to their exposure, in order to maintain the constant reaffirmation of their charismatic status, the primary source of their power. As Weber (1968, pp. 22-23) states:

The charismatic leader gains and maintains authority solely by proving his strength in life. If he wants to be a prophet, he must perform miracles; if he wants to be war lord, he must perform heroic deeds. Above all, his divine mission must 'prove' itself in that those who faithfully surrender to him must fare well. If they do not fare well, he is obviously not the master sent by the gods.

If leaders cannot properly negotiate the challenges they risk losing authority over their followers. In this regard Dawson (2011, pp. 86-98) more specifically discusses four major structural challenges of charismatic authority facing all such leaders: (1) maintaining the leader's image, (2) moderating the psychological identification of the followers with the leader, (3) negotiating the routinization of charisma, and (4) achieving new successes. In the context of new religious movements, if leaders fail to address these issues properly it can set in play a dysfunctional group dynamic that encourages violence as a compensating mechanism. To the extent a terrorist organization is dependent on charismatic forms of authority a similar dynamic may apply leading to either an escalation of violent activity or more extreme forms of violence. But that is an example of a relevant line of inquiry to be explored in another more detailed application of ideas about charismatic authority in the context of specific terrorists groups.

2.3 - A critical look at the use of charisma in the study of terrorism

The congruity between the investigation of the nature and operation of charismatic authority in

new religious movements and the study of terrorist groups and the process of radicalization is fairly obvious, but with the exception of Christine Sixta Rinehart's (2009) article on the radicalization of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, charismatic leadership in terrorist groups has not been examined directly.¹⁰ This lacuna has been noticed. Recent scholarship has acknowledged that gaining a better understanding of certain qualities of leadership, particularly charisma, would enhance our grasp the dynamics of terrorist groups and radicalization (Crelinsten 2009, p. 72; Crenshaw 2011, p. 46; Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 808; Dawson 2010, p. 16; Gupta 2008, pp. 71-73; Hassner 2011, p. 699; Horgan 2005, pp. 33-34; Kirby 2007, p. 418; Noricks, 2009, p. 52; Post 2005, p. 616; Richardson 2005, p. 45; Rinehart 2009, p. 983; Schbley and McCauley 2005, p. 569; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50; Slooman and Tillie 2006, p. 92). But when the concept of charisma is invoked in these cases, the discussion often cleaves to the limited popular understanding and little awareness is displayed of the social scientific research on charismatic authority. The failure to pursue the term further has led to a diffuse and inadequate usage of the concept in terrorism studies.

To rectify the situation we must start by gaining a better grasp of the problem, noting where and how the concepts of charisma, charismatic leadership, and charismatic authority are used and abused in the literature on terrorism. To this end we will distinguish and criticize three similar yet analytically distinct ways in which the current usage of these related terms occurs: the adjectival, tautological, and flirtatious usages.

¹⁰ At the time of publishing, I was unaware of the work of Haroro Ingram (2013), who had written a book on charismatic leadership in militant and radical Islamism around the same time period. See section 5.3 for more details.

2.3.a - Adjectival usage

The term 'charisma' is often introduced into discussions of terrorism purely as an adjective, designed to convey that a leader or leaders enjoy an extraordinary popularity and influence.

Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko's (2011, p. 52) description of the Russian terrorist Andrei Zhelyabov is a case-in-point:

[Zhelyabov and a dozen other terrorism sympathizers] made their case to the general assembly in Voronezh some days later. Plechanov argued against violence, and Sonia vocally sided with him. However, she could not help being in awe of Zhelyabov, with his great presence, imposing physique, and charismatic speeches... It was rare for Zhelyabov to find himself unable to convince someone...

This largely colloquial usage of the term charismatic is quite common (e.g., Chaliand and Blin 2007, pp. 287, 294; Crelinsten 2009, pp. 36-37; Hamm 2002, p. 288; Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 78, 98; Levitas 2002, p. 62; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011, pp. 14, 30, 52, 70, 157; Nesser 2009, p. 92; Neumann 2009, p. 102; Pargeter 2008, p. 9; Richardson 2006, p. 45; Sageman 2004, pp. 64, 104; Stern 2003, p. 15). The term is used in a very subjective way and it is rare for any evidence to be provided that its use accurately describes the views of the peers and followers of the terrorist. It also suggests that charisma and the authority it brings are simply manifestations of the personality of the leader. In most cases the researchers choose to use the term to convey that they have something extraordinary in mind, something that goes beyond being a good orator and convincing. It is precisely this element of the unknown surrounding the colloquial use of the word that perpetuates its use. But the failure to pursue what this means leaves us unable to explain why select leaders, out of the many aspiring ones, gain so much authority over the lives of others.

2.3.b - Tautological usage

In her research on charismatization, Barker (1993, pp. 198-199) raises an important point:

Social scientists always need to be wary of falling into the tautological trap of confusing ‘naming with explaining’; that is they must not believe because they use a concept, such as ‘charisma’, to describe the fact that followers accord their leader a special kind of authority, they have thereby explained *why* the leader is accorded the authority.

Within the context of terrorism research, this tautological error occurs when charisma is used as a superficial causal explanation as to why certain terrorist leaders or groups attract or influence followers (e.g., Atran 2003, p. 1534; Bartlett and Miller 2012, p. 15; Carlisle 2007, p. 1058; Chaliand and Blin 2007, p. 287; Kaplan 2007, p. 553; Kleinmann 2012, p. 285; Moghaddam 2005, p. 165; Post 2005, p. 632; Price 2012, p. 17; Vidinio 2007, p. 579). An example of this error is highlighted below:

In 1987, out of the remnants of existent anti-NRA movements, Joseph Kony, a high-school drop-out and former altar boy from Gulu district, founded what would become known as the LRA. The LRA was formed when the more traditional rebel army of the UPDA was combined with the decidedly unorthodox HSM. Kony began his war by taking control of a unit of the UPDA. Kony, who is said to be a charismatic leader, was then able to attract volunteers from both the UPDA and the HSM (Vinci 2007, p. 339).

The assumption is that Kony, using his personal qualities as a charismatic leader, was somehow able to leverage his claims to authority in order to attract recruits to his movement from rival guerrilla factions. When researchers use charisma in this manner, without further exploring the *how* or *why* of the attribution of charismatic authority, they are committing the tautological error. In other words, the reasoning is circular. The attraction of others to a terrorist leader or group is because of the leader’s charisma, and the success in recruiting new members is evidence that the leader is indeed charismatic. This does not mean, however, that we should throw the baby out with the bathwater. There is good reason why the term charisma has been coined. It designates

an extraordinary state of affairs, a distinctive kind of leadership and authority, and type of relationship between leaders and followers. The commitment to Hezbollah and its Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah is notably different from that of Israelis to their Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the lack of similarity makes a difference that needs to be understood because of its implications for both our grasp of terrorism and counter-terrorism.

2.3.c - Flirtatious usage

The lack of studies analyzing charismatic leadership and authority in terrorism studies is puzzling, considering the stress placed on the importance of small group dynamics, affective ties, and social networks. As Wallis points out, the *gemeinde* is a charismatically-led group that operates primarily on mutual bonds of affection and love. Similarly, scholars like Sageman (2004 & 2008) argue that it is in-group love, not out-group hatred, which catalyzes radicalization. Many more mechanisms of radicalization co-vary with major components of the charismatization process: for example, the totalistic nature of the group, the slippery slope of escalating commitment, and the creation of cults of personality for heroic or martyred terrorist leaders. Consequently, many models of radicalization skirt around the edges of charismatization. They hint that charisma plays a consequential role in the radicalization process.

Marc Sageman's *Understanding Terror Networks* (2004) is a prominent example. In his ground-breaking study of terror networks, Sageman identifies three important factors determining who joins Salafi-Jihadist groups: (1) affective ties of friendship, kinship and discipleship, (2) the intensification of beliefs in small groups (i.e., the "bunch of guys" thesis), and (3) chance encounters leading to formal links, and acceptance by, elements in the global

Salafist movement (Sageman 2004, pp. 107-121). In his discussion of these factors, Sageman flirts with the concept of charismatic authority, but never puts his finger on it.

Of the three affective ties Sageman (2004, p. 114) identifies, the role of charisma is most pronounced in the case of discipleship:

In Southeast Asia, teachers command strong personal loyalty from their students. This loyalty may be lifelong, as illustrated by the three Jemaah Islamiyah convicts incarcerated in Singapore, who testified against their former teacher Abu Bakar Bassyir in June 2003. Despite their damning testimony, two spontaneously started to cry at the sight of their teacher. They repeated that they loved him but urged him to tell the truth about his activities.

The charismatic bond between the students and their teacher is evident in this situation. Many elements of the social process leading to the attribution of charisma are present as well. Groups like Jemaah Islamiyah, for example, are close-knit and totalistic communities based on bonds of love (*gemeinde*); they have emerged from cultures with a long history of cultural expectations about the mythical role of charismatic leaders in local and national affairs; and they espouse an ideology which frames the meaning of life in terms of an ultimate struggle for purity (i.e., defending Islam against the “Jews and Crusader powers” and the local puppet states doing their bidding), a struggle that is premised on the complete illegitimacy of the established traditional and rational-legal forms of authority.

Further illustration of charismatic processes embedded in discipleship is offered in Stewart Bell’s (2005, pp. 107-108) description of Al Qaeda’s secret oath of allegiance – the *bayat*:

A final requirement was that prospective members had to read “the pledge” of loyalty, or *bayat*... It is an act of personal surrender, in which an individual places himself entirely in the hands of his leader, organization and cause... To outsiders, *bayat* seems like nothing more than quaint words, uttered in barren conditions in the unpeopled loneliness of the training camp world. But an intelligence official who interviewed some of those involved in Jabarah’s terrorist plots told me that those who have taken the pledge take it

very much to heart. To them, *baya* is a sacred rite. By the time recruits make *bayat*, they have been so deeply indoctrinated by their instructors, so thoroughly infused with the idea that al Qaeda is the army of God, the last line of defense of the true Islamic faithful, that they believe their oath to Osama is a religious undertaking. Breaking *bayat* is like breaking a promise to God.

This description evokes a certain gravitas akin to the bond established between Bassyir and his students. However Bell, like Sageman, is content to simply present the information, hinting that there is something special at work in the relationships discussed. Some may retort that an in-depth examination of charisma is beyond the scope of the research Sageman, Bell, and others, or that these descriptions are justifiably used as literary mechanisms to drive another argument home. Both points are valid. However, this does not change the fact that they touch briefly and inadequately on a potentially critical element of the process of radicalization. By overlooking the latent social-scientific themes and the creation of overt social bonds, we may be missing an opportunity to gain a much better insight into how and why these people choose to internalize the radical message of their beloved leader, and sacrifice their lives at his or her beckoning. In the end we may not need to invoke the concept of charisma to explain what happened, but we cannot know since no one has systematically sought to find out.

It seems likely that charismatic authority may have a role to play in Sageman's discussion of the "bunch of guys" thesis as well, which posits that the intensification of radical beliefs occurs in small groups bound together by strong fraternal ties. Sageman explains that at the heart of every terrorist "node" in the Al-Qaeda network is an individual called a "hub." This person links the group to the central organization and to other terrorist nodes. In his description of the hub of the Montreal node responsible for the "millennium bomb plot" Sageman (2004, p. 139) alludes to the role played by Fateh Kamel's charisma:

Kamel was a typical hub, a charming and handsome man with a knack for making friends and acquaintances. Everyone in the Maghreb community of Montreal seems

to have known him and his beautiful Canadian wife, who had converted to Islam. In network language, he was a hub with lots of links. The better known he became, the easier it was for newcomers to find him and the more people he met. Given his attractive personality, it became likely that new people sharing his beliefs connected with him. Through Kamel, the Maghreb Arab network grew.

Admittedly the allusion to “charisma” is indirect and rather banal in form, but Sageman is seeking to specify and call attention to the significance of those ineffable aspects found in the relationship with a charismatic leader.¹¹

Similar themes can be found in Mark Hamm’s (2002, p. 114) description of the right-wing preacher Mark William Thomas:

At Thomas’s invitation, over the next few months McCarthy, Stedeford, and Brescia [future members of the Aryan Republican Army] made numerous trips to the farm for Bible study, target practice, and conversations with Thomas about race, politics, and the apocalyptic dream. For [them], Thomas offered something that they never experienced in the Catholic Church. Here was a tall, lanky, silver-tongued preacher wearing sunglasses and a Jim Morrison T-shirt. Although only Thomas, Stedeford, and Brescia know exactly what Thomas said to the errant Catholics, it is likely that Thomas spoke of himself: how he had traversed America as a common laborer – hearing her people and her poets, and being awakened to an oppressive government controlled by Jewish interests – and how he had found religion and his niche as a respected family man, minister, and orator whose words offended the politically correct but stirred a fiber of truth buried deep within the American psyche. He no doubt spoke of Jim Morrison’s visions of dangerous times – how every youth culture lives with its own dark impulses.

The descriptions of Kamel and Thomas evoke aspects of appeal and influence that often play a crucial role in creating and sustaining the networks of personal affiliation, admiration, and trust on which the operation of terrorist movements and cells are dependent. It would be interesting to explore to how and to what extent Kamel and Thomas’ “attractive personalities” contributed to the affective attachments undergirding the growth of their terrorist networks. Is something more involved than good looks and an affable manner?

¹¹ Bartlett and Miller (2012, p. 15) also explicitly associate the role of Fateh Kamal in the Ressay group with his “charisma.”

In Sageman's discussion of the third factor determining who joins Salafi Jihadist groups, he notes the importance of the prestige stemming from participating in jihadi conflicts for the "brokers" who commonly link local nodes to al-Qaeda central. While Sageman indicates that these individuals are unlikely to be trusted enough to become part of the final terrorist node itself because they are too public in their pronouncements, it is their tendency and ability to brag about their experiences as an active jihadist that draws recruits to them (Sageman 2004, pp. 168-169). In other words, it is the charisma associated with their exploits that undergirds their functionality as go-betweens. They have a kind of situational jihadi charisma attributed to them that gives them authority. In other words, in the cultural/historical context in which these exploits are happening it is assumed that serving in these godly wars marks one out as having a special status vis-à-vis the divine. These exploits are woven into the "extraordinariness" crucial for the recognition of an individual's charismatic authority.

In their study of radicalized individuals Bartlett and Miller (2012, p. 15) place even greater emphasis on this factor in the process of radicalization, explicitly referring to charisma in the process:

For religious figures to be granted legitimacy, appearance and personal experience were as important as formal religious knowledge. The typical leader was often slightly older, always charismatic, and with a smattering of Arabic. To many of the young Muslims in the crowd, the leader's faith and trustworthiness are based on the fact that he is being bold, "the biggest thing... he is doing is speaking out."... Previous conflict experience abroad, or the perception of "battle hardiness," including the charisma and gravitas derived from such experiences, also emerged as important.

Here the term charisma is used descriptively, but the observations point to why it might be advantageous to more systematically explore the role of charismatic forms of authority in facilitating the recruitment of terrorists and the process of radicalization.

Similar arguments can be made about Lorenzo Vidino's (2007, p. 579) analysis of the Hofstad Group, Sageman's later analysis in *Leaderless Jihad* (2008, p. 79), and Ersel Aydinli's (2006, p. 307) discussion of the broker in the 2003 Istanbul bombings. The term is being used in these instances in a soft and largely descriptive sense, but the recurrence of the notion points to why further and more systematic study is justified.

Thinking more theoretically about the "puzzle of the root causes of terrorism," Dipak Gupta (2008, pp. 64-101) repeatedly highlights the need to consider the role of charismatic leaders. Most crucially he says:

The reason the measures of economic deprivation – relative or absolute, egoistical or aggregate national – do not show a strong correlation with the occurrence of political violence is because of the presence of the so-called "collective action" problem... the factors of deprivation only provide the *necessary condition* for mass violence. For *sufficient condition*, we need to look at the role the political entrepreneurs play in framing issues to produce a strong enough collective identity. The strength of collective identity, which clearly identifies the "in" and "out" groups – the "community" and its "enemies" – prompts people to take part in violent actions in the name of their group. In other words, it is not enough for an individual to turn to terrorism because of the frustration resulting from his own economic condition until he is certain that his misery is caused by the machinations of a well-defined group whom he identifies as his enemies. ... The political entrepreneurs bring about violent collective actions by "connecting the dots" for their followers by creating a consistent story by borrowing from religion, history, and mythologies (Gupta 2008, p. 71).

Quintan Wiktorowicz makes much the same point in *Radical Islam Rising* (2005), and they both go on to use "charismatic leaders" as a synonym for these entrepreneurs (see, Gupta 2008, pp. 73, 86).

References to charisma, no matter how inchoate, keep cropping up in the literature because leadership matters in the emergence and operation of international and homegrown terrorist groups, and there is the persistent sense that the leadership in question is extraordinary.

There is something “more” involved that the word charisma captures, but the mere use of the word is not sufficiently explanatory.

2.4 - Challenges and future research

The primary challenge for scholars interested in charisma will be to identify the dynamics of the charismatic bond within the specific context of terrorist groups and processes of radicalization.

The straightforward application of the research on charismatic authority in new religious movements (and in other contexts) will only take us so far, and caution must be taken to recognize the significant contextual differences. Nevertheless insights from the study of new religious movements can serve as a basis for future research. Summarizing what we have learned so far:

1. Contrary to popular understanding, charismatic authority is ultimately *attributed* to a leader, and not primarily because of the personal qualities of the leader.
2. The attribution of charisma is a *social process*, and research should focus on the development of the *charismatic bond* and not simply the motives, actions, or character of the charismatic leader.
3. The charismatic bond is not the product of psychopathology or brainwashing.
4. Ideal-typically, pure charisma is *essentially religious*, and there are religious aspects to even seemingly secular manifestations of charismatic authority. Analysts should keep this

religious-like quality in mind.

5. Scholars of new religious movements have identified three social processes that are crucial to understanding how charismatic authority emerges, operates, and prompts violent behavior: (1) how certain types of social crises favour the rise of charismatic authority, (2) the social construction of charismatic authority, and (3) the inherent structural challenges of charismatic authority. The research on each could be used to deepen our insight into the role of charismatic leadership in terrorist groups (e.g., Barker 1993; Dawson 2002; Dawson 2006a; Dawson 2011; Wallis 1982).

Charismatic authority and charismatic leadership are not present in every type of terrorist movement. However, when they are, it is likely that some form of charismatization is happening concurrently with, and playing a significant role in, the slippery slope of the radicalization towards violence. Solid empirical research and case studies, employing primary data, are needed to delineate the process. Qualitative research and ethnographic studies have greatly aided the study of charismatic authority in new religious movements (Dawson 2010, p. 18). The barriers to success are more daunting in the case of terrorism studies. Whereas scholars interested in charismatic authority in religious movements can more readily access a pool of former members for data, the secrecy, security, and legal concerns involved in talking to former or active terrorists are formidable. Nevertheless some notable access to ex-terrorists has been achieved (e.g., Horgan 2009) and it would be most interesting to explore these kinds of leadership issues by seeking to further find such individuals. But to augment these efforts, Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010, p. 812) suggests conducting more interviews with “social workers or youth workers who have close contact to the milieus in which radicalization is known to have occurred”, as well as

family members of radicals, and “individuals who were once radical, but have now turned away”. Journalists and scholars have begun to pursue such sources with some success (e.g., Atran 2010; Ballen 2011; Bell 2005; Merari et. al. 2009; Post et. al. 2003), but as Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010, p. 812) states: “More systematic interviews informed by a clear and consistent research methodology as well as a comparative analysis of such interviews would enhance the reliability and validity of the data.” A further initial starting point, as Dalgaard-Nielsen (2010) notes, would be the biographic essays and books written about specific terrorists or by terrorists. No one has scrutinized this literature yet, or done interviews to detect the presence and role of charismatic authority.

A preliminary look at the study of charismatic authority in terrorist groups from the vantage point of what is known in the case of new religious movements suggests that many of the conditions associated with the rise and presence of charismatic authority in new religious movements have some measure of congruence with terrorist movements:

- Most terrorist groups form due to perceived “acute”, “chronic” and “ultimate” crises, such as the perception of a “War Against Islam” which motivates home-grown terrorism (see, Sageman 2008, pp. 75-82) or perceptions of long-standing and seemingly irreparable relative deprivations (e.g., Borum 2003; Moghaddam, 2005, pp. 162-163).
- Certain forms of terrorism, such as the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ), the Basque ETA, or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stem from situations where political activists have decided that traditional and rational-legal forms of activism have failed.

- The notion that charismatic leaders are more likely to emerge in societies with strong cultural expectations about such leaders seems equally apt for instances of terrorism, and hence it should not be surprising that this kind of leadership is a more prominent feature of Islamist, and even more Twelver Shi'ite inspired terrorism, with their more pronounced messianic expectations and traditional reverence for strong *mujtahids* and *ayatollahs*.¹²
- At the heart of the appeal exerted by terrorist groups is the resonance of their ideologies, usually as embodied in the words, deeds and overall example set by specific leaders, with the deeply felt, if inchoate, grievances of a specific audience, a resonance that fosters an unusually strong self-identification with a cause and its leaders.
- Lastly, the kind of charismatic leader we are talking about believes they alone are capable of resolving the crisis in the right way, and we suspect this supreme self-confidence and exaggerated sense of self-importance can be detected in the writings, proclamations, and actions of terrorist leaders, if we choose to look.¹³

¹² Comparative studies of terrorist groups with a Sunni and Shiite orientation would be required to substantiate this supposition. But in the case of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam of Sri Lanka we have a professedly secular terrorist organization with a military and political leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, who was lionized while alive and then elevated to a martyr-like, even messianic, status on his death in 2009, with many followers denying he had died at the hands of his enemies. Such a complete charismatization of a secular leader is not unusual, however, in the context of the Tamil and broader Indian culture, with its heavy emphasis on god-like charismatic figures.

¹³ For example: Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Knights Under the Prophet's Banner," accessed June 13, 2013, available at (<http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2010/11/6759609-knights-under-the-prophet-banner.pdf>); Osama bin Laden, "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," accessed June 13, 2013, available at (http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military/july-dec96/fatwa_1996.html); Osama bin Laden, "Jihad Against the Jews and Crusaders," accessed June 13, 2013, available at (<http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>); Ulrike Meinhof, *Everybody Talks About the Weather... We Don't*. ed. K. Bauer (New York: Seven Stories Press).

The current focus on Islamist extremism and terrorism, and the religious nature of charismatic authority suggests it would be promising to examine further how charisma is attributed to leaders in the context of Islamic fundamentalism. In the Sunni Muslim world there is little in the way of centralized theological authority. Religious, and in some respects temporal authority, is vested in imams, muftis, and other religious scholars who act as interpreters of Quranic divine law in the face of an ever-changing world. In a situation of interpretative pluralism, Muslims are left to decide for themselves whose views are the most accurate or authentic (Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 25-26; Antoun 1989). Leaders can issue *fatwas* to their followers, but their acceptance is based on the perceptions of the leader's scholarly reputation and character. The vast majority of Muslims engaged in terrorism have not had a traditional religious upbringing, and their knowledge of Islam is limited (Barlett and Miller 2012, p. 9; Sageman 2004, p. 60; Sageman 2008, pp. 74, 77-78). In the absence of such knowledge young Muslims often will gravitate to the leader whose message resonates with them the most. In this regard more is at stake than the veracity of the religious message. As Wiktorowicz (2005, p. 26) notes: "For the seeker then, evaluations of reputation are influenced not only by perceptions about religious knowledge but other characteristics, like charisma."

Another area of terrorism research where the charisma of leaders is often brought up is the debate over the effectiveness of decapitation strategies in neutralizing terrorist groups. Notably, the charismatic nature of terrorist leadership is stressed within the articles that argue for the effectiveness or partial-effectiveness of decapitation strategies (e.g., Cronin 2006; Johnston 2012; Langdon et. al. 2004; Price 2012), while the converse is the case for those who argue for its ineffectiveness (e.g., Hafez and Hatfield 2006; Honig 2007; Jordan 2009). This approach is fundamentally flawed because it overlooks the realities of the group dynamics inherent in the

charismatization process, and assumes the charismatic leader is either difficult to replace or irreplaceable (e.g., Crenshaw 2011, p. 93; Price 2012. Pp. 17-18; Richardson 2006, p. 45) or that the cell-structure nature of contemporary terrorism downplays the effects of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership (e.g., Honig 2007, p. 571; Post 2005, p. 632). The reality is probably somewhere in the middle. However, neither approach goes far enough in analyzing the mechanisms and maintenance of the charismatic bond to properly use charisma as an argument for or against decapitation strategies.

2.5 - Conclusion

Does the particular kind of strong leadership associated with charismatic authority play an identifiable and significant role in the effective mobilization of terrorists (Neumann 2009, p. 102)? Does its presence help to explain why some ideologies have more appeal than others (Noricks 2009, p. 52)? Does it help to understand how such extreme movements are accepted as legitimate (Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 26, 135-161)? Are charismatic leaders one of the most important catalysts for the actual perpetration of violent deeds (Dawson 2010, pp. 14-17)? These are some of the key questions already posed about the potential impact of charisma in the existing literature on terrorism. To answer these and many related questions we need to work harder at setting the theoretical and empirical grounds for analyzing charismatic authority in terrorist groups. This chapter has begun this process in three ways: (1) introducing some of the social scientific insights into the nature of charismatic authority, (2) highlighting where scholars have been misusing or ignoring charisma within current research on terrorism, and (3) framing research challenges concerning charismatic authority in the context of terrorism studies and suggesting some of the potential benefits of exploring the dynamics of charismatic authority in

terrorist groups. With these insights in hand we have turned our attention to two further steps, the development of indices for searching terrorism databases for evidence of the presence and impact of charismatic authority, and detailed case studies involving the systematic documentation and comparative analysis of the role of charismatic authority in terrorist groups. The effort on both fronts is interpretive and open to debate, but the role of charisma as a mechanism of radicalization is too fundamental to neglect further. It warrants more systematic treatment.

Chapter Three

Quantifying and Qualifying Charisma: A Theoretical Framework for Measuring the Presence of Charismatic Authority in Terrorist Groups¹⁴

Building upon the observations in chapter 2, I seek to contribute to future empirical research by presenting and justifying a theoretical framework for the qualitative and quantitative operationalization of the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups. The theoretical framework is based upon Max Weber's seminal work on legitimate domination (*herrschaft*) and the study of charismatic authority in new religious movements. After outlining the fourteen indicators that make up the theoretical framework, I then apply them to an illustrative case study that examines the relationship between the presence of charismatic authority and the radicalization towards violence within the far-right terrorist group known as 'The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord'. I then conclude with a discussion of six ways which the proposed framework may prove to be useful to future analyses of charismatic leadership within terrorist organizations.

3.1 - Introduction

There is a common story told by speaking coaches, self-help "success" gurus, and Internet bloggers interested in corporate leadership. It begins after an evening dinner attended by a nameless young lady and by British political rivals William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli.

When asked her opinion of both men, the young lady responded:

¹⁴ This chapter has been published in *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. See: Hofmann, D.C. (2015). "Quantifying and Qualifying Charisma: A Theoretical Framework for Measuring the Presence of Charismatic Authority in Terrorist Groups," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 38, 710-733.

When I left the dining room after sitting next to Mr. Gladstone, I thought he was the cleverest man in England. But after sitting next to Mr. Disraeli, I thought I was the cleverest woman in England (Anderson 2013).

In her description, the young lady echoes countless accounts of individuals who have come into contact with a charismatic leader. It is an experience that is primal, mysterious, intensely personal, and evokes powerfully complex emotions. As the above quote suggests, charismatic leaders are adept at making those they meet feel in some way special, chosen, or unique. At the same time the experience is highly subjective and abstract, and it is often difficult for most people to pin-point what it is exactly that makes a particular person “charismatic.” These comments reflect recurring problems within the study of charismatic authority: how exactly do charismatic leaders move and influence their followers to engage in risky behaviours? How is it, despite the ubiquity of charismatic individuals in society, only a select few manage to cultivate a loyal and devoted following? What exactly distinguishes a charismatic leader from other types of leaders? These questions have been explored in varying degrees in the context of new religious movements (NRMs), management studies, anthropology, sociology, political science, and psychology (e.g., Conger and Kanungo 1988; Dawson 2002; Gardner and Avolio 1981; Willner 1984; Wilson 1975). Yet within terrorism studies, charismatic authority has not been analyzed in a systematic or empirical manner to date (see, Dawson 2010; Hofmann and Dawson 2014). This has not gone unnoticed. Recent scholarship acknowledges the gap in the literature in regards to charismatic leaders and their role in the operation of terrorist groups and the radicalization process (e.g., Bartlett and Miller 2012, p. 15; Dawson 2010, p. 16; Gupta 2008, pp. 71-73; Neumann 2009, p. 102; Schbley and McCauley 2005, pp. 569-570). There is consensus among scholars that charisma somehow plays a pivotal role in the recruitment and socialization of potential terrorist operatives, yet there is limited analysis beyond brief speculative statements as

to why this is the case (e.g., Crelinsten 2009, pp. 36-37; Dawson 2010, p. 9; Gupta 2005, p. 19; Nesser 2009, pp. 96-97; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107). Scholars also note the importance of charismatic leaders in the operation of terrorist groups, but again, the exact role they play in contributing to terrorist “success” is unexamined (e.g., Aydinli 2006, p. 307; Honig 2007, p. 571; Moghaddam 2005, p. 162; Nesser 2009, p. 98; Richardson 2006, p. 45; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50).

Some tentative steps have been taken towards understanding broader notions of authority and leadership relationships in terrorist groups, but the research tends to be too narrowly focused on two areas of inquiry: (1) case and ethnographic studies that describe, as a sub-aspect of a larger analysis, the operational and ideological aspects of leaders within Islamist terrorist groups (e.g., Nesser 2009; Sloodman and Tillie 2006), and (2) studies of the effectiveness of leadership decapitation (e.g., Hafez and Hatfield 2006; Honig 2007; Johnston 2012; Jordan 2009; Price 2012). On the one hand, the findings from the empirical case studies offer promising preliminary insights on leadership within terrorist and radical groups, but lack in-depth analysis specifically focused on characteristics of charismatic leadership and the social dynamics involved in the creation, maintenance and dissolution of authority relationships. On the other hand, conclusive findings from the research on leadership removal strategies remain elusive due to contradictory opinions on the overall effectiveness of the strategy, which are rooted in alternative interpretations of charismatic leadership. As it stands, the literature on terrorist leaders tends to be focused on “what” leadership is, and does not adequately explain “how” and “why” leaders are influential in their respective groups. In order to determine the extent of this influence, more empirical and theoretical explorations of charismatic authority and other forms of terrorist leadership are needed.

There are two main barriers facing scholars interested in studying charismatic authority in terrorist groups. The first, as Hofmann and Dawson (2014, pp. 355-360) argue, is that the social scientific concept of charismatic authority is widely misused in terrorism studies. They note that for the most part, terrorism scholars have been using charisma in adjectival and tautological fashions, and that much of the research flirts with important concepts involving charismatic authority but never quite adequately addresses it. This has led to charismatic authority being overlooked as a potentially important contributor to the formation, operation, and demise of terrorist groups. The second barrier is the lack of models or methods to measure charismatic authority within terrorist groups (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 362-363). In her assessment of the effectiveness of leadership decapitation, Jenna Jordan (2009, p. 727) raises the point that it is difficult to quantify or qualify “charisma.” This is a valid argument. Charismatic authority is an abstract social-scientific concept, and admittedly, a hard thing to accurately gauge. This does not mean, however, that we should abandon all efforts to do so. The failure to develop a method to operationalize charisma within terrorist organizations has resulted in the use of poorly substituted measures in place of rigorous and theoretically grounded metrics that can be replicated (e.g., Jordan 2009, p. 727; Langdon et. al. 2004, pp. 63-65). It has also resulted in the superficial application of charisma (or an analogous concept) as a *post hoc* explanation for the success or failure of counter-terrorism strategies (e.g., Freeman 2014, p. 2; Post 2005, p. 632; Richardson 2006, p. 45). If the full extent of the influence of charismatic terrorist leadership is to be understood, a model that allows for the qualitative and quantitative measurement of charismatic authority is required.

This chapter is a first attempt at addressing this lacuna by developing a theoretical framework to operationalize the influence of charismatic authority within terrorist groups. For

the purposes of this chapter, terrorism is defined as threats or acts of violence meant to coerce and/or intimidate a political entity or a section of the public in order to further an ideologically, politically, and/or religiously motivated cause.¹⁵ The creation of the theoretical framework builds directly from observations made by Hofmann and Dawson (2014, pp. 360-363) that call for more robust theoretical and empirical approaches to understanding the dynamics of charismatic terrorist leadership. The hope is that by using the framework in conjunction with available qualitative and quantitative data, it is possible to detect, to a degree, how present or absent charismatic authority is within a particular terrorist group. This, in turn, can potentially aid researchers in conducting comparative case studies or statistical analyses of charismatic terrorist leadership.

Although the complex nature of charismatic authority naturally lends itself better to qualitative research, it is indeed possible to quantitatively code “charisma.” There are precedents in social psychology and managerial science, where empirical studies have devised ways to quantify various aspects of charismatic and other forms of leadership (e.g., Bass 1985; Fuller et. al. 1996; House et. al. 1991; Schbley and McCauley 2005). There are, undeniably, certain limits to employing a statistical approach to analyzing charismatic leadership. But, this does not mean that we should abandon all attempts to do so. A holistic understanding of charismatic terrorist leadership will require insight from multiple methodological and epistemological approaches.

The chapter begins with a short background discussion of the social-scientific definition of charismatic authority. It then presents and discusses each of the fourteen indicators which make up the proposed framework. The latter half of the chapter applies the developed framework to an illustrative case study that examines the relationship between various social dynamics of

¹⁵ The definition of terrorism used in this chapter borrows core concepts from definitions presented in Gill et. al. (2014) and Schmid (2013).

charismatic authority and the radicalization process found within the far-right terrorist group known as ‘The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord’ (CSA). The chapter then concludes with a discussion of findings, along with suggestions for future research.

3.2 - What is “charismatic” authority?

Despite the multi-disciplinary nature of the study of charismatic authority, there is common agreement among scholars recognizing Max Weber’s work on legitimate domination (*herrschaft*) as the root of the social scientific definition of charismatic authority (e.g., Dawson 2011, p. 119; Gardner and Avolio 1998, p. 40; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 172; Wilson 1975, p. 4). In his exploration of legitimate domination, Weber (1968) conceives of three different “ideal-types”¹⁶ or “pure” forms of authority: (1) traditional, (2) rational-legal, and (3) charismatic. Traditional authority is derived from custom, where people obey a certain person or office (monarchs, tribal shamans, etc.) because “it has always been that way.” Rational-legal authority is derived from an office that intrinsically possesses legitimate authority. In other words, the authority derived from a rational-legal office is not necessarily contingent on the personal qualities possessed by the individual holding the position. Charismatic authority, however, turns the concepts of traditional and rational-legal authority on their heads. Rather than situating legitimacy for authority in custom, bureaucracy, or office, charismatic authority is vested within a single individual who is recognized as special or extraordinary by their followers. As Weber (1968, p. 48) explains, charismatic authority is:

¹⁶ An “ideal-type” in sociological theory is a typological device used often by Weber and social scientists influenced by his methodology. An ideal-type is a nuanced construction of hypothetical and abstract concepts that results in the creation of a “pure” type of social phenomenon. “Ideal” or “pure” types do not exist in reality in their entirety, but act as an essential objective reference for social scientists interested in particular social phenomena. This suggests that Weber conceived of authority as capable of manifesting in differing magnitudes.

A certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men, and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.

In simpler terms, the “ideal-typical” charismatic leader draws their perceived extraordinariness from some sort of transmundane or divine source. As Tucker (1970, p. 70) explains, “...charismatic authority [is] understood as leadership based upon a transcendent call by a divine being in which both the person called and his followers believe.” The overtly supernatural or religious-like quality of this “transcendent call” is important, and serves as the basis of legitimacy for the charismatic leader. For example, successful charismatic Islamist leaders like Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Anwar Al-Awlaki inspire and attract followers due to their perceived ability to interpret Allah’s will (Wiktorowicz 2005, p. 25). But the religious-like quality of charisma can also manifest in purely secular contexts, as seen with the extreme veneration of Velupillai Prabhakaran of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In both cases, the charismatic leader is seen by their followers as a literal or figurative avatar of a sacred and otherworldly mission. This particular strong form of devotion is what allows “pure” charismatic leaders to inspire such fanatical loyalty from their followers. As a result of this strong bond between leader and follower, certain scholars have noted the important roles that charismatic leaders play in the formation, operation, and dissolution of their groups (Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 135-165. See also, Barker 1993, pp. 182-183; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 351-355; Weber 1968, pp. 54-58).

While authority in a charismatically-led group is inexorably tied to the leader, it is important to note that it is not rooted in individual personality characteristics. Charismatic individuals are common in society, where they are cultivated and rewarded in business, religion, and politics. However, despite the ubiquity of charismatic people, very few obtain any measure

of true authority over others. This prompts Weber (1968, p. 48) to note that “it is the recognition on the part of those subject to authority which is decisive for the validity of charisma.” A charismatic leader must be recognized by *others*, who on the basis of this recognition grant him or her authority. In simpler terms, charismatic authority is a *relational* phenomenon that is socially constructed through interactions between leaders and followers. As Bryan Wilson (1975, p. 7) explains:

Charisma is not a personality attribute, but a successful claim to power by virtue of supernatural ordination. If a man runs naked down the street proclaiming that he alone can save others from impending doom, and if he immediately wins a following, then he is a charismatic leader: a social relationship has come into being. If he does not win a following, he is simply a lunatic.

Scholars therefore stress the importance of recognizing the “charismatic bond” between leaders and followers as the focal point of research, rather than the personal qualities or characteristics of individual charismatic leaders (e.g., Barker 1993; Howell and Shamir 2005; Madsen and Snow 1991).

3.3 - Indicators of the presence of charismatic authority within terrorist groups

The theoretical justification for the fourteen indicators is drawn primarily from Weber’s (1968) theories of legitimate domination and insights from empirical research on new religious movements (NRMs) (e.g., Barker 1993; Bromley and Melton 2002; Dawson 2002; Dawson 2006b; Dawson 2011; Wallis 1982). The term “new religious movement” is used in sociology as a more neutral designation for the groups colloquially and pejoratively identified as cults. It first gained popularity in discussions of the myriad alternative religious groups and traditions that saw rapid growth in North America, Europe, and elsewhere in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (e.g., Transcendental Meditation, Scientology, New Age religions, Wicca, and UFO religions like

Heaven's Gate), but is now used more generally to designate all newer and non-mainstream forms of religious innovation.¹⁷ The decision to supplement Weber's theories with those found in NRM studies is an informed choice. Scholars note that there are significant parallels between the social processes found in NRMs and terrorist organizations (e.g., Barkun 1994, pp. 247-249; Dawson 2010, p. 1; Galanter and Forest 2006; Introvigne, 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011, p. 84). Lorne Dawson (2010, p. 18), in particular, makes a strong case for more cross fertilization between the study of NRMs and terrorist organizations:

In understanding how these religious ideological commitments are instilled [within terrorist groups], and with such force, it is imperative that more attention be given to analysing the role of charismatic leaders and forms of authority. The force of the ideology is intimately entwined with that of the leaders who convey it. In this regard much can be gained from study and selective application of insights from the existing literature dealing with charismatic authority in NRMs, millennialist movements, and other kinds of social and political movements.

This does not suggest that the social processes found within NRMs are completely analogous with those in terrorist groups. However, carefully adapting any "lessons learned" from studies of NRMs is logical given the congruity between multiple social processes and presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups and so-called "cultic" movements.

It should be noted that the indicators are crafted as a heuristic device rather than an iron-clad set of attributes to identify charismatic terrorist leaders. They do not possess a particular rank-order of importance, nor does the absence of one or more indicators necessarily indicate a weaker form or absence of charismatic authority. For example, Osama bin Laden's lack of physical impairment or suffering (see indicator 4) does not in any way lessen his overall charismatic authority. Rather, when "suffering" does play a role in the recognition and

¹⁷ In contrast to terrorist groups, only a minority of NRMs progress towards violent action. See, Dawson (2006a, pp. 14-38).

legitimation of the terrorist leader, it is an additional method with which researchers can identify and analyze the leader's charismatic authority. There is also some overlap between certain indicators, which are differentiated from one another by subtle nuances that may not translate well to quantitative or survey research (for example, indicators 6, 7 and 8). It will be up to individual research designs to determine whether to collapse multiple indicators together or to exclude some entirely.

There are certain features of the ideal-type of charismatic authority that are ubiquitous to most terrorist groups. For example, Weber (1968, p. 21) notes that "the leader and his followers stand outside the ties of this world and routine occupations," and that followers reject methodical and material gain in pursuit of the leader's outlined goals. These traits and behaviors are evident in most examples of terrorist groups, whereby joining a violent and clandestine organization typically necessitates the abandonment of conventional employment and the rational pursuit of wealth in favour of the ideological and political goals of the movement.¹⁸ Since the purpose of the indicators are to differentiate levels of the presence of charismatic authority, it excludes those aspects that are near-universally present at similar levels across terrorist groups.

The indicators are crafted from three overlapping but analytically distinct social processes involved in the attribution and maintenance of the charismatic bond: (1) the conditions giving rise to charismatic authority, (2) the social construction and management of charismatic authority, and (3) the conditions and motivations which lead to the bureaucratization (or "routinization") of charisma into traditional or rational-legal forms of authority (see, Dawson 2011, p. 114). Indicators 1 and 2 refer to both situational and contextually specific conditions

¹⁸ There inevitable exceptions to this case, such as when some terrorist groups slowly evolve into criminal-like for-profit organizations. It can be argued, however, that these types of terrorist groups shed the need for charismatic leadership as their goals shift from ideological aims to routinized bureaucratic aims. See, Dishman (2001).

that must be in place for a charismatic leader to successfully establish a following. Indicators 3 to 8 address the various dynamics and mechanisms present during the social construction and management of the charismatic bond between leaders and followers. Lastly, the remaining indicators deal with the conditions which lead to the routinization of charismatic authority, and the practices employed by charismatic leaders to combat attempts to bureaucratize their authority – an act which is seen as an unacceptable diminution of their own power. The fourteen indicators for measuring the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups, broken down into their related sub-groups, are as follows (see table 1):

3.3.a - The conditions giving rise to charismatic authority

(1) Is the authority of the leader interpreted in terms of ingrained and traditional conceptions of charismatic authority in the broader society and culture? **and;** **(2)** Is authority attributed to the leader on the basis of the perception that there is an impending or current crisis, one associated with the bankruptcy of existing forms of traditional and/or rational-legal forms of authority?

The charismatic bond is not created in a social vacuum. It is primarily established through repeated interactions between leaders and followers, but is also invariably affected by broader societal factors (Dawson 2011, pp. 121-123). Charismatic leaders often arise during times of transition and crisis, particularly when traditional and rational legal-forms of authority are seen to have failed (Conger and Kanungo 1988, p. 329; Dawson 2010, pp. 119-120; Wilson 1975, p. 26). Crises must be perceived as either “acute” (short term but extremely intense) or “chronic” (long term with no resolution in sight), and as a part of some form of “ultimate” struggle which threatens to bring about irrevocable change (Dawson 2011, p. 121). When a crisis remains unresolved, people can become “charisma hungry” (i.e., they actively search for a solution to the crisis from sources other than traditional and rational-legal authority) in their search for psychic

Table 1: Indicators of the Presence of Charismatic Authority within Terrorist Groups and Potential Sources of Evidence

Indicators	Potential Sources of Evidence
<u>The conditions giving rise to charismatic authority</u>	
(1) Is the authority of the leader interpreted in terms of ingrained and traditional conceptions of charismatic authority in the broader society and culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background information on the leader; statements by members; stories recorded or circulated by the group.
(2) Is authority attributed to the leader on the basis of the perception that there is an impending or current crisis, one associated with the bankruptcy of existing forms of traditional and/or rational-legal forms of authority?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements by the leader and followers; media accounts; group communications and documents.
<u>The social construction and management of the charismatic bond</u>	
(3) Are attributions of power to the leader based on the followers' perception of the leader's supernatural or superhuman and/or exceptional powers and qualities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements by the members; statements by the leader; media accounts.
(4) Is the authority attributed to the leader associated with any physical impairment or suffering which is viewed positively by the followers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical/anthropological/sociological information on the society and culture; statements by members; inspirational stories used by members.
(5) Does the leader legitimate their authority through reference to a higher source of authority, either divine or some other transcendent source (i.e., a supreme ideology)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical/anthropological/sociological accounts of the society; media accounts.
(6) Are grandiose and exaggerated claims made about the nature and scope of the leader's authority and importance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements by members; group communications and documents.
(7) Are new members socialized into recognizing the special powers and authority of the leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member statements about intra-group discussions, meetings, and training; propaganda and promotional literature and statements by the group.
(8) Does the leader figure prominently in the folklore of the group and the representation of its 'story'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical accounts; statements by members; propaganda and promotional literature and statements by the group.
<u>Conditions and motivations which lead to the routinization of charismatic authority</u>	
(9) Are organizational decisions highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical accounts; media accounts; statements by members; group communications and documents.
(10) Is the leader intolerant of alternative sources of power and authority, both internal and external to the group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical accounts; media accounts; statements by members.
(11) Does the leader introduce sudden and /or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical accounts; media accounts; statements by members; group communications and documents.
(12) Do followers readily accept these sudden and/or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of intra-group strife and power struggles just prior to policy/strategic shifts and acts of terrorism.
(13) Is the delegation of authority highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statements by members; group communications and documents.
(14) Does the legitimacy of subordinate leaders in the group depend on the nature of their personal relationship with the leader?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical accounts; media accounts; statements by members; group communications and documents.

relief (Conger and Kanungo 1988, pp. 329-333; Dawson 2011, p. 120). Leaders may have an active hand in the framing and creation of crises, or they may seize upon sudden or long standing conflicts or grievances to establish their authority.

Charismatic leaders are also much more likely to arise in cultures that have long standing traditions of hero-prophets, messiahs, and saviours (Berger 1963; Willner 1984). While most societies have deeply rooted eschatological beliefs, they may manifest in varying degrees from culture to culture. For example, it is not an alien concept for god-like charismatic figures to emerge in areas like rural India, where there is a commonplace belief that there is routine divine involvement in mortal affairs.¹⁹ Certain cultures and societies can therefore be expected to be more conducive to the emergence of charismatic leaders. Hence, unresolved social crises and long standing messianic expectations involving national and/or religious saviors are important in setting the stage for emergent charismatic leaders, who may seize upon cultural and societal norms to cast themselves in a salvationist leadership role.

3.3.b - The social construction and management of the charismatic bond

(3) Are attributions of power to the leader based on the followers' perception of the leader's supernatural or superhuman and/or exceptional powers and qualities?

One of the defining characteristics of charismatic authority is the perception of some form of supernatural or exceptional abilities in a leader, whether they are oratorical skills, attributions of superhuman capabilities (clairvoyance, immortality, warrior prowess, etc.), or even quasi or overtly divine characteristics (Weber 1968, p. 48). A "charismatic" individual is someone who is seen as different from the vast majority of other people, and by this virtue is inherently "greater"

¹⁹ A recent example is Lakshmi Tatma, a baby born in 2005 with eight limbs who was worshipped as a deity by members of her rural Indian village.

than everyone else. The leader's actual abilities are important, but secondary (Dawson 2006b, pp. 19-20; Gardner and Avolio 1998, pp. 33-34). What is crucial to the attribution of charismatic authority is the *perception* of some exceptional trait, ability or mannerism by followers, who then accord authority to that leader based on these perceptions.

(4) Is the authority attributed to the leader associated with any physical impairment or suffering which is viewed positively by the followers?

In "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," Weber (1946) discusses the role of "suffering" in the establishment of charismatic authority. Certain individuals throughout history have been capable of turning physical and/or emotional "suffering" into a form of social capital within their movement or group.²⁰ Rather than letting physical impairment or deformities shunt them away to the margins of society, shrewd people like witch-doctors, shamans, sorcerers, and prophets have historically been capable of using their "suffering" to establish a measure of charismatic authority over others. In other words, "suffering" has been socially constructed as a way that facilitates interaction with the sacred, supernatural, or divine. Examples of this include the ascetic lifestyle of Christian monastic orders during the Middle Ages, or the Buddha meditating under a fig tree for seven weeks. These types of individuals are not recognized as deficient due to their physical impairments and suffering, but rather are granted special recognition, in part, *because* of them. A prominent example is Aum Shinrykyo's charismatic leader, Shoko Asahara, who suffers from blindness due to a childhood illness. Other paradigmatic examples are Mullah Omar of the Taliban (partial blindness from a combat

²⁰ Hararo Ingram (2013) develops a similar notion of "charismatic capital" in his work on charismatic leadership in radical and militant Islamist movements. While not related explicitly to the notion of "suffering," his case study analyses of prominent Islamist leaders notes that successive leaders established their own charismatic legitimacy upon the cultural and religious narratives established by their predecessors. In a similar fashion, Weber (1946) notes that the socio-cultural notions that tie "suffering" to the supernatural and divine have allowed certain charismatic leaders throughout history to tap into social and cultural narratives to help establish and maintain the charismatic bond with their followers.

wound), Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman of al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya (blindness from illness), and Sheikh Ahmed Yassin of Hamas (quadriplegia and blindness). Tied into the concept that charismatic individuals are seen to possess superhuman, divine, or exceptional abilities, these particular individuals are perceived to be special because they are capable of overcoming and even rising above impairments that would limit a “normal” person.

(5) Does the leader legitimate their authority through reference to a higher source of authority, either divine or some other transcendent source (i.e., a supreme ideology)?

Weber (1968, pp. 49-52) notes that “pure” charismatic leaders view their mission as a “call” or “spiritual duty” on behalf of a deity or a supreme ideology (the “Ummah”, the environment, communism, the disenfranchised poor, etc.). The charismatic leader therefore becomes both a literal and figurative representation of the concept or cause which they champion, effectively conflating their authoritative legitimacy with that of the referenced source of authority. As a result, they, and by extension their followers, view themselves as an agent, avatar, or messenger of some higher power. The divine or ideological mission takes primacy over other concerns, and recognition of the leader and their cause by followers becomes a *duty*, rather than choice. For Weber, then, the ideal-type of charismatic authority is inherently religious in nature. Whether their group is overtly religious or not, charismatic leaders’ deeds and words are typically cast in a manner that invokes the divine and sacred (Dawson 2010, p. 15). Similar to most religiously or ideologically-based conflicts (see, Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 152-158; Wright 2007, p. 191), the invocation of a transcendent power by a charismatic leader has the effect of creating a black-and-white scenario for them and their followers: “In principle only one side can be in the right in such a conflict; the other must be guilty of a wrong which has to be expiated” (Weber 1968, p. 51).

(6) Are grandiose and exaggerated claims made about the nature and scope of the leader's authority and importance?; (7) Are new members socialized into recognizing the special powers and authority of the leader?; **and** (8) Does the leader figure prominently in the folklore of the group and the representation of its 'story'?

The creation of the charismatic bond and the attribution of charismatic authority to a leader is akin to the "slippery slope" of terrorist radicalization which involves a gradual process of increasing devotion to the leader (or group) that is facilitated by a mixture of existing social ties and small-group socialization processes (e.g., Horgan 2005, p. 19; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011, pp. 35-48; Sageman 2004, pp. 137-178; Sageman 2008, pp. 71-88; Silber and Bhatt 2007, pp. 36-42). The socialization component involved in the attribution of charismatic authority is a process that Eileen Barker (1993, pp. 182-186) terms as "charismatization," where members of NRMs and other similarly closed groups are gradually socialized into perceiving the charismatic qualities of the leader. In other words, new group members do not necessarily recognize the charismatic authority of a leader prior to joining the group, but rather, are gradually *taught to recognize* the charisma of a leader and thereby come to venerate and accord them authority.

In closed-group environments, which are conducive to the charismatization process, new members are slowly exposed to images, stories, myths and claims about the leader that grant him or her special status or qualities (Barker 1993, p. 193; Wallis 1982, p. 34). A mimetic "echo chamber" effect then occurs where members share claims about the leader's authority and importance with each other in an endless feedback loop. The lack of external criticism and the continual repetition of the leader's charismatic qualifications contributes to the overall charismatization process. The charismatic leader becomes central to the folklore or 'story' of the group, and members may even compete with each other to bear witness to the extraordinary qualities of the leader, further contributing to his or her aggrandizing mythology.

3.3.c - Conditions and motivations which lead to the routinization of charismatic authority

(9) Are organizational decisions highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader?

One of Weber's (1968, pp. 54-61) focal concerns with charismatic authority is how it eventually "routinizes" (or bureaucratizes) into more stable and permanent forms of traditional and rational-legal authority. Since charismatic authority is vested in a single individual rather than in long-held customs, institutions, or bureaucracy, it tends to be precarious and impermanent. This precariousness ensures that leaders are faced with a constant challenge to negotiate and validate their charismatic qualifications to their followers. One of these problems is negotiating the challenges of the routinization of charisma. Routinization occurs because followers have both ideological and material interest in seeing the group continue beyond the immediate charisma of their leader (Weber 1968, p. 54). Charismatic movements that persist beyond the death or removal of their leader are ones who have successfully negotiated the routinization process. This "push" from followers towards bureaucratization creates a challenge for the charismatic leader:

The very success of a charismatic leader's movement can pose problems for the leader. As the group survives and grows in size, it often becomes more bureaucratic, and charismatic leaders are inclined to resist this process of institutionalization. They seem to fear the "routinization" of their charismatic authority, to use Weber's well-known term ... [and] this shift toward a more rational-legal mode of authority often is experienced by charismatic leaders as an unacceptable diminution of their own power (Dawson 2002, p. 91).

Charismatic terrorist leaders who successfully negotiate the challenges of the routinization of charisma are those who centralize power and authority within themselves. It is their will alone that dictates the direction of the group. Centralized authority based on the whims and idiosyncrasies of a single charismatic leader is antithetical to traditional and rational-legal forms of authority, who rely on offices, bureaucracy and an established hierarchy in order to govern.

(10) Is the leader intolerant of alternative sources of power and authority, both internal and external to the group? ; **(11)** Does the leader introduce sudden and /or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group? **and (12)** Do followers readily accept these sudden and/or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group?

Dawson (2002, pp. 92-94) notes that there are six common strategies used by charismatic leaders of NRMs to combat the routinization of charisma within their groups: (1) sudden and dramatic alterations of doctrine and policies, (2) an escalation of demands placed on members for personal service and sacrifice to the group, (3) the invention of newer and greater enemies and engagement in crisis mongering, (4) careful intra-group control and stifling of internal dissent, (5) the execution of loyalty tests, and (6) changing the location or operating environment of the group.

The second, third and fifth strategies are common across most, if not all, terrorist groups, who by their very nature demand a series of escalating commitments for personal service and sacrifice for the group (e.g., Horgan 2005, pp. 95-96; Vertigans 2011, pp. 71-74; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 19, 167, 208) and frame their conflict as an existential struggle against powerful and evil enemies (Borum 2003; Wright 2007, pp. 34-37). The execution and success of the remaining three strategies can vary across different leaders and terrorist groups. Dramatic and sudden shifts in doctrine and policy (e.g., new revelations, changes in dress and ideology) can shake up the group and refocus the members' attention onto the will of the leader. It also has a culling effect, as older members are shifted to the margins of the group while newer members are elevated to positions of power. Since ideal-typical charismatic leaders cannot abide a loss in their authority, internal dissent and challenges to the leader's authority are dealt with quickly and decisively through shaming, exile, and peer pressure. Given the heightened need for security among terrorist groups, dealing with internal dissent may involve the overt use of lethal force to prevent

cooperation between dissidents and governmental forces hostile to the group. Lastly, sudden and wholesale relocation of the group can be a failsafe tactic in order to stave off both external and internal influences that threaten to diminish the special status of the leader. This has an effect of further isolating the group from corrupting influences and consolidates the leader's power by ensuring followers have no one to rely on except the group itself, and by extension, the leader (Dawson 2002, pp. 92-94).

Terrorist groups where charismatic authority is present and prevalent will most likely face issues involving routinization, as members seek to continue the movement's goals, success and ideology beyond the immediate influence of their leader. These or other similar strategies can be used by charismatic terrorist leaders to solidify power over their group and combat attempts to diminish their authority. The rapidity and degree with which followers accede to these destabilizing techniques is indicative of the magnitude to which a leader is capable of exerting charismatic authority over his or her group.

(13) Is the delegation of authority highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader? **and (14)** Does the legitimacy of subordinate leaders in the group depend on the nature of their personal relationship with the leader?

As opposed to traditional and rational-legal forms of authority, power within a charismatically-led group emanates solely from the leader themselves and is wholly dependent on his or her whims and desires. Ideal-typical charismatically-led groups therefore do not function with formal positions or established hierarchies. Weber (1968, pp. 50-51) explains this at length:

The corporate group which is subject to charismatic authority is based on an emotional form of communal relationship [*gemeinde*]. The administrative staff of a charismatic leader does not consist of "officials"; at least its members are not technically trained. It is not chosen on the basis of social privilege nor from the point of view of domestic or personal dependency. It is rather chosen in terms of the charismatic qualities of its members. The prophet has his disciples; the warlord his selected henchmen; the leader, generally, his followers. There is no such thing as "appointment" or "dismissal," no

career, no promotion. There is only a “call” at the instance of the leader on the basis of the charismatic qualifications of those he summons. There is no hierarchy; the leader merely intervenes in general or in individual cases when he considers the members of his staff inadequate to a task with which they have been entrusted... There are no established administrative organs. In their place are agents who have been provided with charismatic authority by their chief or who possess charisma of their own.

Building upon Weber’s concept of the *gemeinde*, Roy Wallis (1982) notes that the “inner circle” within charismatically-led groups gain prestige from their close association with the leader. They become invested in propagating the leader’s charisma because “to secure recognition for the leader is thus to secure – in attenuated form – recognition for themselves” (Wallis 1982, p. 38). The legitimacy of subordinates in “pure” charismatically-led groups is therefore tied wholly to personal relationships with the leader.

In sum, ideal-typical charismatically-led groups will present with an informal and impermanent organizational structure, and prestige within the group will be based solely on social or affective proximity to the leader. Furthermore, the charismatic leader will typically have an inner circle of close confidants who actively work to spread the leader’s message and authority because their own power within the group is tied to the continued success and apparent charisma of the leader.

3.4 - Case study: The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord

The following section is an illustrative case study that applies the theoretical framework presented above to the issue of terrorist radicalization. It explores the relationship between the establishment, construction, and maintenance of charismatic authority and the progressive radicalization towards violence of the far-right terrorist group “The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord” (CSA). The analysis is limited to the first two social processes involved in the attribution and maintenance of the charismatic bond (see table 1). While issues involving the

routinization of charismatic authority were a likely contributor, they do not provide sufficient depth and insight into “how” and “why” the CSA radicalized. As a result, the analysis only takes the first eight indicators from the proposed framework into consideration.

Findings from a singular case study are insufficient to make broad generalizations about the causal relationship between charismatic authority and the radicalization of terrorists. While preliminary observations based upon the research findings are discussed in the subsequent section, it is not the primary intention of this exercise. Rather, this case study should be taken as an example of the deductive and heuristic strengths of the proposed framework. The section begins with a consideration of the data used in this study. This is then followed by a brief background on the CSA. Lastly, it discusses the relationship between pre-existing conditions conducive to the development of charismatic authority and the social construction and management of the charismatic bond with the radicalization towards violence of the CSA.

3.4.a - Data

Data on the CSA were taken from the autobiographical accounts of Kerry Noble (CSA’s second-in-command) and Danny Coulson (a federal agent assigned to negotiate with the CSA), primary source documents written by the group, scholarly studies of the CSA (see, Barkun 1989 & 1996; Coates 1995; Coulson and Shannon 1999; Flynn and Gerhardt 1989; Hamm 2002; Noble 2010; Smith et. al. 2006; Stern 2003), and unsealed court documents and legal exhibits. Supplemental and confirmatory data were taken from an in-depth analysis of federal court cases against the core leadership of the CSA, interrogation transcripts with former CSA members, legal affidavits, criminal records of certain CSA members, and open-source media documents found using the Lexis-Nexis and Factiva databases.

3.4.b - Background on the CSA

The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord was a far-right terrorist group that operated from 1976-1985. They espoused an apocalyptic survivalist ideology blended with conspiratorial, anti-government, racist, and anti-semitic themes taken from Christian Identity.²¹ The CSA was initially founded as a Charismatic Christian (e.g., Pentecostal) movement by fundamentalist preacher James D. Ellison. By 1976, Ellison had gathered a small following of adherents on a secluded compound in the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas. In 1978, Ellison received a vision from God that prophesized the end of the world. At this point, the community embraced a catastrophic millenarian ideology that forecasted the imminent collapse of the American economy prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. In order to prepare for the trials and tribulations associated with the apocalypse, Ellison directed his followers to begin stockpiling food, weapons, ammunition, and supplies so that they would be able to accept and shelter the inevitable flood of refugee seekers. Shortly after Ellison's divine revelation, the church spent approximately \$52,000 on weapons and military equipment, and began to practice military-style drills.

In 1979, Ellison returned from a work assignment in Missouri and introduced Christian Identity to his group. As a result, his followers gradually adopted a virulent racist, anti-government, and anti-semitic worldview. This caused a shift in group ideology from passively awaiting for the apocalypse, to actively hastening its arrival. By 1982, the CSA began strengthening its ties to other right-wing survivalist movements, and even hosted a gathering of right-wing hate groups at their compound. They also became heavily involved in the gun show circuit, where they bought and sold weapons as a means of sustenance. In addition to stockpiling

²¹ In a simplistic sense, Christian Identity adherents blend a racist ideological world-view with conservative Christian values. They view white Europeans as the true "chosen people," and all other "inferior" races as the offspring of Cain, the biblical son of Adam and Eve who killed his brother, Abel. For more information, see Barkun (1994).

weapons, CSA members started to illegally convert weapons to automatic firing, manufacture grenades and ammunition, and craft silencers for their weapons.

In December of 1982, the CSA suffered a crisis of leadership that led to a schism where two-thirds of its members left the group. A three-year power-struggle between Ellison and one of his lieutenants, Randall Rader, culminated with a disagreement over the adoption of polygamy. Ellison's adamant stance on the matter, coupled with a long standing disagreement on the military direction of the group, caused Rader, his followers, and those that disagreed with the practice of polygamy to leave the CSA.²² It was shortly after this event that the CSA began actively planning and executing terrorist attacks. This included the fire-bombing of a LGBT church in Kansas City and Jewish community center in Indiana, the murder of pawnshop owner Bill Stumpp (who was mistaken as Jewish), the attempted bombing of a natural gas pipeline, and a plan to use a 30 gallon drum of cyanide to poison the water supplies of major cities. The CSA also reportedly scouted out the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma as a potential target, but aborted the mission when the missile being constructed for the attack exploded prematurely.

During the summer of 1984, CSA member Wayne Snell shot and killed a black Arkansas state trooper during a routine traffic stop. When Snell was stopped during the ensuing roadblock and arrested, weapons were found in his car that were traced back to the CSA. Around the same time, two former CSA members turned states-evidence and provided information on the CSA's weapons manufacturing. They also indicated that several wanted members of The Order were hiding on the CSA compound.²³ Equipped with enough evidence, an arrest warrant was issued

²² Ellison overplayed his hand when trying to introduce polygamy into the group, and as a result received "pushback" from competing sources of leadership. This type of dynamic is common when strong charismatic leaders achieve extreme levels of success, which lead them to believe that their exercise of power is limitless. Due to the nature of charismatic authority, leaders like Ellison cannot accept compromise when challenged. As a result, these types of intra-group crises often result in the expulsion, demonization, and/or discrediting of the dissenting members.

²³ The Order was a right-wing group with similar goals to the CSA.

for Ellison on racketeering and a variety of weapons charges. In April 1985, a three-day siege of the CSA compound resulted in the peaceful surrender of Ellison and his followers. Despite efforts to continue the movement by some of the remaining members, the CSA disbanded shortly after Ellison's arrest.

3.4.c - Conditions giving rise to Ellison's charismatic authority

Unsurprisingly, Charismatic Christian movements like the CSA are extremely fertile grounds for the emergence of charismatic leaders (Robbins 2004, pp. 130-131). Most of, if not all, the major liturgical and theological beliefs of Charismatic Christianity (e.g., divine healing, prophecy, miracles, figurative reading of the bible) socialize members into believing that divine and extraordinary acts can and do occur on a regular basis. It provides credence to emergent charismatic leaders who claim to have an intimate knowledge of God's will, since adherents believe that He is involved in the daily lives of the faithful. However, whether or not these emergent leaders are successful in gaining a measure of charismatic authority over others is contingent on their capability of gathering a following. This is what differentiated Ellison from a multitude of other "wannabe" preachers and spiritual leaders within the larger Charismatic Christian movement.

Charismatic Christianity's focus on the imminent apocalypse and on conservative Christian values also creates an environment conducive to the emergence of charismatic leaders. Much like other Charismatic Christian movements, the CSA believed that the end of days was nigh, and would be followed by a period of trials and tribulations prior to God's judgement (Noble 2010, p. 73). The landmark abortion case of *Roe vs. Wade*, drug use, and other immoral behaviours were pointed to as signs that God's judgement was inevitable. As the CSA became

increasingly enmeshed in Christian Identity culture, this list of societal evils expanded to include race mixing, Jewish influence in America, and the evils of the federal government and the New World Order. Ellison was shrewd enough to encourage this “crisis” mindset among his followers, thereby helping pave the way for their acceptance of his charismatic authority. To Ellison and his followers, the world had gone mad and the only solution was to fortify themselves in their compound and await God’s judgement.

3.4.d - The social construction and management of Ellison’s charismatic authority

The qualitative data suggest that Ellison was clearly perceived as extraordinary by his followers. A recurring theme during praise meetings, personal conversations between members, and in court testimony by both the group’s leadership and membership was the notion that God had chosen Ellison, and by extension his followers, for a higher purpose (Noble 2010, pp. 49, 65; Stern 2003, pp. 25-26).²⁴ Due to his perceived extraordinary nature, followers both consciously and unconsciously tried to curry favor with Ellison, most often through recitation of prophecies during praise meetings aimed at curbing dissent within the group or reinforcing his special status (Noble 2010, pp. 50-53, 97-98). Even after Ellison’s arrest, many members of the CSA fervently believed that God would intervene and miraculously release him from prison to continue serving His will (Noble 2010, p. 229).

In addition to the recognition of Ellison’s extraordinary nature, there was a clear charismatization process in the CSA that focused on educating new members about his special powers and authority. Much of this process hinged on the semi-regular commission of miracles

²⁴ See also: Testimony of James Ellison before Grand Jury, September 26, 1984, Eastern District of Oklahoma; *United States of America vs. James D. Ellison and William Thomas*, 85-20006-01/02, (W.D. Ark, 1985); *United States of America vs. Kerry Noble*, 85-20017-04, (W.D. Ark, 1985).

by Ellison and the recitation of stories about his supernatural powers among the group's membership. For example, Ellison claimed to have resurrected his son from the dead after he had been hit by a car in 1977. Witnessing this miracle was a crucial turning point in Kerry Noble's (2010, pp. 49-50) acceptance of Ellison's charismatic authority:

Almost everyone seemed to take what happened with Joseph [Ellison's son] being raised from the dead like it was a normal everyday occurrence... It seemed God had now confirmed with signs and wonders that He was indeed active in these people's lives. I believed God was definitely moving in this place and now I was really convinced Kay [Noble's wife] and I were meant to be here.

These semi-regular miracles were accompanied by claims of Ellison's supernatural abilities and prowess, such as the supposed ability to turn into a mouse to escape danger, and the ability to chew poison ivy leaves with no ill effects (Coulson and Shannon 1999, pp. 299, 310). The isolationist nature of the CSA also contributed to a closed "echo chamber" effect that magnified the impact of the grandiose stories about Ellison's importance and divinely-chosen status. These included a claim by Ellison that he was resurrected by God after a building collapsed on him during a workplace accident in 1970, tales of his superhuman capacity for kindness and forgiveness, and how God spoke to him on a regular basis (see, Noble 2010, pp. 28, 52-53, 56, 60, 63, 65). Members who overtly challenged Ellison's authority were rapidly expelled from the group (Noble 2010, pp. 52-53). With no outside feedback to challenge members' assumptions of these claims, the charismatization process within the CSA was effective at teaching new members to recognize Ellison's charismatic authority.

Ellison's perceived extraordinariness undoubtedly played a significant role in the progressive radicalization towards violence within the CSA. He figured prominently in much of the CSA's folklore. His personality, will, and whims were clearly stamped upon the communal identity of his followers, who looked to him as a temporal prophet of the Lord. It is therefore

unsurprising that the CSA rapidly adopted Christian Identity ideology at Ellison's behest. By framing the world as a dualistic struggle of "us" (White Christians) vs. "them" (Blacks, Jews, the New World Order, etc.), Christian Identity provided a comprehensible framework for the CSA to interpret Ellison's prophecies about the coming apocalypse. More importantly, the adoption of a Christian Identity worldview gave Ellison a cause with which to legitimate his "chosen" status by providing a visible enemy which he and his followers were tasked to defeat. To use Mark Juergensmeyer's (2006, p. 141) term, the CSA envisioned an imminent symbolic "cosmic war" that consisted of a divine struggle between the forces of good and evil. This allowed Ellison to cast himself as the leader of the faithful during the rapidly approaching time of tribulations. This is exactly what he did in 1983, when he crowned himself as "King of the Ozarks" during an elaborate ceremony. As a divinely-ordained ruler, any criticism of Ellison could be interpreted as criticism of God's will. Whatever individual doubts members may have had about the direction of Ellison's leadership were likely quashed by their sincere faith in God's plan, fear of social repercussions (e.g., expulsion or being branded a non-believer), genuine loyalty to their fellow group members and to Ellison, or some combination of the three.

A turning point in the radicalization towards violence within the CSA was Ellison's failure to maintain his faltering charismatic authority during the aftermath of the 1982 defection of nearly two-thirds of the group's membership. Even though only the most fervent of his followers remained, Ellison's image of extraordinariness had been significantly shaken.²⁵ Noble (2010, p. 155) recounts that it was during this time Ellison became obsessed with his legacy and how history would remember him. At Ellison's urging, the CSA began to plan and execute violent attacks against their perceived enemies. A similar spiral towards violence has been

²⁵ In an interview with Jean Rosenfeld, Agent Danny Coulson stated that he believes Ellison spurred the CSA towards violence in order to maintain his waning leadership. See, Rosenfeld (2010, pp. xv-xvi).

empirically observed in certain cults and new religious movements whose leaders failed to maintain their charismatic authority (e.g., Dawson 2002; Robbins 2002; Wessinger 2000). As Dawson (2002, pp. 89-97) argues, the act of striking out against a demonized enemy serves to reinforce the goals of the group, vents rage and frustration, and strengthens the bond between leader and followers. Violence becomes “the ultimate act of charismatic legitimation” for a leader with very few options left. This appears to have been the case for the CSA. Reflecting on why he agreed to participate in an aborted attempt to blow up an adult bookstore in Kansas City, Noble (2010, p. 171) recalls that his “desperation to earn a place in Ellison’s kingdom now outweighed any value for human life.” The violent struggle against the enemy (who symbolized all that was wrong with the world) became an all-encompassing unifying factor for the CSA. Expending the effort to strike at the enemies of the CSA further legitimated Ellison’s divinely-inspired mission and diverted attention away from the crisis that threatened his charismatic authority.

3.5 – Discussion

This case study is a useful example of how the theoretical framework developed in section 3.3 can operationalize charismatic authority for use during empirical analyses of terrorist leadership. When using the framework as a heuristic device, it is clear that Ellison was an extremely charismatic leader who exercised an atypically strong form of influence over his followers. The CSA’s roots in Charismatic Christianity provided a fertile ground for the emergence of charismatic leaders. This presented Ellison with an appropriate setting with which to begin establishing the charismatic bond with his followers and to cement their perceptions of his extraordinary nature. After he had succeeded in gathering a following who recognized and

legitimated his charismatic authority, Ellison's status as God's "chosen" made it difficult to repudiate his will. Those that challenged his authority were quickly culled from the group. This gave Ellison a disproportionate amount of clout in deciding the ideological direction of his followers. As a result, he had a central role in directing them towards violence by blending his prophetic apocalyptic visions with core concepts taken from Christian Identity. Ellison's promotion of a dualistic world-view replete with racism, anti-federalism, conspiracy theories, and anti-semitism set the stage for a progressive slide towards violence by providing ideological justification. It also served to buoy his charismatic authority by placing himself and his followers at the center of an impending spiritual battle between the forces of good and evil. Perhaps most importantly, a pivotal turning point in the CSA's radicalization towards violence can be linked directly to Ellison's failure to maintain the charismatic bond. The escalation towards violence was a tool used by Ellison to legitimate his charismatic authority, unify his followers under his banner and establish his legacy, all while diverting attention away from the cataclysmic defection of close to two-thirds of his adherents.

When tracing both processes throughout the lifespan of the CSA, it appears that the relationship between charismatization and radicalization was not causal in a purely straightforward manner (e.g., charismatization solely influenced the radicalization process). Rather, the data suggest that there was a complex interplay between the charismatization and radicalization processes within the CSA. Ellison's progressive establishment of the charismatic bond with his followers coincided with a gradual slide towards increased radicalism and violence. Both processes operated concurrently and fed-off of one another other. The CSA's increased radicalism provided Ellison and his followers with a framework to cast themselves as key players in the coming apocalypse, and singled out "demonic" enemies which they were

tasked to defeat. This served to strengthen the charismatization process, but it also set the CSA on a gradual and perhaps inevitable path towards the commission of acts of religiously-inspired terrorism. The group's rhetoric and ideology eventually escalated to a point where violent action was all but necessary to maintain Ellison's authority, particularly during the aftermath of a serious blow to followers' perceptions of Ellison's charisma. In crude terms, after years of talking about the fighting the "enemy" it was time for Ellison and the CSA to "put up, or shut up." Rather than admit the failures of their leader and his divine mission, the members of the CSA opted to further legitimate Ellison's charisma by planning and executing terrorist attacks. This suggests that, much like in the cases of violent NRMs, the failure to maintain the charismatic bond within terrorists groups with high levels of charismatic authority may be a major precipitant to acts violence (e.g., Robbins 2002).²⁶

It should be noted that the presence of strong charismatic authority is not a sufficient condition by itself to propel a group towards violent action. In his discussion of how NRMs can become violent and its applicability to the context of terrorism studies, Dawson (2010, p. 10) points to three important factors: (1) apocalyptic or world-rejecting beliefs, (2) the presence of strong charismatic leadership, and (3) social isolation or encapsulation. All three of these factors are present in the case of the CSA, and each feasibly contributed to the radicalization process. The extent to which apocalyptic beliefs and social encapsulation contribute to the interplay between the charismatization and radicalization processes within terrorist groups needs to be explored in more detail in future research. Future research should also seek to discern if a similar relationship between the charismatization and radicalization processes can be found within other

²⁶ While this observation needs to be substantiated by further empirical research, there are other examples of the failure to maintain the charismatic bond catalyzing violent action in groups like Aum Shinrykyo. See, Lifton 1999 and Reader 2000.

types of terrorist groups (e.g., Salafist jihadist, left-wing, ethno-nationalist groups) and in groups with varying levels of charismatic authority. If this relationship is indeed substantiated by additional nuanced and comparative research, findings suggest that extremely charismatic leaders may play a pivotal role in directing and influencing the process of radicalizing towards violence within terrorist groups (see, Khosrokhavar 2013; Hamm 2013; Milla et. al 2013). Furthermore, this suggests that radical and fringe groups where a strong charismatization process is present may be at increased risk of committing acts of terrorism, particularly if they are socially encapsulated and hold apocalyptic beliefs. This has operational implications for counterterrorism and countering violent extremism (CVE) programmes. The identification of potentially violent groups where a strong charismatization process is present may be a “red flag” for security agencies. Paying close attention to the development of the charismatization process and the maintenance of the charismatic bond within radical social, political, and religious movements can possibly provide early warning that an at-risk group may be slipping towards the commission of a terrorist act. Early identification also grants opportunities for CVE programmes to intervene and attempt to combat the process of radicalization, although the de-legitimization of a highly charismatic leader is a daunting task given the commonly found environmental factors and social dynamics involved in the attribution of charismatic authority. The current findings are promising, however, much more research of this nature needs to be conducted before crafting any practical intervention and counter-terrorism measures aimed at disrupting or dissolving charismatically-led terrorist groups.

3.6 – Conclusion

Scholars have repeatedly noted the probable significance of charismatic leaders in the recruitment (e.g., Crelinsten 2009, p. 72; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 25-26), radicalization towards violence (e.g., Crenshaw 2011, p. 93; Hamm 2002, p. 288), strategic operation (e.g., Hoffman 2008, p. 137; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50), and dissolution of terrorist groups (e.g., Cronin 2009, pp. 17-24; Jones and Libicki 2008, pp. 52-54; Juergensmeyer 2003, p. 38). This chapter does not seek to authoritatively test these claims. Rather, as argued, the literature requires a sound methodological foundation with which to begin measuring and developing a sense of the nature, relative presence, and impact of charismatic terrorist leaders. The justification, creation, and application of the theoretical framework for measuring the presence of charismatic authority presented in this chapter is a first step towards the production of additional research on charismatic terrorist leadership. It provides methodological and theoretical grounding for future empirical research interested in investigating the various claims made by terrorism scholars about charismatic terrorist leadership. As partially surveyed in Hofmann and Dawson (2014, pp. 362-363), and discussed further here, there are at least six ways in which the theoretical framework presented in this chapter can be pertinent to future empirical analyses of charismatic terrorist leadership:

- (1) Recruitment and mobilization: As suggested by the robust literature on charismatic authority in management sciences, the study of new religious movements, and other social scientific disciplines, charismatic leaders play an important role in the creation and operation of their organizations (e.g., Bass 1985; Bryman 1992; Dawson 2002; Morris and Staggenborg 2007). Is this also the case in terrorist movements? Furthermore, once they have gathered a following, how exactly do charismatic terrorist leaders influence the

mobilization of financial, strategic, and social capital in the pursuit of organizational goals (Morris and Staggenborg 2007; Neumann 2009, p. 102)?

- (2) Explanation of ideological appeal: Can the presence of charismatic leadership explain why certain terrorist ideologies have more appeal than others (Noricks 2009, p. 52)? With many different terrorist groups competing for members from the same base of supporters (e.g., Hamas, Fatah, Al-Aqsa's Martyrs Brigade), a better understanding of the dynamics of charismatic authority may help explain why some choose to join or support one terrorist group over another.
- (3) Legitimation of terrorism: Does the establishment of the charismatic bond help legitimate the actions of terrorist movements? In other words, does the avid acceptance of a charismatic leader's authority by followers pave the way for the acceptance of a radical, violent, or world-rejecting ideological viewpoint? The current literature points to the importance of followers' perceptions of a leader's sacred authority, credibility and trustworthiness in the gradual adoption of a radical world-view or ideology, but these assumptions have yet to be rigorously tested with empirical and comparative research (e.g., Maynard 2014, p. 827; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 25-26).
- (4) Promotion of violence: Does the presence of extreme forms of charismatic authority catalyze violence within terrorist groups? The new religious movement literature points to a dysfunctional dynamic between charismatic authority, apocalypticism, and social encapsulation as the primary cause of violence (Dawson 2006a, pp. 142-166; Robbins

2002). Is this also the case in certain charismatically-led terrorist groups, as suggested by the illustrative case study presented above?

(5) Operational efficiency and tactical choices: Is strong charismatic leadership an important component in determining the strategic choices and efficacy of terrorist groups? The charismatic qualities of leaders are often pointed to in the terrorism literature as a partial explanation for operational efficiency (e.g., Aydinli 2006, p. 307; Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50) or the choice of certain targets and tactics (e.g., Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 98, 111-112). But, the exact reason as to *why* and *how* charismatic leadership may influence strategic choices and efficiency within terrorist groups has yet to be explored in any detail.

(6) The effectiveness of leadership decapitation strategies: For the most part, the existing literature on leadership decapitation relies overmuch on macro-level statistical analyses, and fails to account for the *quality* of leadership when analyzing the effectiveness of the leadership removal strategies. In other words, little of the current research on leadership decapitation takes into account the relative importance of differing styles of leadership to the ideological and strategic well-being of terrorist groups.²⁷ A better understanding of the dynamics of charismatic and other forms of terrorist leadership (e.g., grass-roots, operational, transactional) may help provide some resolution in the ongoing debate over whether or not the coercive removal or arrest of leaders is an effective counter-terrorism strategy.

²⁷ The lone exception to this is the work done by Michael Freeman (2014).

Considering the probable importance of “pure” charismatic terrorist leaders to the formation, operation, and demise of groups engaged in terrorism, each of these areas of future research have obvious implications for counterterrorism policies and practices. At this stage we are still a long way from seeing the real benefits of actively pursuing many of these lines of inquiry. But a necessary first step is to effect the operationalization of our conception of charismatic leadership and charismatic authority. This study indicates the feasibility of doing so, and how we might best proceed.

Chapter Four

How does Charismatic Authority Influence the Operational Tactics and Attack Outcomes of Terrorist Groups?²⁸

In order to explore the complex nature of charismatic terrorist leadership from as many methodological approaches as possible, I seek to quantitatively analyze if charismatic authority has a real-world impact on operational tactics (i.e., weapon and target choices) and attack outcomes (i.e., success rates, lethality) during terrorism-related events. Using the theoretical framework developed in the previous chapter, I code a predictor scale variable that quantifies the presence of charismatic authority within a sample of thirty international terrorist groups. I then run bivariate and multi-level models to examine the relationship between the predictor variable and a number of outcome variables related to operational tactics and attack outcomes taken from the Global Terrorism Database that is maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism at the University of Maryland (START 2012). I then conclude with a discussion of results, study limitations, policy recommendations, and areas for future research.

4.1 - Introduction

In a recent Washington Post article about the leadership of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the author reflected in length upon the levels of extreme devotion granted to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi by the rank-and-file membership:

Baghdadi's ability to inspire such intense support worries U.S. officials. His fighters seemingly will go anywhere and do anything for the cause. They combine a fanatical passion with an unusual degree of organization, technical skill and tactical planning... Baghdadadi may be more skillful in the field than either of his mentors, Osama bin Laden

²⁸ This chapter is currently under review at a scholarly journal related to terrorism.

or Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq... The ISIS leader, in sum, is a clever, disciplined, violent and charismatic man – with an eye for manipulating Muslim public opinion (Ignatius 2014).

From the way al-Baghdadi is described, it is evident that he is not a typical “run-of-the-mill” leader. There is something *special* that differentiates him from other terrorists. He possesses ineffable qualities that allow him to invoke the fanatical loyalty of his followers, who are willing to lay down their lives for his cause. He embodies a potent blend of strong personality, fanaticism, and apparent piety that serves as a rallying cry for the creation of an Islamist state. The implication is that al-Baghdadi’s charisma, and the charismatic qualities of terrorist leaders like him, present a significant challenge to Western efforts to combat Islamist terrorism.

The academic literature on charismatic leadership and strategic organization in benevolent and violent groups is robust and multidisciplinary (e.g., Bass 1985; Burns 1978; Dawson 2002; Rustow 1970; Willner 1984; Wilson 1975). Since the 1980s, scholars of management science have increasingly acknowledged that charisma is a key component in effective business leadership and organizational success (Bryman 1992, p. 91; Conger 1988, pp. 23-36). Much of this recognition is due to the work of James Burns’ in his Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Leadership* (1978), which identifies two ways in which leadership can manifest. The first is transactional leadership, where managers “survey their subordinates’ needs and set goals for them on the basis of the effort they can rationally expect from their subordinates” (Bass 1985, p. 13. See also, Zaleznik 1983). These types of leaders are commonplace, are primarily concerned with daily operations, and do not question larger organizational goals. The second type of leadership is transformational, which is conceptually tied to charismatic authority and charismatic leadership. In contrast

to the day-to-day management involved in transactional leadership, transformational leaders “engage the full person of the follower” by arousing a higher level of need (Bass 1985, p. 14). In simpler terms, transformational leaders motivate their subordinates to become personally invested in the well-being and growth of their employer. There are many colloquial examples of charismatic and transformational business leaders such as Lee Iacocca (Chrysler), Richard Branson (Virgin), and Steve Jobs (Apple), who seemingly single-handedly turned around the fortunes of their companies. The relationship between transformational leadership and corporate success has been extensively tested, (e.g., Bass 1985; Bass and Riggio 2006; Howell and Avolio 1993) and findings suggest that charismatic business leaders have a real-world effect on the strategic and organizational behaviors of their employees.

The study of how charismatic leaders influence strategic dynamics in violent organizations has also been empirically analysed, particularly in the case of the minority of cults and new religious movements that turn towards violence. Scholars of new religious movements have noted that the escalation to violence in cultic movements is often tied to deviant social dynamics involving charismatic authority (e.g., Dawson 2002; Robbins 2002; Wessinger 2000). A paradigmatic example is the case of the highly charismatic Shoko Asahara and his adherents in Aum Shinrykyo. In response to his waning authority and pressures to fulfill certain apocalyptic prophecies, Asahara masterminded the Tokyo subway sarin gas attacks in 1995 that killed thirteen individuals and injured thousands (see, Lifton 1999; Reader 2000). The influence of charismatic leaders on strategic dynamics has also been examined to a lesser degree in the context of radical and terrorist groups. In a survey administered to 650 religious Muslim men who participated in a “Jerusalem Day” protest march in 2002, Ayla Schbley and Clark McCauley

(2005, p. 563) noted a significant relationship between charismatic leadership and respondents' willingness to use CBRN (chemical, radiological, biological, and nuclear) weapons. Researchers interested in malevolent creativity within terrorist groups have also recognized the importance of charismatic leaders and entrepreneurs to the creation of innovative strategic behavior (Gill et. al. 2013; Rasmussen and Hafez 2010). This suggests that much like in the case of benevolent organizations, strategic behaviors of violent organizations and their members are similarly affected by diverse factors involving charismatic leadership.

There are many historical and contemporary instances of charismatic terrorist leaders who have risen to lead violent political action against perceived injustices. Obvious examples include Shoko Asahara of Aum Shinrykyo, Abdullah Öcalan of the PKK, Abimael Guzman of the Shining Path, Vellupillai Prabhakaran of the LTTE, and Osama bin Laden of Al-Qaida. Yet, despite the prevalence of charismatic terrorist leaders, there has been relatively little scholarly research on how charisma influences important social and tactical dynamics within terrorist groups (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, pp. 349, 355; Ingram 2013, pp. 1-4). This gap in knowledge persists despite widespread acknowledgement by scholars of the importance of charismatic leadership in the recruitment and radicalization of terrorist operatives. For example:

In many of the reviewed studies, evidence seems to indicate the importance of the influence of a peer group or significant other - a charismatic leader, a family member or a trusted peer - as a key in initiating and driving the radicalization process. Many indicate the increasing importance of the peer group leader with regard to outreach and recruitment, not least because overt and top-down recruitment has become more difficult in Europe due to countermeasures of authorities (Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 810; see also, Crelinsten 2009, pp. 36-37; Dawson 2010, p. 9; Hamm 2013; Gupta 2005, p. 19; Milla et. al. 2013; Nesser 2009, pp. 96-97; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107).

Scholars also acknowledge that charismatic leadership plays an important role in how some terrorist groups operate, strategize, and execute successful attacks:

In order for a group of people with a grievance to turn into a terrorist cell, they need an effective leader. This leadership comes in two forms: operational and charismatic. These two qualities are sometimes found in separate people in a group and sometimes in one person. Operational and charismatic leadership are vital in providing training, motivation, discipline and group cohesiveness. Leadership within the group is the determinant in terrorist “success” (Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50; see also, Aydinli 2006, p. 307; Honig 2007, p. 571; Mogahaddam 2005, p. 162; Nesser 2009, p. 98; Post 2005, p. 620; Richardson 2006, p. 45).

The common refrain in the terrorism literature is that leaders, particularly charismatic ones, are important to social processes involved the formation, operation, and demise of their groups.

Despite this recognition, a number of pressing questions remain unanswered: how exactly do charismatic terrorist leaders inspire such fanatical levels of devotion from their followers? Are there strategic differences between charismatically-led and other types of terrorist groups? Are charismatically-led terrorist groups more prone to certain types of behaviors than other types of terrorist organizations? Given the worrisome ability of certain terrorist leaders like al-Baghdadi to inspire intense devotion among their followers, it is clear that further scholarly analysis is needed if we are to understand how to properly combat this genre of Islamist fundamentalism.

The objective of this chapter is to begin addressing this gap in knowledge by quantitatively examining how differing levels of charismatic authority influence strategic dynamics and attack outcomes within terrorist groups. It builds directly from the concluding remarks made by Hofmann and Dawson (2014, pp. 362-363) that call for more robust empirical analyses of charismatic terrorist leadership. To date, the terrorism literature that mentions charismatic authority and charismatic leadership is largely speculative, with little to no empirical evidence backing up the majority of statements made by scholars about the charismatic nature of certain terrorist leaders (see, Hofmann and Dawson 2014; Hofmann 2015a). At this early stage, this chapter does not seek to authoritatively test *specific* claims made by terrorism scholars about charismatic terrorist leaders. Rather, it purposefully takes a broad inductive approach. As a

result, no specific predictions or hypotheses are made in order to allow for the *post hoc* application of findings to help strengthen or discredit what we believe to know about the relationship between charismatic terrorist leadership and the strategic operation and outcomes of terrorist attacks.

The chapter begins with a brief overview of the theoretical background on charismatic authority.²⁹ This is then followed by a presentation of the data, methods, and measures used during analysis. Results from frequency, bivariate, and multivariate models that examine the relationship between varying levels of the presence of charismatic authority, operational tactics (e.g., weapon choice, target choices) and the outcome of terrorist attacks (e.g., success rates, lethality, number of wounded) are then presented. The chapter finally concludes with a discussion of results, policy recommendations, study limitations, and areas for future research.

4.2 - What is charismatic authority?

The theoretical basis for charismatic authority is derived from Max Weber's (1978, pp. 212-245) discussion of legitimate domination. In his analysis of how and why people submit to the dominion of others, Weber identifies three "ideal-types" of authority: (1) traditional, (2) rational-legal, and (3) charismatic. Traditional authority is the acceptance of an individual's or office-holder's power that is based upon long-standing socio-cultural norms, customs, or traditions (e.g., a monarch, a tribal chieftain). Rational-legal authority demands obedience based upon the recognized power that is intrinsically invested in an office or position (e.g., law enforcement and elected officials). Traditional and rational-legal forms of authority are typically stable, and are focused on the routine, day-to-day governance over a group, organization, or country. In other

²⁹ Consult Hofmann & Dawson (2014, pp. 350-355) for a more comprehensive overview of charismatic authority in the context of terrorism studies.

words, these forms of authority base their legitimacy on well-entrenched hierarchical and bureaucratic social structures. However, when in its “ideal-typical” form, charismatic authority is established in direct opposition to traditional and rational-legal forms of domination. Rather than deriving their authority from long-standing traditions or bureaucratized offices, charismatic leaders demand obedience from their followers based upon the *recognition* of some extraordinary, supernatural, or divine quality. As Weber explains, it is this “extraordinariness” that differentiates charismatic leaders from their traditional and rational-legal counterparts:

[Charisma is] a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men, and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader (Weber 1968, p. 48).

This perceived “extraordinariness” can vary greatly (Melton 1991, p. 2). People may submit to a charismatic leader based upon perceptions of something as simple as superior oratorical skills, or, followers may fervently believe in the god-like nature of the charismatic leader. Regardless of how it manifests, if a truly charismatic leader manages to gather a following, perceptions of the leader’s exceptional nature can move and inspire adherents to surrender themselves completely to the fulfillment of the leader’s stated goals (Bendix 1977, p. 300). As Lorne Dawson (2011, pp. 121-123) notes, there are other social, strategic, and structural conditions that need to be met in order for a charismatic leader to be successful. But, if established, the bond between charismatic leaders and their followers is truly unique: “In its “pure form” charismatic leadership involves a degree of commitment on the part of the disciples that has no parallel in [traditional and rational-legal] types of domination” (Bendix 1977, p. 300). It is this special bond of love and loyalty formed between a charismatic leader and their flock that serves as a catalyst for the commission of both remarkable and terrible acts.

Scholars note that charismatic authority tends to manifest primarily during times of socio-cultural, political, and religious turmoil (Dawson 2011, pp. 119-124; Friedland 1964, pp. 22-24; Ingram 2013, pp. 20-21; Madsen and Snow 1991, pp. 14-23; Weber 1968, p. 19; Wilson 1975, pp. 26-31). If traditional and rational-legal forms of authority are seen as incapable of resolving the crisis, people can become “charisma hungry” in search of a resolution (Dawson 2011, pp. 121-123; Korany 1976). There are numerous historical examples of this phenomenon. Charismatic leaders like Adolf Hitler, Mohandas Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Joan of Arc, and Martin Luther King Jr. almost always stand at the heart of social and political movements that challenge conventional norms and drastically alter the social landscape, for good or for ill. Since the basis for a charismatic leader’s authority lies in the perception of the extraordinary qualities of an individual, they are not hampered by the rules and traditions which govern the more stable forms of authority. As a result, the power that they wield can be virtually unrestricted in its scope (Barker 1993, pp. 182-183). In this sense, charismatic authority is both anti-institutional and a force for change. Given the tumultuous and change-oriented nature of charismatic authority, it is unsurprising that terrorism is fertile soil for the emergence of charismatic leaders who are focused on social and political change through the use of coercive violence (Rasmussen and Hafez 2010, p. 84).

As a final point, the type of relationship formed between charismatic leaders and their followers is best conceived as a mutually-established dyadic bond:

The general consensus among scholars is that the focal point of research should be the *relationship* between the charismatic leader and his or her followers and not the individual psychological qualities of the leaders. This relationship, also known as “the charismatic bond,” is socially constructed through a complex process of negotiation. It rests on an exchange of mutual needs, where the charismatic leader is granted authority by the followers in return for recognition, affection, and reinforcement of worth (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, p. 351. Emphasis original).

In simpler terms, the charismatic relationship should not be understood as the unilateral imposition of the leader's strong will upon his or her mindless followers. Rather, both leaders and followers are active participants in the formation of the charismatic bond, and both parties gain something from the relationship. As a result, there is scholarly agreement that the focal point of research on charismatic authority should be on the formation and maintenance of this special type of relational bond (see, Barker 1993; Madsen and Snow 1991; Wallis 1993; Willner 1984).

4.3 - Data and methods

4.3.a - Research objective and focus

The primary objective of this chapter is the quantitative examination of the relationship between varying levels of the presence of charismatic authority (PCA) among a sample of thirty international terrorist groups ($n = 30$) and their strategic choices (e.g., target preferences, attack methods). It also attempts to determine whether groups with higher levels of the PCA are likely to be more successful and/or more destructive (reflected by lethality rates and number of wounded victims/perpetrators). This study employs a predictor variable that was coded using a theoretical framework (the "PCA indicators") designed for measuring the presence of charismatic authority within and across terrorist groups (Hofmann 2015a). The predictor variable was then used to test the relationship between the PCA scores of each group in the sample with a number of outcome variables that reflect a range of tactical choices and attack outcomes.

The current study focuses exclusively on non-state actors, rather than exploring the presence of charismatic authority within the contexts of both insurgent and state terrorism. The decision to exclude state terrorism from the analysis was due to the nature of the authority

relationships examined in this study. Charismatic authority within small and clandestine groups is based on according power to an individual who actively challenges and seeks to replace established social norms and governance, while “charismatic” political leaders typically operate within the bureaucratized structure of traditional or rational-legal authority. In other words, the charisma attributed to “likeable” political leaders is superficial and is not the same sort of intense and personal bond formed between a “pure” charismatic leader and his or her followers (see, Bendix 1977, pp. 298-307; Hofmann and Dawson 2014, p. 349). There are very few politicians who are venerated by followers in the same manner as highly charismatic terrorist leaders. This does not mean that the PCA indicators cannot be adapted to account for certain extreme types of charismatic political leaders and dictators who perpetrate or support state terrorism (e.g., Ayotollah Khomeini, Kim Jong Un, Muammar Gaddafi). But, the theoretical framework presented in this study focused on the “ideal-typical” charismatic relationship that is antithetical to traditional and rational-legal forms of authority, and is therefore better suited for analyzing non-state terrorist groups.

4.3.b - Dataset

The data were taken from the *Global Terrorism Database (GTD)*, which is maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START 2012). The GTD uses publically available and unclassified data to record various characteristics of incidents of terrorist violence from events occurring between 1970 and 2011. Data sources include media articles, electronic news archives, existing datasets, books, journals and legal documents. This limits the incidents within the study sample to successfully executed attacks that have been recorded by START and whose details are known to the general public.

4.3.c - Sample selection and data inclusion

The focus on contrasting a group level variable (the PCA within terrorist groups) with incident-based data led to the creation of a modified dataset with hierarchical data (also known as nested or clustered data) comprising of two distinct levels. The first level includes the various descriptive variables for each incident (e.g., attack type, number of perpetrators, number of victims), which are nested in the second level of data, comprising of the thirty terrorist groups that make up the study sample. The hierarchical nature of the data necessitated the use of survey-based variance estimates for models at the bivariate level, and the use of random intercept multi-level models at the multivariate level to account for the non-independence of cases.

For the selection of groups, each distinct terrorist organization listed in the GTD was given a sequential numerical value. A random number generator was then used to select groups for the sample. The viability of each group for inclusion in the final sample was assessed during the coding process. Those with insufficient available information (e.g., language issues, security/publication bans) to allow for comprehensive coding were discarded. The groups included in the final sample are listed in table 1, in descending order of PCA scores.

In order to avoid blindly blending multiple off-shoot groups into the larger organizations from which they were created, attack incidents in the GTD executed by a splinter or sub-group were excluded from the final dataset (i.e., when an alternate group was listed in the *gsubname* string variable). This was done in order to avoid the conflation of terrorist organizations with similar ideologies, goals and methods, but whose levels of the PCA may have differed greatly. This limits the data somewhat, because it is impossible to correctly identify the “true” perpetrators of terrorist incidents one-hundred percent of the time. Findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

Table 1: List of groups included in final sample in rank order from highest to lowest PCA Score

Group Name
Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)
Taliban
Shining Path
Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK)
Hizballah
Jewish Defense League (JDL)
Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA)
Jemaah Islamiya (JI)
Baader-Meinhof Group
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
Red Army Faction (RAF)
al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ)
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
National Liberation Army of Colombia (ELN)
Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)
New People's Army
Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)
Armed Islamic Group (GIA)
Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)
Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA)
Army of God
Irish Republican Army (IRA)
Animal Liberation Front (ALF)
Weather Underground
Red Brigades
Action Directe

The incident data nested within the thirty terrorist groups chosen for analysis were also subjected to three inclusion criteria: (1) the selected incident must not have been in doubt as to whether it was a terrorist act (using the *doubt terrorism proper* variable when data were available), (2) the selected incident was perpetrated by an actual known terrorist entity, as opposed to suspected umbrella affiliations (Kashmiri separatists, Jewish radicals, anti-abortion activists etc.), and (3) the selected incident conformed to all three GTD definitions of terrorism. Incidents that did not conform to these three criteria were excluded. The GTD's three criteria for the definition of terrorism are as follows:

- The incident must be intentional;
- The incident must entail some level of violence or threat of violence; and
- The perpetrators of the incidents must be sub-national actors (START, 2012, p. 6).

As a result, the modified dataset was limited to incidents perpetrated by known non-state actors who committed clearly identifiable acts of terrorism, as per the GTD's definition. After application of the inclusion/exclusion criteria, a total of 18,172 terrorist incidents were included in the final modified dataset, nested within thirty terrorist groups.

4.3.d - Coding the predictor variable

The GTD is a critical incident database of terrorist attacks that collects information on variables such as methods of attack, fatalities, property damage, tactics used, etc. The data are meant to provide a broad overview of terrorist activities and methods, but reveal little about the social realities within the groups themselves, such as ideology, motivations and relationships.

Therefore, no existing variable within the GTD can be used to gauge the presence of charismatic authority within the groups listed in the database. As a result, the construction of a variable capable of assessing the presence of charismatic authority within terrorist groups was required.

This was done by using a list of fourteen indicators (the "PCA indicators") meant to assist in the qualitative and/or quantitative operationalization of charismatic authority in the context of terrorist groups. The PCA indicators are based on Weber's theories of legitimate domination, as well as empirical insights from charismatic authority in new religious movements. Full descriptions of each indicator are available in Hofmann (2015a). The list of indicators are as follows:

1. Are attributions of power to the leader based on the followers' perception of the leader's supernatural or superhuman and/or exceptional powers and qualities?;
2. Is the authority of the leader interpreted in terms of ingrained and traditional conceptions of charismatic authority in the broader society and culture?;
3. Is authority attributed to the leader on the basis of the perception that there is an impending or current crisis, one associated with the bankruptcy of existing forms of traditional and/or rational-legal forms of authority?;
4. Is the authority attributed to the leader associated with any physical impairment or suffering which is viewed positively by the followers?;
5. Does the leader legitimate their authority through reference to a higher source of authority, either divine or some other transcendent source (i.e., a supreme ideology)?;
6. Are grandiose and exaggerated claims made about the nature and scope of the leader's authority and importance?;
7. Are new members socialized into recognizing the special powers and authority of the leader?;
8. Does the leader figure prominently in the folklore of the group and the representation of its 'story'?;
9. Are organizational decisions highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader?;
10. Is the leader intolerant of alternative sources of power and authority, both internal and external to the group?;
11. Does the leader introduce sudden and /or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group?;
12. Do followers readily accept these sudden and/or seemingly arbitrary changes in the practices and policies of the group?;
13. Is the delegation of authority highly centralized and reliant on the will of the leader?;
14. Does the legitimacy of subordinate leaders in the group depend on the nature of their personal relationship with the leader?

On a group-to-group basis, coding involved assigning a value to each of the PCA indicators using a scale ranging between 0 and 5. Each number on the scale corresponded with a qualitative descriptor. The coding scheme used is available in table 2. Using the scale as a guide, the coder made an informed choice based on available sources of information before assigning a value for each indicator. A coding table was constructed for each group, which allowed for annotation and organization of material for each indicator. Information on groups were gleaned from case studies, peer-reviewed articles, scholarly books, historical accounts, online videos, biographies, as well as media and journalistic accounts taken from the Factiva and Lexis-Nexis databases. Each group was meticulously researched prior to actual coding. In cases where groups had

undefined or unclear leadership (e.g., multiple leaders, spiritual vs. operational leaders), the coder made an informed judgement call and the leader most involved in the creation and shaping of the group’s ideology was chosen for analysis. If multiple leaders were responsible for creating and shaping the group’s ideology, they were all considered as a single entity for the purposes of coding. Coding for the current study was done individually by the author.

Table 2: Coding scheme for PCA scores

Code	Qualitative Statement
0	Never the case (0% of the time)
1	Rarely the case (<25% of the time)
2	Sometimes the case (Between 25-49% of the time)
3	Often the case (Between 50-74% of the time)
4	Very often the case (Between 75-99% of the time)
5	Always the case (100% of the time)

4.4. - Measures

4.4.a - Predictor variable: Presence of charismatic authority scale (PCA scale)

Upon completion of the coding process, the fourteen PCA indicators were added together to create the predictor variable: the PCA scale. Since the indicators have not been tested for reliability elsewhere, a test-retest reliability analysis with an 18-month time lag was conducted by re-coding the PCA scores of a random subset of ten groups taken from the study sample.³⁰

³⁰ The test-rest reliability analysis was chosen due to the fact there was only a single coder for the PCA scores. Since coding PCA scores for each group was time intensive, it was unfeasible to add a second coder for the purposes of inter-rater reliability analyses. In order to avoid bias that could distort the results of the second round of coding, research for each group was conducted with a “clean slate” approach that did not draw on previous notes from the first round of coding.

The results of the test-retest reliability analysis indicate an acceptable level of correlation ($r = 0.781$), which suggests that the coding process was reliable. In addition, a principle components analysis test (direct oblimin) was conducted to ensure internal consistency of the PCA score. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (.801) and Bartlett's test ($p < .000$) indicated the suitability of a principal components analysis. There are three eigenvalues over 1 (8.223, 1.601 and 1.087), however the scree plot indicated strong evidence for a single factor solution. All items aside from 3, 4, and 5, load onto the same latent factor. The substantive similarity of these three indicators did not translate well to the quantitative coding process, which caused them to load onto a separate factor. Cronbach's alpha for the eleven-item PCA scale is .954, which indicates a high level of internal consistency. As a result, the final PCA scale was constructed from eleven of the fourteen indicators (items 1-2, 6-14). The mean PCA score for the sample was 21.03 (observed range = 0-50; SD = 14.95). The scale is normally distributed.

4.4.b - Outcome variables

The outcome variables chosen for analysis reflect a large range of attack outcomes, behaviours, tactics, and operational choices made by terrorist groups in the sample, but are constrained by what is available within the GTD. A total of eleven outcome variables were included in the models, and can be broadly categorized in two main groups: (1) 'operational choices', and (2) 'attack outcomes'. 'Operational choice' variables include measures meant to identify preferences of tactics, targets and methods for terrorist attacks. It consists of six variables: (1) *suicide attack?* (dichotomous yes/no); (2) *attack type* (nominal with 10 categories); (3) *target type* (nominal with 22 categories); (4) *weapon type* (nominal with 13 categories); (5) *number of perpetrators*; and (6) *hostage/kidnapping victims?* (dichotomous yes/no). 'Attack outcomes' consists of a total of

five variables that measure the aftermath of each incident: (1) *successful attack?* (dichotomous yes/no); (2) *number of victim fatalities*; (3) *number of perpetrator fatalities*; (4) *number of injured victims*; and (5) *number of perpetrators injured*. Detailed descriptions of each outcome variable and their categories are available within the GTD coding handbook (START 2012). A full list of the outcome variables chosen for analysis are available in table 3.

Table 3: List of outcome variables

Operational Choices	Attack Outcomes
Suicide Attack?	Successful Attack?
Attack Type	Number of Victim Fatalities
Target Type	Number of Perpetrator Fatalities
Weapon Type	Number of Injured Victims
Number of Perpetrators	Number of Perpetrators Injured
Hostage/Kidnapping Victims?	

4.4.c - Control variables

For the multivariate models, three additional control variables were included to account for differences across geographical regions, time periods, and group ideology. The *region* control variable consists of thirteen nominal categories that divided incidents into large continental and geographical regions (South America, Western Europe, South Asia, Central America & Caribbean, Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia, North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, and Australia & Oceania). The *decade* control variable consists of four time periods: the 1970's, 1980's, 1990's, and 2000-2011. Lastly, a broadly defined *ideology* control variable was included to account for ideological differences across the sample (ethno-nationalist, right-wing, left-wing, and religious).³¹

³¹ The ideological categories were purposefully chosen to be broad (e.g., 'Religious' instead of 'Islamist'/'Fundamentalist Christian', and so on) to account for the relatively small sample (n = 30). In case where a certain group could be described with multiple ideological categories (e.g., the PKK as ethno-nationalist and leftist), a judgement call was made by the coder to choose the *primary* ideology that best fit the group.

Table 4: Attack incident frequency across groups

Group Name	Frequency of Incidents	Group Name	Frequency of Incidents
Action Directe	48	MILF	186
Al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya	239	ELN	1,081
Animal Liberation Front	90	New People's Army	800
Armed Islamic Group	197	PLO	74
Army of God	23	Palestinian Islamic Jihad	94
Baader Meinhof Group	88	PFLP	110
ETA	1,663	Red Brigades	199
FMLN	2,098	FARC	1,263
Hezbollah	163	Shining Path	3,970
Irish Republican Army	1,587	SLA	4
Jemaah Islamiya	70	Taliban	1,151
Jewish Defense League	78	MRTA	516
PKK	806	Ulster Freedom Fighters	217
LTTE	973	Ulster Volunteer Force	234
Lord's Resistance Army	140	Weathermen	40

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for higher-order outcome variables

	Mean	SD	Min	Max	n
<i>Number of Perpetrators</i>	31.26	74.23	0	1,000	2,640
<i>Number of Victim Fatalities</i>	1.99	7.06	0	375	16,681
<i>Number of Perpetrator Fatalities</i>	0.36	2.07	0	70	3,665
<i>Number of Injured Victims</i>	2.72	80.81	0	10,000	16,065
<i>Number of Perpetrators Injured</i>	0.05	0.49	0	11	3,498

4.5 - Results

Frequency statistics for attack incidents perpetrated by the study sample are available in table 4.

The descriptive statistics for attack incidents indicate that the groups within the study sample committed an average of 606 terrorist attacks (ranging from 4 to 3,970 attack incidents). The median value is 198 terrorist attacks, and there is a high amount of dispersion ($SD = 858.42$).

Descriptive statistics for the five higher-order outcome variables are available in table 5 and provide information on: (1) *number of perpetrators*, (2) *number of victim fatalities*, (3) *number of perpetrator fatalities*, (4) *number of injured victims*, and (5) *number of perpetrators injured*. The data show that on average, terrorist incidents involved around 31 perpetrators ($M = 31.26$), though slightly more than half were committed by groups of five or fewer perpetrators (57% of incidents). The lethality of attacks within the sample appeared to have been relatively low, with an average of close to 2 victim fatalities ($M = 1.99$) per incident. The vast majority of attacks ($n = 9,521$) resulted in no victim casualties, and more than 95% of attacks claimed 10 lives or less. There are similar trends for the number of victims wounded ($M = 2.72$), with 77% of attacks ($n = 12,121$) resulting in no injuries among victims, and 96% of attacks resulting in 10 or less injuries. Among the perpetrators, there were relatively few fatalities ($M = 0.36$) and injuries ($M = 0.05$) per incident. Close to 88% of terrorist attacks ($n = 3,200$) resulted in no fatalities among the perpetrators, and 97% of attacks resulted in 3 fatalities or less among the perpetrators. Findings are similar for the number of perpetrators injured, with 98% of incidents ($n = 3,435$) indicating no injuries.

Table 6 displays the frequency statistics for the three dichotomous variables: (1) *successful attack?*, (2) *suicide attack?*, and (3) *hostages or kidnapping victims?* Nearly 93% of attack incidents were deemed successful ($n = 16,880$), and less than 2% of attacks involved suicide tactics ($n = 267$). Lastly, approximately 9% of incidents ($n = 1,579$) involved kidnapping or hostage taking.

Table 6: Frequency statistics for dichotomous outcome variables

	No	Yes	n
<i>Successful attack?</i>	1,291	16,880	18,171
<i>Suicide attack?</i>	17,905	267	18,172
<i>Hostages or Kidnapping?</i>	16,574	1,579	18,153

Frequency statistics for the three multi-category nominal variables (*attack type, target type, weapon type*) and the three control variables (*region, decade, ideology*) in table 7 reveal a number of trends in regards to tactical choices made by the study sample. The preferred method of attack was the use of bombs/explosives (n = 8,169), with 45% of incidents involving some form of explosive device. The other two favored methods of attack were armed assault (n = 3,857, 21.2%) and assassination (n = 3,037, 16.7%). The favored target was private property and citizens (n = 3,781, 20.8%), followed by businesses (n = 3,604, 19.8%), police targets (n = 2,549, 14%), and general government targets (n = 2,427, 13.4%). The weapon of choice for terrorist groups within the sample was explosives/bombs/TNT (n = 8,284), with 45.6% of terrorist incidents involving explosives as the primary weapon. The next most frequent weapons of choice were firearms (n = 6,635, 36.5%), other/unknown weapons (n = 1,610, 8.9%), and incendiary weapons (n = 1,401, 7.7%). There were no recorded terrorist events within the study sample of the use of biological, radiological, or nuclear weapons. Frequency statistics for the *decade, region, and ideology* control variables reveal that the majority of attack incidents occurred in the 1980s (n = 7,956, 43.8%) and 1990s (n = 5,423, 29.8%), took place mostly in South America (n = 6,829, 37.6%) and Western Europe (n = 4,231, 23.3%), and primarily involved groups with left-wing (n = 10,196, 56.1%) and ethno-nationalist ideologies (n = 5,634, 31%).

Table 7: Frequency statistics for Attack Type, Weapon Type, Target Type, Region, Decade and Ideology

	Frequency	%		Frequency	%
Attack Type:			Target Type:		
<i>Bombing/Explosion</i>	8,169	45.0	<i>Private Citizens/Property</i>	3,781	20.8
<i>Armed Assault</i>	3,857	21.2	<i>Business</i>	3,604	19.8
<i>Assassination</i>	3,037	16.7	<i>Police</i>	2,549	14.0
<i>Facility/Infrastructure</i>	1,298	7.1	<i>Government (General)</i>	2,427	13.4
<i>Hostage Taking (Kidnapping)</i>	1,094	6.0	<i>Utilities</i>	2,023	11.1
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	450	2.5	<i>Non-Aviation Transport</i>	1,006	5.5
<i>Hostage Taking (Barricade)</i>	197	1.1	<i>Military</i>	510	2.8
<i>Hijacking</i>	46	0.3	<i>Educational Institutions</i>	376	2.1
<i>Unarmed Assault</i>	24	0.1	<i>Journalists/Media</i>	332	1.8
			<i>Government (Diplomatic)</i>	284	1.6
Region:			<i>Religious figures/locales</i>	248	1.4
<i>South America</i>	6,829	37.6	<i>Other</i>	225	1.2
<i>Western Europe</i>	4,231	23.3	<i>Telecommunication</i>	173	1.0
<i>South Asia</i>	2,124	11.7	<i>Airports and Airlines</i>	127	0.7
<i>Central America & Caribbean</i>	2,099	11.6	<i>Unknown</i>	101	0.6
<i>Middle East and North Africa</i>	1,474	8.1	<i>Other Terrorists</i>	101	0.6
<i>Southeast Asia</i>	1,055	5.8	<i>NGOs</i>	70	0.4
<i>North America</i>	209	1.2	<i>Tourists</i>	65	0.4
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	146	0.8	<i>Food/Water Supply</i>	56	0.3
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	4	0.0	<i>Violent Political Parties</i>	47	0.3
<i>Australia and Oceania</i>	1	0.0	<i>Maritime Transportation</i>	45	0.2
			<i>Abortion Related</i>	22	0.1
Decade:			Weapon Type:		
<i>1970-1979 (1970s)</i>	1,676	9.2	<i>Explosives/Bombs/TNT</i>	8,284	45.6
<i>1980-1989 (1980s)</i>	7,956	43.8	<i>Firearms</i>	6,635	36.5
<i>1990-1999 (1990s)</i>	5,423	29.8	<i>Other/Unknown</i>	1,610	8.9
<i>2001-2011 (2000 onwards)</i>	3,117	17.2	<i>Incendiary</i>	1,401	7.7
			<i>Melee</i>	204	1.1
Ideology:			<i>Chemical</i>	16	0.1
<i>Left-wing</i>	10,196	56.1	<i>Sabotage Equipment</i>	9	0.1
<i>Ethno-nationalist</i>	5,634	31.0	<i>Vehicle</i>	4	0.0
<i>Religious</i>	2,341	12.9	<i>Fake Weapons</i>	1	0.0
<i>Right-wing</i>	0	0.0			

n = 18,172

For the purposes of the bivariate and multivariate analyses, categories with relatively low frequencies were recoded into their respective ‘other’ categories. For *attack type*, this included hijacking (n = 46, 0.3%) and unarmed assault (n = 24, 0.1%). For *target type*, the threshold for recoding was categories with less than 100 cases (NGOs, tourists, food and water supply, violent political parties, maritime ports and facilities, abortion related). In *weapon type*, the recoded

categories included chemical weapons (n = 16, 0.1%), fake weapons (n = 1, 0.0%), vehicles (n = 4, 0.0%), and sabotage attacks (n = 9, 0.1%).

Table 8: Results of Spearman’s correlation (survey-based variance estimates) – PCA scores by outcome variables

	Spearman’s rho	Sig.	n
<i>Number of Victim Fatalities</i>	0.317**	0.006	16,681
<i>Number of Perpetrator Fatalities</i>	0.239	0.746	3,665
<i>Number of Victims Injured</i>	0.258	0.304	15,814
<i>Number of Perpetrators Injured</i>	0.017	0.166	3,498
<i>Number of Perpetrators</i>	-0.258	0.591	2,640

* p <.001 ** p < .05 + p <.10

In order to understand how the PCA scores varied according to each of the five higher-order outcome variables at the bivariate level, Spearman correlations (employing survey-based variance estimates to account for the clustered data) were examined. Results are available in table 8, and show that the only significant relationship is *number of victim fatalities* (rho = 0.317, p < .05). This suggests that the number of victim fatalities involved in terrorist events is positively correlated with higher levels of the PCA.

The results of ANOVA tests (employing survey-based variance estimates) to compare the differences in means of the PCA scores across the three multi-categorical nominal variables (*attack type*, *weapon type*, and *target type*) are available in table 9. *Attack type* (F = 4.10, p < .05) and *target type* (F = 10.69, p < .05) are significant, and suggest that certain types of strategies were employed in relation to higher PCA scores within the sample. In regards to *attack type*, terrorist events with higher than average levels of the PCA favored ‘other’ weapons (M = 29.44), armed assault (M = 26.52), and kidnapping (M = 24.14). Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé criterion for significance indicate that for *attack type*, the average number of errors was significantly lower in the bombings/explosions (M = -5.47) and facility/infrastructure (M = -

1.85) conditions than in the remaining conditions ($M = 0.21$ to 7.56). For *target type*, terrorist events that exhibited relative higher average levels of the PCA favored attack targets such as educational institutions ($M = 31.67$), religious figures / locales ($M = 31.06$), other targets than those listed ($M = 28.44$), and both general ($M = 26.28$) and diplomatic ($M = 26.81$) government targets. Scheffé post hoc analysis results for *target type* indicate that the average number of errors was lower in the utilities ($M = -0.04$) and telecommunications ($M = 0.43$) conditions than in the remaining conditions ($M = 4.41$ to 9.45). At the bivariate level, *weapon type* was found to be non-significant ($F = 1.86$, $p > .05$), which suggests that differing levels of PCA had no effect on the choice of weapons within the study sample.

In order to compare differences across means, t-tests (employing survey-based variance estimates) were conducted for the remaining three dichotomous variables (*successful attack?*, *suicide attack?* and *hostages/kidnapping?*). Results of the t-tests in table 9 show that all three relationships are significant ($p < .05$). Terrorist events that have higher relative PCA scores tended to be more *successful* in their attacks ('No' mean = 19.39 / 'Yes' mean = 23.40 , $p < .001$). Unsurprisingly, terrorist groups that have higher relative levels of the PCA were much more likely to engage in *suicide attacks* ('No' mean = 22.89 / 'Yes' mean = 38.61 , $p < .001$). Lastly, there is not much difference in the means for the *hostages/kidnapping* variable ('No' mean = 23.02 / 'Yes' mean = 23.96 , $p < .05$), suggesting that while the relationship is significant, the presence of charismatic authority did not greatly affect whether or not the groups engaged in hostage or kidnapping events.

At the multivariate level, separate random-intercept multilevel models that controlled for *decade*, *region*, and *ideology* were run for each of the outcome variables (using a group mean

Table 9: Results of ANOVA and t-tests (survey-based variance estimates) - PCA scores by outcome variables

	Mean	LSE		Mean	LSE
Attack Type^{a**} (F = 4.10)			Target Type^{a**} (F = 10.69)		
<i>Assassination</i>	21.88	5.75	<i>Business</i>	19.00	5.49
<i>Armed Assault</i>	26.52	5.41	<i>Government (General)</i>	26.28	5.44
<i>Bombing/Explosion</i>	22.09	6.45	<i>Police</i>	25.29	4.96
<i>Hostage Taking (Barricade)</i>	16.41	5.81	<i>Military</i>	23.40	6.06
<i>Hostage Taking (Kidnapping)</i>	24.14	4.21	<i>Airports and Airlines</i>	24.80	4.06
<i>Facility/Infrastructure Attack</i>	20.02	5.61	<i>Government (Diplomatic)</i>	26.81	4.10
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	29.44	4.10	<i>Educational Institutions</i>	31.67	4.20
			<i>Journalists and Media</i>	19.43	5.69
Weapon Type^a (F = 1.86)			<i>Other</i>	28.44	4.13
<i>Firearms</i>	24.01	5.36	<i>Private Citizens and Property</i>	25.16	5.18
<i>Explosives/Bombs/Dynamite</i>	22.15	6.26	<i>Religious Figures / Locales</i>	31.06	3.28
<i>Incendiary</i>	18.69	5.31	<i>Telecommunication</i>	18.95	7.76
<i>Melee</i>	32.61	3.90	<i>Other Terrorist Groups</i>	17.47	5.98
<i>Other</i>	26.99	3.81	<i>Non-Aviation Transportation</i>	24.06	5.95
			<i>Unknown</i>	23.77	5.29
			<i>Utilities</i>	16.24	10.23
Successful Attack?^{b*} (t = 8.33)			Suicide Attack?^{b*} (t = 15.49)		
<i>No</i>	19.39	5.05	<i>No</i>	22.89	5.55
<i>Yes</i>	23.40	5.58	<i>Yes</i>	38.61	2.95
Hostage/Kidnapping?^{b**} (t = 2.40)					
<i>No</i>	23.02	5.69			
<i>Yes</i>	23.96	4.45			

* p <.001 ** p < .05 + p <.10
^a ANOVA ^b t-test
LSE = Linearized Standard Error

centered version of the PCA scale)³² to account for the direction of model predictions and the hierarchical nature of the data. Each multi-level model was tested for the inclusion of the regression coefficient to verify if using a random-effects model was justified. When controlling for *region*, *ideology*, and *decade*, the multi-level linear regression results for the five higher-order variables available in table 10 indicate that none are significant at the multivariate level ($p > .05$), suggesting that PCA scores are not related to the number of perpetrators involved in

³² Centering the mean is commonly done in multi-level modeling in order to reduce the degree of multicollinearity between predictors and the random slopes/intercepts in the model (Meyers et. al., 2013, p. 476). After careful consideration, a group mean centering approach was chosen over grand mean centering in order to erase the difference between the standing of individual cases with respect to the entire sample.

terrorist events, nor with the number of victim and perpetrator fatalities and injuries. Multi-level logistic regression models run for each of the dichotomous variables (*success*, *suicide*, and *hostages/kidnapping*) that controlled for *region*, *ideology*, and *decade* indicate that while all three variables are significant at the bivariate level, only *successful attack* ($b = 2.334$, OR 1.014, $p < .001$) and *hostages/kidnapping* ($b = -0.047$, OR = 0.954, $p < .001$) remain significant at the multivariate level. The results indicate that terrorist events with higher levels of the PCA had a slightly lesser likelihood of employing hostage and kidnapping tactics, and a slightly greater likelihood of executing successful attacks.

Table 10: Multi-level linear and logistic model regression results – centered PCA scores predicting outcome variables

	b	SE	SD		b	SE	OR	ICC
Higher-Order Variables:^a				Dichotomous Variables:^b				
<i>Number of Victim Fatalities</i>	0.052	0.993	2.349	<i>Successful Attack?</i>	2.334*	0.378	1.014	0.040
<i>Number of Victims Injured</i>	0.682	0.076	1.450	<i>Suicide Attack?</i>	0.005	0.036	1.004	0.117
<i>Number of Perpetrator Fatalities</i>	0.086	0.310	1.670	<i>Hostages/Kidnapping?</i>	-0.047*	0.022	0.954	0.066
<i>Number of Perpetrators Injured</i>	0.009	0.083	1.866					
<i>Number of Perpetrators</i>	2.119	13.452	8.281					

* $p < .001$ ** $p < .05$ + $p < .10$
^a Multi-level linear regression, controlling for *region*, *ideology* and *decade*. Coefficient for the PCA predictor variable is displayed.
^b Multi-level logistic regression, controlling for *region*, *ideology* and *decade*. Coefficient for the PCA predictor variable is displayed.
 ICC = Intraclass correlation coefficient

Results are available in table 11 for two-level multinomial logit models that were run for the three multi-categorical nominal variables (*attack type*, *target type* and *weapon type*), controlling for *region*, *ideology*, and *decade*. For *attack type*, using ‘bombing/explosions’ as the reference category, assassination ($b = 0.010$, OR = 1.010, $p < .001$), armed assault ($b = 0.015$, OR = 1.015, $p < .001$), hostage taking (barricade) ($b = -0.021$, OR = 0.979, $p < .001$), facility/infrastructure attack ($b = -0.009$, OR = 0.991, $p < .001$), and other/unknown ($b = 0.034$, OR = 1.034, $p < .001$) are significant. This suggests that terrorist events within the study sample with higher PCA scores are more likely to use assassination, armed assault and ‘other’ attack types (aside from the other categories listed) than bombs, and less likely to use barricading and

facility/infrastructure attacks than bombs. Using ‘private citizens and property’ as the reference category for *target type*, businesses (b = -0.021, OR = 0.979, p < .001), military (b = -0.010, OR = 0.990, p < .05), diplomatic government targets (b = 0.018, OR = 1.009, p < .05), educational institutions (b = 0.018, OR = 1.018, p < .001), journalists and media (b = -0.026, OR = 0.974, p < .001), other targets (b = 0.009, OR = 1.009, p < .05), religious figures and locales (b = 0.011, OR = 1.011, p < .05), telecommunication (b = -0.027, OR = 0.973, p < .001), other terrorist groups (b = -0.021, OR = 0.979, p < .05), non-aviation transportation (b = -0.008, OR = 0.992, p < .001), and utilities (b = -0.030, OR = 0.971, p < .001) are significant. This indicates that terrorist events with higher PCA scores were more likely to target private citizens and property than businesses, military, journalists/media, telecommunication, other terrorist groups, non-aviation transportation, and utilities, and were more likely to target diplomatic government targets, ‘other’ targets than those listed, and religious figures/locales than private citizens and property. Lastly, for *weapon type*, higher levels of the PCA predicted a preference for melee weapons (b = 0.415, OR = 1.042, p < .05) over bombs, explosives, or dynamite.

Table 11: Multinomial logit model regression results – centered PCA scores predicting outcome variables

	b	SE	OR		b	SE	OR
Attack Type:^a (Reference: Bombing/Explosion)				Target Type:^a (Reference: Private Citizen)			
<i>Assassination</i>	0.010*	0.015	1.010	<i>Business</i>	-0.021*	0.002	0.979
<i>Armed Assault</i>	0.015*	0.001	1.015	<i>Government (General)</i>	-0.000	0.002	1.000
<i>Hostage Taking (Barricade)</i>	-0.021*	0.005	0.979	<i>Police</i>	0.001	0.002	1.001
<i>Hostage Taking (Kidnapping)</i>	0.001	0.002	1.001	<i>Military</i>	-0.010**	0.003	0.990
<i>Facility/Infrastructure Attack</i>	-0.009*	0.002	0.991	<i>Airports and Airlines</i>	0.007	0.006	1.007
<i>Other/Unknown</i>	0.034*	0.003	1.034	<i>Government (Diplomatic)</i>	0.018**	0.004	1.009
				<i>Educational Institutions</i>	0.018*	0.004	1.018
				<i>Journalists and Media</i>	-0.026*	0.004	0.974
				<i>Other</i>	0.009**	0.003	1.009
Weapon Type:^a (Reference: Bombs/TNT)				<i>Religious Figures / Locales</i>	0.011**	0.005	1.011
<i>Firearms</i>	0.011	0.007	1.011	<i>Telecommunication</i>	-0.027*	0.005	0.973
<i>Incendiary</i>	-0.013	0.014	0.987	<i>Other Terrorist Groups</i>	-0.021**	0.007	0.979
<i>Melee</i>	0.415**	0.016	1.042	<i>Non-Aviation Transport.</i>	-0.008*	0.002	0.992
<i>Other</i>	0.020	0.014	1.020	<i>Unknown</i>	-0.009	0.007	0.992
				<i>Utilities</i>	-0.030*	0.002	0.971

* p < .001 ** p < .05 + p < .10

^a Multinomial logit, controlling for *region, ideology and decade*. Coefficient for the PCA predictor variable is displayed.

4.6 - Discussion

This chapter examined the relationship between differing levels of charismatic authority and their strategic choices and attack outcomes within a sample of terrorist organizations. Although more research is required before any of the current findings can be treated as authoritative, the results reveal several discernable operational trends. Findings at the bivariate level suggest that terrorist groups with a higher magnitude of charismatic authority committed more lethal attacks. However, this finding is not supported at the multivariate level when controlling for *region*, *decade*, and *ideology*. Multivariate findings on attack and weapon types indicate that terrorists groups within the sample with higher levels of charismatic authority were more likely to employ melee weapons, use assassination tactics, engage in armed assault, and use ‘other’ attack types, over bombs and explosives. However, groups with higher levels of charismatic authority were more likely to employ bombs and explosives over barricade incidents and facility/infrastructure attacks. In terms of target preferences, results indicate that groups with higher levels of charismatic authority were more likely to attack diplomatic targets, educational institutions, ‘other’ targets, and religious figures/locales than private citizens and property, but were more likely to target private citizens and property rather than business, military targets, journalists and media, telecommunications, other terrorist groups, non-aviation transportation, and utilities. However, most of the significant multivariate findings are limited in their predictive utility. The likelihood of all of these relationships are relatively low (< 5%), which suggests that they are not particularly helpful in authoritatively anticipating the strategic behaviours of charismatically-led terrorist groups.

Despite the seminal nature of the current study, there are a number of conclusions that may help inform future empirical analyses of charismatic terrorist leadership. To begin, findings

at both the bivariate and multivariate levels indicate that highly-charismatic groups within the sample tended to be more successful in their attacks. This suggests that strong charismatic leadership may provide some form of operational or strategic benefit to terrorist groups. The broader literature on leadership in both peaceful and violent movements note that effective leadership is a crucial component to organizational success (e.g., Bass and Bass 2009, p. 11; Bass et. al. 2003, pp. 208-209; Dawson 2010, p. 14; McAdam 1982, p. 47). However, *how* charismatic leaders influence the success or failure of terrorist attacks cannot be determined definitively with the current data. While speculative, one way in which charismatic terrorist leaders may contribute to organizational success is by promoting group cohesion and self-identification with the terrorist organization and its cause (see, Shamir et. al. 1994, pp. 27-29).³³ This observation is supported by study results that indicate a preference for “face-to-face” weapon and attack types (e.g., assassination, armed assault, and melee weapons) over the use of bombs and explosives within charismatically-led terrorist groups. Research on interpersonal violence and conflict has shown that people have an innate resistance to killing (Grossman 2009), although this can be broken down through conditioning or moral disengagement (Bandura 2004) or the use of impersonal weaponry such as guns and drone strikes (Bar and Ben-Ari 2005; Moghaddam 2005, p. 166). For the average person, then, killing someone at close proximity requires a great deal of psychological conditioning and unwavering commitment to a leader, group, or cause. The establishment of a strong charismatic bond may strengthen both individual commitment and group cohesion as followers conflate their needs and identity with that of the

³³ While this discussion commits a common methodological error in terrorism studies by jumping from macro-level results to meso and micro-level conclusions (see, Dawson 2014, pp. 66-67), the wording purposefully indicates that the subsequent discussion is speculative and requires additional research to be authoritatively substantiated. Given that this research examines a previously unexplored relationship in terrorism studies, I argue that a certain amount of informed speculation is warranted here in order to help stimulate and direct avenues for future research.

leader and his or her cause (Dawson 2002, p. 84). This, in turn, may help followers overcome social and psychological barriers to close-hand interpersonal violence. This is perhaps best exemplified by ISIS's commonplace use of knives and swords to behead those they deem to be infidels.

The preference for hand-to-hand attack methods therefore supports the idea that strong forms of charismatic leadership within the study sample may play an important role in catalysing group cohesion and the intense socialization required to overcome the aversion to kill. If this finding is substantiated in future research, it has the potential to help inform the ongoing debate over the effectiveness of leadership decapitation. There are evident operational benefits for terrorist groups that function with high levels of cohesion: a heightened sense of purpose, a strong support system, resilience against outside infiltration, etc. But there are also weaknesses as well. If charismatic terrorist leaders are indeed central to fostering group cohesion and identity, leadership decapitation strategies may prove to be more effective at disrupting these types of terrorist organizations (see, Cronin 2009, p. 26; Weber 1968, pp. 246-249). This may also help explain why leadership decapitation is effective against some groups, but not others (see, Cronin 2009, p. 14; Freeman 2014; Richardson 2006, pp. xx-xxi). Needless to say, this supposition requires more research in order to be treated as conclusive. However, given the importance of highly-charismatic leaders to multiple aspects of their movements, it is surprising that none of the literature for or against the effectiveness of leadership decapitation strategies has adequately integrated the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority into their analyses (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, p. 362).

The appearance of success is a crucial component in a charismatic leader's ability to maintain the charismatic bond with his or her followers. Since the basis for their authority lies in

the perceptions of their followers, charismatic leaders must continually prove their legitimacy through successful endeavours or risk losing their authority (Dawson 2002, pp. 94-98; Weber 1968, pp. 22-23; Wilson 1975, pp. 29-31). It is therefore unsurprising that charismatic groups within the sample were more likely to be successful, given that the vast majority of the examined groups consisted of long-lived terrorist organizations. In other words, a certain measure of success was required for the highly-charismatic groups within the sample to persist, or followers would have abandoned the leaders' causes. This, however, suggests that limiting and minimizing opportunities for charismatically-led terrorist groups to claim "successes" may be pivotal in delegitimizing their leadership by rendering them impotent in the eyes of their followers (see, Hutchinson and O'Malley 2007, pp. 8-9). In particular, delegitimizing charismatic leaders may have a significant role in hampering their ability to radicalize potential members. As the existing literature on terrorist radicalization indicates, the appearance of legitimacy is an important factor in the ability of a leader to attract new recruits (Neumann 2009, p. 102; Richardson 2006, p. 45; Wiktorowicz 2005, pp. 25-26, 127, 147). Simply killing or incarcerating a charismatic terrorist leader may only serve to enhance or even routinize their charismatic authority by entrenching them as symbols or martyrs to the cause (Hutchinson and O'Malley 2007, p. 9; Crenshaw 2011, p. 93). Similarly, government responses that aim for swift apprehension of culprits and that publically downplay the magnitude of terror attacks may be beneficial to building resilience among civilians, but ignore the benefits accrued by charismatic-leaders who are seen as capable of executing successful terrorist attacks. Therefore, government responses to terrorism could benefit from efforts to mitigate and control perceptions of success among terrorist groups and their larger support networks. Detection and denial will always remain the primary tools in preventing terrorist successes. However, if the appearance of success is indeed a cornerstone in

maintaining charismatic authority within terrorist groups, then nuanced and carefully tested counter-terrorism and media strategies that attack perceptions of success may have an effect in hampering efforts to recruit new members and the ability of charismatic leaders to maintain authority over their followers.³⁴

Study findings are also supportive of the existence of separate roles for charismatic and operational leaders within terrorist groups. The limited influence of charismatic authority on attack outcomes (e.g., the number of perpetrators, fatalities, and wounded) and the limited predictive utility of the findings on strategic choices may indicate that operational decisions within terrorist groups are made separately from concerns involving charismatic leadership. In simpler terms, research results suggest that charismatic leaders may be more concerned with maintaining their authority than worrying about the small details involved in planning and executing terrorist attacks. In social movement theory, this division of movement leadership has been analyzed and substantiated with empirical case studies (Aminzade et. al. 2001; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, pp. 171-172). In the particular case of contentious social movements, two different types of leadership have been identified: task oriented (operational) leaders, who focus on assembling resources and executing group action, and people-oriented (charismatic) leaders, who focus on evoking and framing emotional responses within the group (Aminzade et. al. 2001, pp. 129-132). Interestingly, theorists note that conflict and imbalance between task and people-oriented leaders is a significant factor in the failure of contentious social movements (Aminzade et. al. 2001 pp. 141-142; Price 2012, p. 44). If a similar division in leadership roles is common among terrorist groups, as hinted at by the current findings, then further empirical research aimed at differentiating the exact roles and breadth of the influence of charismatic and operational

³⁴ A strategy to counter online radicalization has been proposed by Omar Ashour (2010) that may be adaptable to mitigating the appearance of terrorist success.

terrorist leaders is needed. This may lead to the identification of potential sources of tension between operational and charismatic leaders that may help in crafting non-coercive counter-terrorism initiatives aimed at delegitimizing terrorist leadership or destabilizing larger terrorist networks.

4.6.a - Study limitations

Research results should be interpreted with a number of limitations in mind. Study findings only begin to shed light on a small portion of the complex realities involved in charismatic relationships within terrorist groups. Study results cannot account for any meso or micro level social processes that may influence the strategic and ideological direction of groups. The data available in the GTD are insufficient for measuring group-level motivations, relationships and social realities. This necessitates employing the PCA indicators in qualitative research that can examine these group-level social processes in more depth (see, Hofmann 2015a), or undertaking quantitative survey research among active or incarcerated terrorists and radicals that inquires about charismatic relationships (see, Schbley and McCauley 2005, pp. 559-560).

An additional study limitation is the inability to measure the influence of multiple levels of leadership on operational tactics and results of attack incidents. Leadership manifests at many different levels within both violent and non-violent social movements (Barker et. al. 2001, p. 15; Morris and Staggenborg 2007, p. 190). The present research focuses exclusively upon charismatic organizational-level terrorist leaders - the top leaders - and therefore fails to account for the effect of mid-level (e.g., lieutenants, network brokers, seconds-in-command), cell-level, and grassroots leaders. Future research designs that can account for the effects of multiple levels of leadership are needed to flesh out the full range of the influence of charismatic authority in

terrorist groups. With proper data, social network analyses can be extremely beneficial in understanding the multi-level complexity involved in the construction and maintenance of charismatic authority and charismatic leadership within terrorist groups.

A number of study limitations are also the result of the coding process used to determine the PCA scores for the study sample. Much like the GTD, the coding process overwhelmingly relied on secondary source data. As a result, coding was done from an “outsider” perspective, and was limited in its ability to gain a truly deep understanding of the processes of charismatic authority within the sample groups. The coding process was also hampered by barriers involving language and access to information. This led to certain groups being discarded entirely from the sample, which means that true probability sampling is impossible. As a result, generalizability of research findings beyond the study sample is impossible.

The unique security situation surrounding terrorism studies makes gaining access to primary source data difficult at times. As a direct result, databases like the GTD rely almost exclusively on secondary source data, which limits information to the details known by the public. The inability to comprehensively measure the “true” number and characteristics of terrorist attacks can lead to unidentifiable statistical deformations that may cause incorrect or incomplete findings. This problem is further exacerbated by the study’s use of cross-sectional data to examine a dynamic phenomenon like charismatic authority. Complex social phenomena like leadership and authority are ever changing relationships that are renewed and recreated through repeated interactions between leaders and followers. This raises an issue with some of the longer-lived terrorist organizations in the sample, whose ideology, actions and leadership can change in a variety of different ways throughout their life course. An inclusion criteria limiting attack incidents to those that overlapped with the active time-period of the “major” charismatic

leader used for coding was originally considered during sampling, but was ultimately decided against. A charismatic leader's "presence" can be routinized and persist after his or her death or incapacitation, much like how Osama Bin Laden's charisma persists in al-Qaeda inspired terrorism. However, the fashion in which charismatic authority routinizes is not universal across all terrorist groups, and the use of a cross-sectional predictor variable in this study is admittedly problematic. Longitudinal and dynamic methods that can account for changes in leadership over time are needed in future quantitative research.

4.7 - Conclusion

The study of how charismatic forms of authority influence the strategic and operational dynamics in terrorist groups is in its infancy, and many aspects of charismatic terrorist leadership remain unexamined or under-developed. For example, how do mid or lower level leaders influence the strategic operation of terrorist groups? Are there other forms of charismatic leadership than those examined in the study, such as the attribution and development of the charismatic bond through the Internet and social media? How does charismatic authority actively contribute the radicalization and recruitment of terrorists? Does the coercive removal of charismatic leaders have a greater contribution to the disruption or dissolution of their groups? Is there an effective way to delegitimize charismatic forms of leadership within terrorist groups? Findings from the current study are promising, but only scratch the surface of a highly complex social relationship. Knowledge of how charismatic terrorist leaders recruit, radicalize, and manage their organizations may prove to be pivotal in crafting effective counter-terrorism strategies aimed at disrupting or dissolving these types of groups. But, this will require much more empirical research that employs a variety of different methodological approaches before we

can gain a truly holistic understanding of the nuances involved in the establishment, maintenance, and ultimate demise of groups led by charismatic terrorist leaders.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this chapter, I tie together key findings, concepts, and themes from across this dissertation. I begin with a synthetic and summative discussion of the content from the previous chapters, paying particular attention to how the research findings contribute to the literature. I then discuss several policy-relevant suggestions derived from research findings, before considering some general study limitations. I then conclude the dissertation with suggestions of areas for future research related to the study of charismatic leadership and charismatic authority in terrorist groups.

5.1 – Contributions of the dissertation to the literature

In early January 2015, the peaceful day-to-day life in Paris, France was shattered by a pair of terrorist attacks. On January 7th, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi stormed the building of the left-wing satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* armed with assault rifles, murdering eleven people and injuring a dozen others before fleeing and killing a police officer outside of the building. Two days later, Amedy Coulibaly entered a kosher supermarket in Porte de Vincennes and took shoppers hostage in support of the Kouachi brothers. During the ensuing siege, he murdered four Jewish hostages before police stormed the building, killing Coulibaly. The three attackers claimed ties to Al-Qaeda in Yemen and ISIS. They justified their attacks as revenge for blaspheming against the Prophet Muhammad and in defense of their Muslim brothers in Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan.

As details emerged during the aftermath of these events, numerous pundits, academics, and government officials commented on the link between the attackers and a notorious

charismatic Islamist leader in French prison by the name of Djamel Beghal (e.g., Halliday et. al. 2015; Jamieson 2015; Ouest-France 2015; Shephard 2015).³⁵ Beghal, also known by his Islamist *nom de guerre* Abu Hamza, is currently serving a 10 year sentence for terrorism related offences. During stints in prison, Chérif Kouachi and Amedy Coulibaly met with and developed a relationship with Beghal. As more information on the events and the perpetrators came to light, it became obvious to even the most casual observer that Beghal played some sort of influential role in guiding these and other young men down the path towards radical violence (see, Nesser 2009, pp. 96-98).

This recent incident highlights the importance of developing a comprehensive understanding of charismatic leadership in terrorist organizations. We know that Beghal and other charismatic figures like him are important to the process of the radicalization towards violence (e.g., Gupta 2008, pp. 71; Hamm 2013; Khosrokhavar 2013; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107; Wiktorowicz 2005) and the strategic operation of terrorist organizations (e.g., Silber and Bhatt 2007, p. 50; Rasmussen and Hafez 2010, pp. 3-4). But, we have yet to fully understand *how* and *why* they matter to various social, strategic, and operational aspects of their groups. As a result, many important questions concerning charismatic terrorist leadership remain unanswered. How do charismatic leaders influence the recruitment and the radicalization towards violence of operatives? Does the presence of a charismatic leader increase the apparent legitimacy of a terrorist group's cause? How do charismatic leaders play a significant role in the strategic operation of terrorist groups? How do charismatic leaders influence the mobilization of social and financial capital within their groups? Do charismatic terrorist leaders play an active role in

³⁵ In his case study of Djamel Beghal's 2001 terrorist plot, Petter Nesser (2009) describes Beghal as "intelligent and charismatic" several times, and ties his apparent charisma to his ability to recruit and radicalize potential recruits for his cell and the Jihadist cause.

the promotion of violence? Does charismatic leadership help explain differences in ideological appeal from terrorist group to terrorist group? How do mid or low levels of terrorist leadership influence important group dynamics? Aside from a singular attempt to systematically examine charismatic leadership in militant and radical Islamism (see, Ingram 2013), prior to this dissertation there has not been any concerted attempt by terrorism scholars to address these lingering questions, despite widespread acknowledgement of the probable importance of charismatic leaders to terrorist groups (e.g., Crelinsten 2009, pp. 36-37; Crenshaw 2011, p. 93; Juergensmeyer 2003, pp. 38, 108; Kepel 2004, p. 256; Khosrokhavar 2004, pp. 219-224; Khosrokhavar 2013, p. 289; Kirby 2007, p. 418; Silber and Bhatt 2005, p. 50; Vertigans 2011, pp. 106-107).

In this dissertation, I begin addressing this lacuna by laying the foundations of a theoretical and empirical examination of charismatic terrorist leadership. I accomplish this in several important ways. To begin, I help re-orient scholarship on terrorist leadership by addressing one of the persistent weaknesses in the literature: the widespread misuse of the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority. The critical and synthetic discussion of the misuse of charisma and charismatic authority in chapter 2 is the first of its kind, and draws attention to a largely misunderstood and neglected aspect of terrorism studies. This analysis breaks new ground by providing the theoretical and conceptual basis to criticize and improve upon previous scholarly work on terrorism that may have overlooked or misused the social-scientific concept of charismatic authority (e.g., Jordan 2009, p. 727; Langdon et. al. 2004; Pape 2006, p. 178). In order to facilitate the future development of theories and empirical research, I also provide a synthetic and summative discussion of the broad and multi-disciplinary literature on charismatic authority. I purposefully wrote this discussion in a way that makes the core concepts surrounding

charismatic authority relatively accessible and digestible to wide academic audience who may not possess backgrounds in sociology or leadership studies. Perhaps most importantly, by highlighting the existence of a highly-complex social bond between charismatic leaders and their followers, I provide the justification for additional theoretical and empirical research into how charismatic terrorist leaders may influence the formation, operation, and demise of their organizations. In other words, I make the fundamental argument that charismatic leadership *matters* to important social and strategic elements of terrorist groups.

Despite these contributions to the literature, terrorism scholars will inevitably continue to employ the notion of charisma in adjectival, tautological, and flirtatious ways. The “banalization” of charisma is too engrained in society to ever be entirely rid of its colloquial usage in the scholarly literature. This does not mean that efforts to re-orient past scholarship and inform future research on charismatic terrorist leadership are in vain. As long as references to the charismatic nature of leaders keep appearing in the terrorism literature, there is justification for urging further analysis of the social dynamics of the charismatic bond between leaders and followers.

By carefully borrowing applicable concepts from the study of charismatic leaders in new religious movements (NRMs) during the creation of the theoretical framework, I demonstrate the utility and feasibility of approaches that cross-fertilize important insights from other disciplines into the context of terrorism studies. In particular, my choice to draw primarily upon the literature on charismatic authority in NRMs inadvertently tests the claims made by Dawson (2010) and other terrorism scholars who point to the similarity of certain behaviors, conditions and social processes within NRMs and terrorist groups (e.g., Barkun 1994, pp. 247-249; Crenshaw 2011, p. 47; Galanter and Forest 2006; Introvigne 2009; McCauley and Moskalenko

2011, p. 84). There are only a handful of theoretical studies (e.g., Dawson 2010; Galanter and Forest 2006; Introvigne 2009; Mayer 2001) and no known empirical research that rigorously combines core concepts from both disciplines. I am among the first scholars to do so, and can therefore speak to the usefulness of future efforts to cross-fertilize applicable concepts between terrorism and NRM studies.

Considering the empirical limits of this initial research, it is difficult to conclusively state the extent to which the cross-fertilization of concepts from charismatic authority in NRMs to the context of terrorism will be fruitful. However, there is evidence to suggest that this is indeed the case. While the backbone for the creation of the theoretical framework relies primarily upon Weber's (1968) work on legitimate domination, I cross-fertilize insights from the study of NRMs such as Eileen Barker's (1993) description of "charismatization" among Unificationists, the effects of social encapsulation (e.g., Wallis 1982), and the ways in which charismatic leaders combat the routinization of charisma (e.g., Dawson 2002, pp. 92-94). Each of these sets of observations from the study of NRMs are broadly applicable to the context of terrorist groups, and they provide the theoretical framework with some important additional analytical depth, especially with regard to the social construction of the leader's charismatic persona, structural conditions that facilitate the attribution of charisma, and how charismatic leaders attempt to maintain their fragile authoritative bond with followers. When I applied the framework to the study of The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSA), I observed key social processes involving the indicators that were crafted from cross-fertilized concepts from NRMs and linked them to the complex relationship between the presence of charismatic authority and the radicalization towards violence within the CSA.³⁶ Similarly, there were many instances

³⁶ Admittedly, the CSA possesses traits that can define it as a terrorist organization and/or a violent NRM. However, there are many obvious examples of secular terrorist groups (e.g., LTTE, Shining Path, Red Army

during the coding of the presence of charismatic authority (PCA) variable where the same indicators proved to be important to the charismatic bonds between leaders and followers within the sample. Although more research is required before any definitive claims can be made about the congruity of both fields, the research findings indicate that it is feasible and potentially fruitful for future analyses to continue bridging applicable concepts from the study of NRMs to the study of terrorism.

As I argue in the introduction, the creation of multi-disciplinary and multi-method theoretical models grounded in sound social-science are necessary to stimulate future research that is robust, replicable, and useful for the generation of theories of terrorist leadership. With the presentation, justification, and application of the theoretical framework in this dissertation, I reinforce the veracity and importance of this reasoning. The theoretical framework provides the means to begin the nuanced exploration of the relationship between charismatic leadership and various social, behavioral, and strategic aspects of terrorist group. This equips scholars with a practical framework for analysing the presence and influence of one key form of leadership and authority – charismatic – in terrorist groups. It also demonstrates the utility of creating similar theoretical frameworks for the many different types of leadership present across terrorist organizations and ideologies. Furthermore, the theoretical model is the first of its kind to be useful to both the qualitative and quantitative measurement of the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups. This allows for the creation of multi or mixed methodological research aimed at understanding the dynamics of charismatic terrorist leadership. In sum, the theoretical framework developed in this dissertation is an important and much needed first step

Faction) that present with varying degrees of charismatization, social encapsulation, and efforts to combat routinization. This suggests that the social, structural, and behavioral similarities between terrorist groups and NRMs transcends, to a certain degree, the religious nature of groups, per se.

towards the holistic understanding of the diverse social, behavioral, and strategic elements related to charismatic and other forms of terrorist leadership.

There is a paucity of empirical research that comprehensively examines charismatic leadership in terrorist organizations. However, the little that does exist is entirely focused on issues involving charismatic leadership within radical and militant Islamist groups (e.g., Ingram 2013; Rinehart 2009). With the study of the relationship between the presence of charismatic authority and the radicalization towards violence in the CSA, I am the first terrorism scholar to explore the phenomenon in detail within the context of a far-right terrorist organization. This has important implications in the development of theories of charismatic leadership in the context of terrorism. Varied research which does not fall prey to the tendency to myopically focus on violent Islamism is required in order to conduct the comparative studies and meta-analyses necessary for the development of useful theories. By bucking this trend, I am furnishing important initial findings that describe certain dynamics of charismatic leadership in non-Islamist terrorist groups, while simultaneously highlighting the need to adopt a broader scope of analysis in future research on terrorist leadership.

The findings from the qualitative and quantitative empirical application of the theoretical framework indicate that charismatic leadership has a real-world effect on the radicalization towards violence and strategic operation of terrorist groups. In the case study of the CSA, close scrutiny of the concurrent processes of charismatization and the radicalization towards violence suggests the presence of a concrete, but complex, relationship. Ellison's efforts to establish and strengthen the charismatic bond with his followers involved the adoption of a conspiratorial, apocalyptic, and progressively violent world-view that cast him and his followers as key players in an upcoming ultimate battle between good and evil. In addition to giving Ellison's

divine mission purpose and direction, it set the CSA down a path towards the commission of violent acts of religiously-inspired terrorism. In other words, since the construction of Ellison's charismatic authority was based upon a violent ideological world-view, at some point the commission of violent acts was required in order to maintain and buoy his charismatic qualifications in the eyes of his followers. Perhaps most importantly, I argue that the slide towards violent action in the CSA coincided with a serious challenge to Ellison's charismatic authority after two-thirds of his adherents defected due to the institution of polygamy. The complex interplay between the progressive slide towards violence and the establishment and maintenance of Ellison's charismatic authority demonstrates that, at least within the context of the CSA, there are real-world causes and consequences related to both processes.

The results from the statistical analysis also suggest that charismatic terrorist leaders have a probable real-world effect upon strategic choices and attack outcomes within their groups. Findings from the multi-level regression models indicate that there are discernable and significant trends among charismatically-led groups within the study sample in terms of weapon choices (i.e., the preference for melee weapons over bombs), methods of attack (i.e., the preference for assassination and armed assault over bombs), and target preferences (i.e., educational institutions, 'other' targets, and religious figures and locales over private citizens and property). While speculative, findings also suggest that the choice to use close-quarters weapons and tactics (i.e., melee weapons and assassination) may be indicative of how charismatic terrorist leaders help members overcome innate aversions to killing with the promotion of group cohesion and dedication to a cause. Charismatically-led groups within the study sample also tend to be more successful in their attacks, which suggests that charismatic terrorist leaders may provide some form of strategic benefit to their organizations. These significant relationships point to the

probable existence of some form of link between charismatic leadership, strategic operation, and attack outcomes within terrorist organizations.

The full weight of the findings are tempered by the fact that they are limited to a singular case study and a series of statistical models that use a non-probability sample of thirty international terrorist groups. However, the sparse existing research on the topic is supportive of the assertion that there is indeed a concrete link between the presence of charismatic leaders, and real-world causes and consequences related to the formation, operation, and demise of terrorist groups (see, Freeman 2014; Ingram 2013; Milla et. al. 2013; Rinehart 2009). I argue that the collective findings from this dissertation and the existing literature is enough to tentatively conclude that the presence of charismatic leadership has a real-world effect on certain strategic choices and attack outcomes within terrorist groups. This has significant bearing on the feasibility of, and directions for, conducting future research on charismatic authority and charismatic leadership within terrorist groups.

5.2 – Policy suggestions

Despite positive indications from the findings in the preceding chapters, at this early stage in the study of charismatic terrorist leadership it is still difficult to know with any certainty whether pursuing additional research will yield significant information, data, or theories of use for countering violent extremism (CVE) programs or coercive counter-terrorism strategies. However, there are several policy-relevant suggestions that can be derived from the findings that, once tested further, may help inform counter-terrorism efforts aimed at the prevention, identification, and disruption of charismatically-led terrorist groups.

The likelihood that charismatic terrorist leaders have a real-world effect on social, behavioral, and strategic dynamics of their groups suggests that the presence of extreme forms of charismatic authority may indeed be an important explanatory component as to why certain radical, social, political, and/or religious groups progress towards terrorist violence. As a result, it may be beneficial for security agencies and community organizations to pay close attention to the nature of the behaviors and claims made by radical leaders and their followers in order to discern the presence of extreme or dysfunctional charismatic bonds. The theoretical framework developed in chapter 3 will be useful in this regard. For example: does the leader purport to speak for some higher power (e.g., God/Allah, the environment, the disenfranchised poor)? Does the leader (or their followers) put forth claims that single out his or her extraordinary/divine nature? Is the observed group associated with a culture or religion that has salvationist or messianic expectations? Is there evidence of extreme veneration of the leader? Does the group hold apocalyptic beliefs and/or is socially encapsulated? Furthermore, certain charismatically-led groups who are at risk of engaging in terrorism may present with similar behaviors as those seen in the case study of the CSA, such as attempts by the leader to excise competing sources of authority from his or her group, the willful destabilization of the group to combat the routinization of the leader's charismatic authority, a visible charismatization process that socializes the members to recognize the extraordinary qualities and nature of the leader, and so on.

The presence of some or all of these factors does not necessarily mean that an at-risk group will become violent – they can easily describe a Pentecostal church community, or any number of benign contemporary NRMs. However, previous empirical research has identified a dysfunctional charismatic bond as one of the three catalysts of violent action in a minority of

NRMs, along with apocalyptic or world-rejecting beliefs, and social encapsulation (Dawson 2010, p. 10). As demonstrated by the case study of the CSA, these three elements, and others like them, may also play a role in whether at-risk charismatically-led movements radicalize towards terrorist violence. Whether or not this is the case in charismatically-led terrorist groups other than the CSA needs to be explored in future research. But, once discovered, comprehensive knowledge of the conditions, beliefs, and behaviors that precipitate the adoption of terrorism within charismatically-led movements will be invaluable for informing efforts aimed at detecting and preventing potential threats to national security.

As noted, waning or unstable authority can be a notable “red flag” within at-risk radical, social, political, and religious movements that present with extreme forms of charismatic leadership. As is the case in the CSA and with the minority of NRMs who progress towards violence, extreme charismatic leaders whose authority has been harmed or severely challenged may opt to push their groups towards violent action in order to buoy or maintain the charismatic bond. Therefore, it may be useful for security agencies and community organizations interested in countering radicalization to pay careful attention to the power dynamics within charismatically-led groups, for it may help them to detect which groups may be at risk of progressing towards the commission of terrorist acts. Are there multiple sources of charismatic or other forms of authority? Is there a clear demarcation between charismatic and operational leaders within the group? Is the main charismatic leader able to manage and deal with competing forms of authority within his or her group? If a “pure” charismatic leader within a fringe or radical group is unable to sustain and maintain the charismatic bond with their followers, it may be a prelude to the adoption of violence or terrorist tactics to bolster the leader’s waning authority.

Findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies support the conclusion that the concerns of charismatic and operational leaders differ when both roles are not invested in a single person. This ideological rift between the two types of leaders can lead to defections, chaos, and instability, as was the case in the conflict between Randall Rader and James Ellison in the CSA.³⁷ If future research supports the existence of this rift between charismatic/ideological and operational leaders in terrorist groups, the knowledge of when or if these types of leaders come into conflict with one another may be useful to security and intelligence agencies. A carefully placed agent-provocateur or mole who can exacerbate the tensions between the concerns of charismatic and operational leaders might be able to fragment and therefore weaken the capabilities of charismatically-led terrorist groups. However, given the intense social and environmental factors involved in the attribution of charismatic authority, this is likely to be a difficult endeavor. Efforts to destabilize charismatically-led terrorist groups may also propel them towards acts of violence in an effort to legitimize the charismatic authority of the leader. This may be useful to security and intelligence agencies who want a modicum of control over the time and place of the “tipping point” towards the commission of violence of an observed group. But, it may also cause unforeseen consequences such as the rapid and unexpected escalation towards violence, or the adoption of extreme measures or methods (i.e., the use of CBRN weapons, mass suicidal attacks, and so on). This necessitates careful consideration and balancing of the risks and rewards prior to attempting to destabilize charismatically-led terrorist groups. But, in some circumstances security and intelligence services may find it useful to take

³⁷ This type of conflict between leadership styles was also clearly present in the case of the homegrown terrorist group, the Toronto 18. The rift between the group’s ideological leader (Fahim Ahmad) and operational leader (Zakaria Amara) led to the group eventually splitting into two cells. Ahmad’s group activities continued to center around promoting and maintaining his authority, while Amara’s group rapidly escalated to planning and preparing the commission of terrorist attacks (see, Shaikh and Speckhard 2014).

advantage of the fragility of the charismatic bond. Regardless, much more research examining the causes and consequences of unstable authority in charismatically-led terrorist groups is required prior to employing any counter-terrorism tactics aimed at purposefully destabilizing authoritative bonds.

5.3 – Study limitations

The arguments and findings from the analytical and empirical portions of this dissertation are tempered somewhat by several methodological limitations endemic to the study of terrorism (see, Dawson 2014, pp. 66-68; Dolnik 2013, pp. 3-4; Schuurman and Eijkman 2013; Silke 2004, pp. 61-63) and the broader study of leadership in different types of social, political, and religious movements (see, sections 1.4 and 1.5). Where applicable, I discuss the study limitations unique to the methodological approaches employed in the empirical chapters (see, section 4.6.a). However, in this section I take into consideration some of the broader issues with study design, data, and methods that may affect the applicability and quality of the results of the research.

With enough time, opportunity, and resources, I may have been able to circumvent some of the problems with gathering primary data on terrorist groups by conducting qualitative interviews or quantitative survey research with individuals ‘at-risk’ of radicalization who also come from socio-cultural and religious backgrounds that promote the emergence of charismatic leaders (e.g., Schbley and McCauley 2005). However, as I discussed in section 1.7, access to primary data is often difficult in terrorism studies due to the practical, ethical, and legal barriers involved in studying secretive and violent groups. This does not mean that gathering pertinent primary data was entirely impossible, particularly from individuals who are close to, but not participants in terrorist activities (i.e., case workers, family members, community members,

friends, at-risk youth, and so on; see, Dalgaard-Nielsen 2010, p. 812). However, there were certain insurmountable barriers to accessing communities connected to far-right social movements, Islamist extremisms, and right-wing terrorism. At the early planning and writing stages this dissertation, I made efforts to reach out and contact right-wing militia movements, such as the Hutarees³⁸ in Michigan and former members of the Militia of Montana, in order to gauge the possibility of conducting first-hand interviews. My religious and ethnic background, however, made it difficult to establish a measure of trust with these types of groups once it became apparent to them that I did not fit into the archetype of a white Aryan Christian. As Pete Simi and Robert Futrell (2010, p. 129) note, gaining face-to-face access to right-wing extremists is often predicated on being able to physically blend into Aryan and Christian Identity culture. This significant barrier to access was one of the main reasons why I chose to examine a historical right-wing group like the CSA, rather than attempting to gather first-hand primary data from an existing right-wing movement. I faced similar problems accessing individuals and communities involved or connected to Islamist extremism. As a result, I had to mostly rely on secondary and open-source data during my analyses, despite efforts to employ primary sources as much as possible. The quality and nature of the data should be kept in mind when interpreting and applying the research findings.

Another pervasive limitation in terrorism studies involves the ‘heterogeneity problem’ (Dawson 2014, 68-71). There are many different ideological and operational incarnations of terrorist groups: ethno-nationalist, left-wing, right-wing, separatist, domestic, international, homegrown, lone-actor, and so on. Each different form of terrorism is the product of many

³⁸ The Hutarees are a Christian militia movement operating in Michigan. They adhere to a Christian Patriot ideology, which blends religious overtones with conspiratorial themes concerning the federal government. In 2010 the FBI arrested several members of the group out of fear that they were planning an attack meant to inspire a violent revolt against the federal government. The charges against them were dismissed in 2012.

different socio-political contexts, temporal issues, and social/cultural/religious practices. As a result, it is difficult to blindly apply the findings from one type of terrorist group to the next. While the findings from the empirical chapters may prove to be useful for understanding certain behaviors of charismatically-led right-wing and international terrorist groups, they may be less useful for understanding important dynamics involving charismatic leadership in the context of homegrown, lone-actor, and foreign-fighter forms of terrorism. As a result, the research findings cannot be seamlessly applied to other types of terrorist organizations without taking into consideration the ideological, temporal, geographic, cultural, religious, social, and political differences between groups.

The generalizability of findings are somewhat limited by the case-study and sampling methods employed in the empirical chapters. Although the study on the CSA provides interesting preliminary conclusions about the relationship between the radicalization towards violence and the presence of charismatic authority within terrorist groups, the generalization of results is impossible from a singular case study. Furthermore, the CSA is a group that manifested with an extreme version of charismatic authority. Are similar dynamics present in groups where charismatic leadership manifests in more subtle fashions? As well, the findings from the statistical analysis are limited by the process used to decide which terrorist groups to include in the study sample. While I randomly selected terrorist groups from the GTD, many had to be discarded due to language issues or a paucity of available data on the group. This means that despite efforts to ensure a probability sampling, it was impossible to achieve. This hampers the ability to properly generalize research results from chapter 4 beyond the thirty international terrorist groups examined.

Another study limitation is the scope of the analysis in chapter 4, which only considers the influence of “top” charismatic terrorist leaders (i.e., the most ideologically or operationally important leader or leaders) on strategic choices and attack outcomes. As a result, the research results could not account for the extent of similar influences exercised by mid-to-low level charismatic leaders. This leaves the findings open to justifiable criticism concerning the confounding effects that multiple leaders of varying charismatic authority may have on the social and strategic behaviors of the groups within the study sample. However, given the seminal nature of the study, I argue that the findings from chapter 4 still provide important foundational insights on how “top” level charismatic terrorist leadership may influence strategic behaviors and attack outcomes. Social network approaches that consider the multi-level nature of leadership may be one way to better explore the relationship between multiple levels of charismatic leadership and key social, strategic, and behavioral aspects of terrorist groups. Longitudinal statistical analyses of long-lived terrorist groups which correlate strategic and behavioral trends with the rise and fall of charismatic leaders across the organizational lifespan may also prove to be useful for future quantitative research.

Although my research breaks new methodological and theoretical ground in the study of charismatic leadership in terrorist groups, Haroro Ingram’s book, *The Charismatic Leadership Phenomenon in Radical and Militant Islam* (2013) was the first to theorize and develop a theoretical framework of charismatic leadership applicable to radical and militant groups. I only became aware of Ingram’s research in early 2015. By the time I had discovered and read Ingram’s work, I had already completed the theoretical framework, and applied it to the case study of the CSA and the quantitative analysis in chapter 4. This is why I do not address Ingram’s work in a more direct manner throughout this dissertation, aside from several passing

references. Given the similarities and strengths of both of our models, I fully intend to integrate his work in my future analyses of charismatic authority in terrorist groups.

Ingram's theoretical framework is an admirable and well-constructed first attempt at theorizing the complex nature of charismatic leadership. Similar to the model which I developed, Ingram's core ideas are drawn from the multi-disciplinary literature on charismatic authority (Ingram 2013, pp. 11-25).³⁹ He outlines a generic theoretical framework of charismatic leadership that accounts for both macro (e.g., situational contexts, socio-cultural charismatic narratives, crisis management) and micro (e.g., the shaping of followers' cognitive perceptions, in-grouping and out-grouping) level dynamics. Ingram's model is based upon the complex interplay between five key concepts: (1) the leader-follower relationship, (2) perceptions of crisis, (3) charismatic narratives (or 'centres'), (4) the construction of in-group and out-group identity, and (5) the routinization of charisma (Ingram 2013, pp. 44-46). After outlining his mode, Ingram then applies his framework to several case studies that contextualize and examine the charisma of prominent Islamist leaders such as Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Abdullah Azzam, Osama bin Laden, and Anwar al-Awlaki.

Ingram's work on charismatic leadership is more complementary than competitive to my proposed framework. Although certain key concepts inevitably overlap (e.g., the emphasis on the charismatic bond, the importance of perceptions of crisis, the fragile nature of the charismatic bond, the presence of socio-cultural preconditions necessary to the emergence of charismatic leadership, in-group dynamics involving the routinization of charisma) there are methodological differences that distinguish the models from one another. By paying particular attention to how

³⁹ It is worth noting however that Ingram's model draws inspiration primarily from post-Weberian theories involving self-concept, sociological-symbolism, social formation, identity, and radicalization. On the other hand, my model draws directly upon Weber's theories of legitimate domination and insights from the study of charismatic leaders in NRMs.

successive leaders build their charismatic personae upon the charismatic capital (i.e., social/cultural/religious myths and socio-historical narratives) of their predecessors, the immediate empirical application of Ingram's model is more longitudinal and qualitative in scope. In contrast, my model can be used to examine charismatic leadership cross-sectionally (i.e., the coding of the PCA predictor variable) and longitudinally (i.e., the case study of the CSA). In other words, my proposed theoretical framework is useful for both the qualitative and quantitative examination of charismatic leadership in terrorist groups, while Ingram's model is useful more for qualitative analyses of charismatic leadership over time. There are also epistemological differences between both models. Ingram's theoretical framework primarily focuses on qualitatively exploring the relationships between the many complex social dynamics involved in the social construction (Ingram 2013, pp. 27-39, 49-62, 63-74) and the routinization (Ingram 2013, pp. 39-44) of charismatic leadership over time. His model seeks to explore the social and behavioral dynamics of charismatic authority more so than the related causes and consequences. On the other hand, the primary purpose of my model is to discern the presence of charismatic leadership in terrorist groups in order to contrast its magnitude and influence with social and strategic behavior. As a result, my theoretical model is useful for examining the causes and consequences of the presence of charismatic terrorist leadership. In the end, both theoretical frameworks offer different methodological and epistemological approaches to understanding the complex nature of charismatic leadership across a myriad of different terrorist groups. The differing perspectives provided by both theoretical frameworks have the potential to provide findings crucial to the development of robust future research on charismatic terrorist leadership.

5.4 - Areas for future research

The insights and findings from this dissertation point to a number of fruitful avenues for future research involving the study of charismatic terrorist leadership. Ideally, I should have addressed each of the areas, to some degree, within this dissertation. However, the “three articles” dissertation format imposed certain scope and focus limitations on what could conceivably be included as topics of research. Each of the research directions outlined in this section merit extensive analysis if we are to develop a holistic understanding of how charismatic terrorist leadership may influence the radicalization towards violence, strategic operation, and eventual demise of terrorist groups.

Recent events, such as the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in January 2015, have brought renewed attention to the issue of radicalization towards violence within prisons. Research by scholars such as Mark Hamm (2013) and Farhad Khosrokhavar (2013) have examined the link between prison life and the radicalization towards Islamist and white-supremacist violence among prison inmates. Both Hamm (2013, pp. 53, 113) and Khosrokhavar’s (2013, pp. 287-289) findings from numerous qualitative interviews with ‘at-risk’ and radicalized inmates note that prison leaders, particularly charismatic ones, play a pivotal role in urging certain inmates to adopt a violent radical worldview. However, while both studies identify the importance of the charismatic bond to prisoner radicalization, the full extent of this relationship remains unexamined beyond preliminary and speculative observations. As a result, crucial insight into how and why certain prisoners radicalize towards violence remains unexplored. This suggests that future research on the charismatic leader-follower relationship within the carceral context may provide unique insight into how and why certain individuals radicalize towards violence within prisons and other similar totalistic institutions (i.e., socially encapsulated movements). A better understanding of

the influence of leadership on prison radicalization may also be useful for informing the creation of effective prison CVE programs meant to combat the influence that charismatic figures may have on potential recruits for terrorist organizations.

This dissertation argues repeatedly that current large-N statistical research on the effectiveness of leadership decapitation largely fails to account for the *style* and *nature* of leadership in their analyses (see, sections 2.4, 3.6., and 4.6). As a result, existing studies assume that the terrorist leaders being examined are strategically, inspirationally, operationally, and ideologically homogeneous. As the wider research demonstrates (see, sections 1.1, 1.4 and 1.5), this is clearly not the case. Except in extremely authoritarian groups, the vast majority of terrorist organizations are likely to have several types of leaders within different levels and clusters in the group. The existing studies on leadership decapitation almost exclusively examine the effects of the strategic arrest or killing of “top” leaders within terrorist organizations, effectively ignoring the impact of organizational leadership within different strata and group clusters. In order to truly understand the effects of leadership decapitation on the strategic operation and demise of affected terrorist groups, future research needs to address this gap in knowledge. Given that existing studies on leadership decapitation often reference the charisma of terrorist leaders, a logical starting point would be the examination of the effectiveness of the coercive killing or arrest of charismatic terrorist leaders on reducing operational capabilities or encouraging organizational death (Hofmann and Dawson 2014, p. 362). The theoretical framework developed in chapter 3 may be useful to this end.

The importance of the Internet in the radicalization of Islamist homegrown and lone actor terrorists has been noted by scholars of terrorism (e.g., Atran 2005; Sageman 2008; Weimann 2006). The ubiquity of internet blogs, jihadi websites, restricted fundamental Islamist forums,

and diverse forms of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, KiK messenger) raises the spectre of virtual charismatic bonds forming between radical Islamists and audiences in the absence of face-to-face contact. Marc Sageman (2008, pp. 110-111) argues that popular internet Islamist personae do not single-handedly radicalize homegrown terrorists, but serve to reinforce those who have already made up their minds. This is in line with findings from the study of televangelists and new religious movements and the Internet (see, Dawson and Hennebry 1999; Hoover 1988). There is no data, however, on what draws pre-radicalized individuals to particular inspirational radical leaders on the Internet, given the multitude of competing ideologies and sources of information available on the Web. The process might be wrapped up with the attribution of charismatic authority to these online radical figures, to a process of virtual charismatization. The Internet provides the ultimate form of flexible separation between charismatic leaders and their followers, allowing any leader “to be all things to all people, [giving] individuals a certain degree of freedom in which to construct an image [of the charismatic leader] that will fit or resonate with their own values and ideals” (Barker 1993, p. 197). This separation lends itself to the subjective formation of extreme interpretations and enactments of the radical message delivered by the non-physically present charismatic leaders. Investigation of this situation should be part of the study of the prominent role of the Internet in so many cases of homegrown and lone-actor terrorist radicalization. Knowledge of how and why individuals who eventually radicalize towards violence form these charismatic bonds could be critical to counter-terrorism research aimed at combating Jihadi and other forms of online propaganda.

Lastly, charismatic political leaders clearly play a significant role in the establishment, choices, actions, and policies of their administrations (e.g., Burns 1978; Madsen and Snow 1991;

Willner 1984). History is replete with obvious examples of political leaders, demagogues, and dictators such as Adolf Hitler, Mohandas Gandhi, Juan Péron, Ayatollah Khomeini, Sukarno, and Theodore Roosevelt, whose charismatic personae were central features of their rule. Although scope constraints meant that this dissertation did not explore the relationship between the formation and maintenance of the charismatic authority of national leaders and the causes and consequences of state terrorism, it is naïve to think that no correlation exists. There are *many* prominent examples of charismatic political leaders like Muammar Gaddafi, Pol Pot, Joseph Stalin, Kim Jong Un, and Saddam Hussein, who have used repressive policies involving state terrorism to control their citizens, subdue insurgent or troublesome minority groups, and/or to maintain political power. It is likely that some form of link exists between the establishment, maintenance, and demise of charismatic political leadership and the willingness to employ state terrorism. Deeper insight into how and why this may be the case can potentially provide useful warnings and guidelines for the international community aimed at preventing the emergence of states that sponsor or engage in terrorist activity.

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