



NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**INFLUENCE AND DESTRUCTION: MODES OF
VIOLENCE, MILLENNIALISM AND THE IMPACT OF
CONSTRAINT**

by

Cassie Hamblin

June 2019

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Leo J. Blanken
Tristan Volpe

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.				
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE June 2019	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE INFLUENCE AND DESTRUCTION: MODES OF VIOLENCE, MILLENNIALISM AND THE IMPACT OF CONSTRAINT			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Cassie Hamblin				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) Though conventional methods of conducting terrorist attacks continue to be a highly effective way for violent non-state actors to achieve their goals, technological uncertainty drives a debate regarding the impacts of emerging technology on the modes of violence these actors will employ in the future. This is indicative of a potential puzzle, in that there is little predictive capability regarding which groups may seek to adopt technologies that are becoming available due to increasingly easy means of adoption. Previous work indicates a continuum of violence perpetuated by violent non-state actors that ranges from those that conduct limited acts of violence to the less constrained actors who may seek to carry out acts of mass destruction. Research into the less constrained groups suggests that, regardless of constraints, the more successful violent non-state actors gauge the level of violence needed to communicate their threat and avoid enemy overreaction while operating within the constraints set by their constituencies. Furthermore, the case studies contained herein suggest that, unless there is a preference for specific types of technology inherent to a group's narrative, the actors will not necessarily reach for emerging technologies even when they decide to escalate the destructiveness of their attacks.				
14. SUBJECT TERMS terrorist organizations, technology, adoption, constraints			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 91	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	

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**INFLUENCE AND DESTRUCTION: MODES OF VIOLENCE,
MILLENNIALISM AND THE IMPACT OF CONSTRAINT**

Cassie Hamblin
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
BA, Mississippi State University, 2006

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS
(IRREGULAR WARFARE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
June 2019**

Approved by: Leo J. Blanken
Advisor

Tristan Volpe
Second Reader

John J. Arquilla
Chair, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Though conventional methods of conducting terrorist attacks continue to be a highly effective way for violent non-state actors to achieve their goals, technological uncertainty drives a debate regarding the impacts of emerging technology on the modes of violence these actors will employ in the future. This is indicative of a potential puzzle, in that there is little predictive capability regarding which groups may seek to adopt technologies that are becoming available due to increasingly easy means of adoption. Previous work indicates a continuum of violence perpetuated by violent non-state actors that ranges from those that conduct limited acts of violence to the less constrained actors who may seek to carry out acts of mass destruction. Research into the less constrained groups suggests that, regardless of constraints, the more successful violent non-state actors gauge the level of violence needed to communicate their threat and avoid enemy overreaction while operating within the constraints set by their constituencies. Furthermore, the case studies contained herein suggest that, unless there is a preference for specific types of technology inherent to a group's narrative, the actors will not necessarily reach for emerging technologies even when they decide to escalate the destructiveness of their attacks.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violent non-state actors persist in their use of conventional attack methods despite the availability of more advanced technology. This is puzzling because accepted wisdom states that, if the technology is available, an actor will adopt it. The term “radical leveling technologies” was recently coined by Jennifer Snow to define a new set of technologies that can upset existing balances of power and potentially allow violent non-state actors access to increasingly destructive or disruptive technology that was previously out of their reach.¹ This concept underlines the easing of technological barriers for both state and non-state actors to obtain increasingly destructive/disruptive weapons.² The tension between these two trends is indicative of a puzzle, in that there is little predictive capability regarding which groups will seek to adopt emerging or radical leveling technologies.

Due to the nature of the problem, case studies involving violent non-state actors who conduct limited acts of violence would likely be irrelevant, as it is the less constrained violent non-state actors who are more likely to adopt technology that could cause mass destruction or disruption. Using the Possibility Principle, as delineated by James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, case selection for this thesis was dependent upon whether the “outcome of interest is possible.”³ Because of this principle, the sample of cases was restricted to those groups with a demonstrated willingness to engage in higher order violence. The cases selected from this delimited pool were Chechen separatists; the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSAL); and Aum Shinrikyo.

This thesis used the qualitative methodology of process tracing, as defined by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, to identify the causal chain between how the independent variables of a group’s *goals* and *audience needs* affected an actor’s chosen

¹ Jennifer J. Snow, “Entering the Matrix: The Challenge of Regulating Radical Leveling Technologies” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), 1–4, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/47874>.

² Snow, 1–4,

³ James Mahoney, and Gary Goertz, “The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (November 2004): 653–669, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404041401>.

mode of violence.⁴ The independent variables influenced the violent non-state actor's communication and signal needs and therefore affected their mode of violence. In turn, each actor's choice of mode of violence yielded valuable clues regarding the conditions under which a less constrained actor reaches for more destructive modes of violence. This understanding can then be applied to the likelihood of an actor choosing to adopt emerging or radical leveling technologies if they are available to them.

Ultimately, in the case of the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord, and Aum Shinrikyo, the independent variables of *goal* and *audience needs* affected the selection of specific modes of violence. However, in the case of the Chechen separatists only the audience needs shifted, though that seems to have been sufficient to impact the dependent variable. Notably, except for the Aum case, where there was a stated predilection for advanced technologies,⁵ each case showed that even when the actors had the opportunity to pursue high-cost technology options they chose to continue their use of low-cost technologies, though the destructive capacity of their choices shifted. Both the Chechen separatists and CSAL had access to high-cost technology options and yet, with one exception, neither used them.

Each actor was driven and constrained by their goals and narrative as well as their disparate audience needs. Interestingly, in all three cases, the actors constrained themselves. In the case of Aum, this constraint was likely due to the inconsistency of other modes of violence with their narrative; in the case of the Chechen separatists, likely due to the demonstrated inefficiency of using the more destructive modes of violence as a strategic tool; and for CSAL, likely due to a combination of their lack of belief in their narrative and minus an existential threat in the form of government countermeasures. These findings substantiate the idea that less constrained actors are more likely to reach for more destructive capabilities, *but that the technology that they reach for must be consistent with their goals, narrative, and audience needs.*

⁴ Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies in Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 207.

⁵ Adam Dolnik. *Understanding Terrorism Innovation*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007. 156, 173–175.

As the technology acquisition pathway shortens, and violent non-state actors have the option to more easily obtain high-cost technology, it is vital for the intelligence community, policy makers and their advisors to understand potential points of interdiction or influence. This understanding could introduce the potential to prevent high-cost technology acquisition by affecting the behavior of the audiences of these violent non-state actors, or by preventing a goal shift that could act as an impetus for escalation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to my thesis team, Dr. Leo Blanken and Dr. Tristan Volpe, without whom I would still be attempting to define “technology.” I could not have asked for a better team.

To CDR Sarah Sherwood, thank you for not only reading and commenting on the first *very* ugly version but for voluntarily reading the last.

To my cohort brothers and your wonderful families, thank you for your friendship and support throughout this journey.

Finally, a huge thank you to my family. Your patience with my intermittent muttering about goals and audience needs coupled with my prioritization of “the thesis” over everything else allowed me to knuckle down and get it done. You are the wind beneath my wings and all that jazz. Love you guys.

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I. INTRODUCTION

We are living in an age that presents unique opportunities and inimitable dangers that, when viewed through the long lens of history, will likely be defined by the swift pace of its technological advancements and the leveling of the information playing field. In the next decade, we can expect to see the continued acceleration of emerging technologies in the form of information communications technologies, artificial intelligence, autonomous weapons, additive manufacturing, and biotechnology.¹ This has profound implications for state security. Rapid technological growth has historically introduced increased uncertainty into the international system regarding the capabilities of adversaries. Technological uncertainty today is further complicated by the increased threat from violent non-state actors (VNSAs).²

Technological uncertainty coupled with an ever-growing threat palette has aggravated the debate about the potential negative implications on the balance of power in the international system, explicitly regarding the acquisition of emerging technology. Emerging technology potentially increases the destructive capability of VNSAs and the potential consequences of that acquisition on the power dynamics between state and non-state actors.³ Despite these evolving concerns, conventional methods of conducting terrorist attacks have been and continue to be a highly effective way for VNSAs to affect their operational goals. Underlining this point, is that even attacks involving the more sophisticated groups of VNSAs are primarily carried out using conventional technology.⁴ Though some scholars argue that it has been feasible for certain VNSAs to adopt and use nuclear, biological and chemical

¹ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends Paradox of Progress, 2017* (Washington, DC: ODNI, 2017), 6, 14–16, <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/nic/GT-Full-Report.pdf>; Jennifer J. Snow, “Entering the Matrix: The Challenge of Regulating Radical Leveling Technologies,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2015), 1–4, <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/47874>.

² Emily O. Goldman., *Power in Uncertain Times*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1–11, 12–35, 125–161.

³ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends Paradox of Progress*, 6, 14–16; Snow, “Entering the Matrix: The Challenge of Regulating Radical Leveling Technologies,” 3–4.

⁴ Bruce Hoffman, “Terrorist Targeting: Tactics, Trends, and Potentialities,” in *Technology and Terrorism*, ed. Paul Wilkinson (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 12.

weapons for several years, few have attempted to do so; those who have, have failed to use the capability in a manner consistent with the definition of “weapons of mass destruction.”⁵

The persistent use of conventional attack methods by VNSAs, despite the availability of more advanced technology, is indicative of a puzzle. There is little understanding of why VNSAs choose to adopt certain technologies, the assumption being that if technology will allow a group to cause more damage, the technology will be adopted; however, this might not be true.⁶ The puzzle is that there is little predictive capability regarding which groups may seek to adopt technologies that are becoming available due to the shortening of the technological pathway.

There has been some work in this area by terrorism scholars that indicates a continuum of acceptable violence amongst VNSAs that ranges from those who conduct limited acts of violence, to the less constrained actors who may seek to carry out acts of mass destruction (see Figure 1).⁷ One commonality, however, is that regardless of the differences amongst the disparate groups, each of them attempts to leverage its actions to achieve its aims. Successful VNSAs can gauge the level of violence that most effectively communicates their threat and mitigates the risk of enemy government overreaction, while operating within the constraints set by their constituencies. It is important to note that the parameters of this relationship will vary among different VNSAs.⁸ For instance, actors who are pursuing a provocation strategy will often attempt to purposefully provoke the enemy government into an unthinking response

⁵ Richard Clutterbuck, “Trends in Terrorist Weaponry,” in *Technology and Terrorism*, ed. Paul Wilkinson (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 130–139; Zachary Davis, “Strategic Latency and World Order,” *Orbis* (Winter 2011): 73–74, DOI: 10.1016/j.orbis.2010.10.006; Gavin Cameron, “Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism Research: Past and Future,” in *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 74–90.

⁶ Clutterbuck, “Trends in Terrorist Weaponry,” 130–139.

⁷ Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*. (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1982), 152–168; Randall D. Law. *Terrorism: A History* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009), 274–275; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, New York, NY, 2017), 81; Andrew Silke, “An Introduction to Terrorism Research,” in *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 18–22; Adam Dolnik, *Understanding Terrorism Innovation* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group), 1–3.

⁸ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 173–196, 229–256.

which can contribute to the radicalization of the populace.⁹ That said, it is not difficult to posit that there may be a relationship between the modes of violence that a violent non-state actor will use to carry out their activities, the constraints placed upon them by their disparate audiences, and the need to prevent increased enemy government attention.

Each of the case studies within this thesis substantiates the supposition that there is a relationship that exists between modes of violence, constraints and the need to operate under the government radar. Notably, this thesis focuses on the idea of mode of violence versus the technology used, due to the dearth of cases in which VNSAs have used emerging technology. The intent is to generalize the tactics and technology into two categories of modes of violence to allow conclusions to be drawn about the likelihood of technology adoption by similar future actors. Interestingly, each case study verifies that the violent non-state actor inherent to the case was reactive to some degree to the aforementioned variables. For instance, to varying degrees, each actor studied constrained themselves to certain modes of violence based upon their goals and audience needs. Understanding this constraint is central to solving the puzzle.

A. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After the completion of an initial literature review, three key research questions are identified as essential to understanding each group's audience needs and their effect on modes of violence selected by each actor. The first question was concerned with the disparities amongst groups who operate under fewer constraints in their use of violence than others, specifically whether there is an acceptable violence continuum even among the most extreme VNSAs. The second question was whether any patterns of constraint could be identified between each group and its different audiences, and, further, whether these constraints influenced the group's modes of violence. The third question centered around whether conclusions could be drawn between goals, audience needs, and the choice of specific modes of violence.

As will be discussed in depth in this thesis, the case studies under review are those pertaining to VNSAs that are perceived to operate under less constraints and are therefore

⁹ Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," *International Security* 31, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 51.

more likely to embrace more destructive methods. Among those studied, two of the groups, Aum Shinrikyo and the Chechen separatists, were more prone to destructive modes of violence than CSAL. That said, it is perhaps not surprising that the latter was more reactive to their audience needs and lacked the goal conviction of the other two groups. Further, while all three groups reacted or altered their modes of violence in response to their audience needs, both Aum Shinrikyo and CSAL went so far as to change goals in response to those needs. In the end, this discussion establishes a basic understanding of the relationship between some predictable VNSAs and any potential technological constraints based upon of their influence needs for each of their audiences.

B. APPROACH

1. Pool of Actors

When reviewing this puzzle, it is essential to evaluate relevant case studies. Due to the nature of the problem, case studies involving VNSAs who conduct limited acts of violence would likely be irrelevant as it is the less constrained VNSAs whom are more likely to adopt technology that could cause mass destruction or disruption. Using the possibility principle, as delineated by James Mahoney and Gary Goertz, case selection for this thesis was dependent upon whether the “outcome of interest is possible.”¹⁰ Because of this principle the cases chosen were selected in part due to the possibility that the violent non-state actor would choose to adopt advanced technology for an enhanced destructive capability.¹¹

In addition to their adherence to the possibility principle, the three groups represented in the case studies are meant to be representative of the plethora of violent non-state actor groups that fall within the less constrained side of the continuum of violence (see Figure 1). Essentially each group adhered to three crucial criteria. Each had an evolutionary path that affected their audience needs; each targeted civilians, and each was perceived to have limited constraints on their use of violence. As previously mentioned, the groups chosen are the

¹⁰ James Mahoney, and Gary Goertz, “The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 4 (November 2004): 653, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055404041401>.

¹¹ Mahoney, and Goertz, “The Possibility Principle: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Research,” 653–654.

Chechen Separatists; CSAL, a U.S. Christian Identity group; and Aum Shinrikyo. Notably, none of these groups fit neatly within general interpretations of terrorist groups.

Terrorism is commonly viewed through the lens of ethnonationalism, revolutionary leftism or jihadism.¹² However, it has also been adopted as a strategy by groups that do not adhere to these narratives, including purely apocalyptic and political extremist groups. Apocalyptic groups have been known to use terrorism not only to bring attention to their cause, but also to wage war against their enemies. Examples of these groups are cults, right-wing extremists, religious extremists or lone wolf entities. The political extremist groups are those that generally believe in conventional political goals, but with a dangerous amount of conviction, examples of these groups are generally eco-terrorists or anti-abortion activists.¹³ While the latter have some relevance to this discussion, the three case studies in this thesis will focus on the apocalyptic groups.

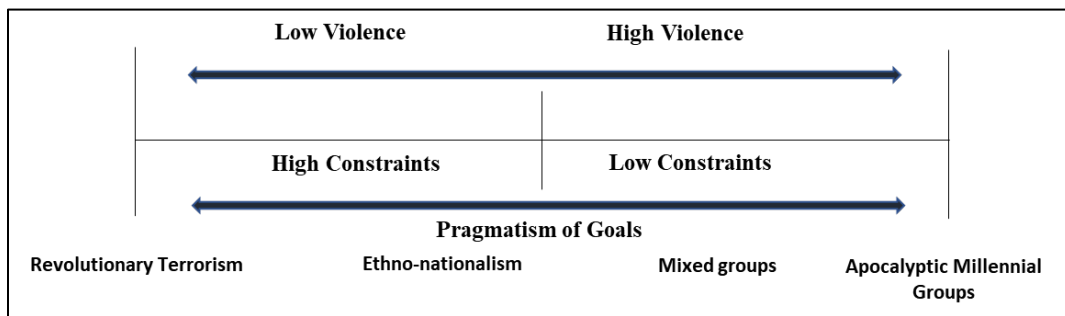


Figure 1. The continuum of violence¹⁴

¹² Law, *Terrorism: A History*, 316–329.

¹³ Law, 316–329.

¹⁴ Adapted from Law, *Terrorism: A History*; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*; The idea to introduce the concept of whether the groups goals were pragmatic to the continuum of violence was given to me by Dr. Jeffrey Bales in a discussion regarding my thesis on April 15, 2019 at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

2. Method

Process tracing will be used to identify the causal chain between two independent variables: goals and influence needs with a dependent variable of the differing modes of violence to include the tactics and technology used to affect that violence. This will allow for full consideration of one or more causal pathways that will hopefully lead to an understanding of the constraints among violent non-state actor groups with minimal restraints on their activities.¹⁵ The intent of this thesis is to see whether arguments can be built based upon the data derived from the case studies. As discussed by Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, theory-building process-tracing is a process which attempts to construct a theory that describes a causal mechanism that can be applied to more than one case without claiming that the identified mechanism alone is enough to explain the outcome.¹⁶ A key aspect of case study analysis is the identification of independent variables to provide the foundation of the study and the dependent variable to comprehend the puzzle of which VNSAs may seek to adopt emerging technologies.¹⁷

Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter give us a framework by which to understand the goals and strategies of VNSAs by differentiating between the ultimate desires of the group (goals) and the plans of action to attain those goals (strategies).¹⁸ According to Kydd and Walter, to carry out these goals the organization needs to both gain and maintain influence over their disparate audiences, to include the government that they are seeking to impact and the populace or individuals whose support or compliance the group is trying to acquire. Further, the authors argue that terror as carried out by non-state actors is a form of signaling that is used to influence their audiences ergo the strategy and mode of violence that each actor adopts will depend upon their audience needs (see Figure 2).¹⁹ For instance, when

¹⁵ Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 207.

¹⁶ Derek Beach and Rasmus Brun Pedersen. *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. 9–22, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=3415124>.

¹⁷ George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, 79.

¹⁸ Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 52, 58.

¹⁹ Kydd and Walter, 52, 58.

the Islamic International Brigade invaded Dagestan in 1999 it was with the intention of provoking the Russians into an unthinking retaliatory response that would radicalize the members of the populace who had yet to choose a side. Unfortunately for the Islamic International Brigade they had miscalculated the response of both the Russians and the Dagestani populace to their choice of signals.²⁰

Signaling is introduced in game theory as a game where the players have private information which their opponents do not know. Signaling is extremely important in games with repeated interactions where an entity's decisions could be colored by their opponents' threats and promises regarding future deeds.²¹ This has significant implications to the puzzle at the center of this thesis. If as game theory suggests, private information increases uncertainty and impedes communication attempts by the actors involved, then the signals that they send to one another are extremely significant in determining how each will respond to the other.²² This is perhaps especially true of conflict between VNSAs and states wherein the state often lacks knowledge regarding the resources and goals of the violent non-state actor and the different sides regularly issue both threats and promises in order to advance their individual end-states.²³

The supposition that the use of terror is a game of signaling is further discussed by Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick, where they define terrorism as “a signaling game in which terrorist attacks are used to communicate a group's character and objectives to a

²⁰ Robert W. Schaefer. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 179–187; Dodge Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009* (England: Helion & Company Limited, 2013), 2, 3–4. Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 51; Julie Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 57, no. 1 (January 2005) 43–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966813052000314101>.

²¹ Robert Gibbons, “An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 11, no. 1 (February 1, 1997: 138, 140, 142, 144–145, <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.11.1.127>.

²² Gibbons, “An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory,”: 138, 140, 142, 144–145; Todd Sandler and Daniel G. Arce, “Terrorism and Game Theory,” *Simulation & Gaming* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 319–320, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1177%2F1046878103255492>.

²³ Gordon H McCormick and Frank Giordano, “Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerilla Mobilization,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28. No. 2 (Feb. 2007) 295–320. Sandler and Arce, “Terrorism and Game Theory,” 320, 333.

set of target audiences.”²⁴ The authors posit that terrorism is a means by which VNSAs use modes of violence to gain leverage where they do not have alternate means to affect their end-state. However, in order to maintain relevancy, they must also sustain their presence as a violent actor. In order to do this the actors must create a signal, generally based upon their targets and tactics, to reinforce the perception of their audiences that the actor is strong enough to carry out their threats (see Figure 2).²⁵ There are several examples of VNSAs who successfully used signaling to affect their goals, to include current US-Taliban negotiations, the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Somalia and the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq and Afghanistan following the Madrid bombings.²⁶ In sum, the signals that are sent by the VNSAs in a conflict are often inherent to their strategies and are frequently communicated via their chosen mode of violence.

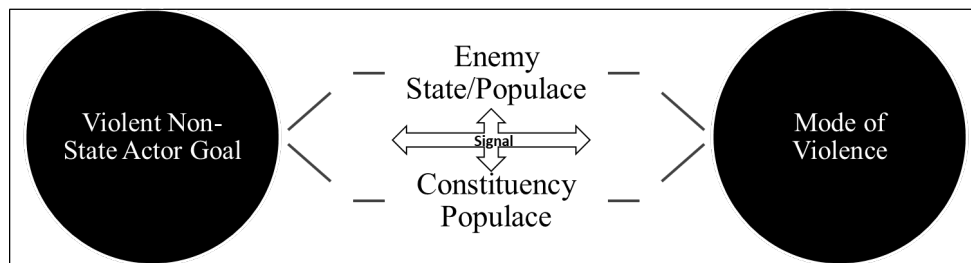


Figure 2. Pathway to mode of violence²⁷

²⁴ Bruce Hoffman, and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (July 1, 2004): 243.

²⁵ Hoffman and McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” 245–248.

²⁶ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “The US-Taliban negotiations breakthrough: What it means and what lies ahead,” *Brookings*, January 29, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/01/29/the-us-taliban-negotiations-breakthrough-what-it-means-and-what-lies-ahead/>; “Black Hawk Down: The Somali battle that changed U.S. policy in Africa,” BBC, February 1, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-38808175/black-hawk-down-the-somali-battle-that-changed-us-policy-in-africa>; “Group threatens to turn Spain into ‘inferno’,” *MSNBC*, April 5, 2004, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4651993/ns/us_news-security/t/group-threatens-turn-spain-inferno/#.XNzvsshKiUk.

²⁷ Adapted from McCormick and Horton and Harrison, “Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars,” 321–367; McCormick and Giordano, “Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerilla Mobilization,” 295–320; Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 152–168; Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 49–79; Gibbons, “An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory,” 127–149; Sandler and Arce, “Terrorism and Game Theory,” 319–337. Hoffman, and McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” 243.

The previous discussion is the foundation behind the identification of the independent and dependent variables that will be used in this thesis. Each case study will look at two independent variables and one dependent variable to identify similar causal pathways amongst the three groups. The variables are as follows:

Independent Variables:

- Goals of the group
- Audience and relationship to constituency

Dependent Variable:

- Mode of violence

C. CATEGORIZING TERRORISM

Panic Terror, called so from the fables, that make Pan the author of them; whereas in truth there is always in him that so feareth first, some apprehension of the cause, though the rest run away by example, every one supposing his fellow to know why. And therefore this passion happens to none but in a throng or multitude of people.

—Thomas Hobbes²⁸

Terrorism is a term that has no agreed-upon definition. That said, terrorism is commonly viewed within the context of coercive intimidation or the creation and exploitation of fear, with violent groups using acts or threats of violence against the innocent to force a target to alter its behavior. This is predicated upon fear and the belief that the group can and will carry out their threats.²⁹ Stated simply, terrorism is influence brought about by the manufacture and manipulation of the fear of being hurt to effect a desired change within the

²⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett, 1994), 31.

²⁹ Paul Wilkinson, "Editor's Introduction: Technology and Terrorism," in *Technology and Terrorism*, ed. Paul Wilkinson (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 1–10; Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 1–44; Randall D. Law, *Terrorism: A History*, 1–4; Henry E Mattox, *Chronology of World Terrorism, 1901 – 2001* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company INC Publishers, 2004) 3; Andrew Silke, "An Introduction to Terrorism Research," in *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 3; Martha Crenshaw, "How Terrorists Think: What Psychology Can Contribute to Understanding Terrorism," in *Terrorism: Roots, Impact, Responses*, ed. L. Howard (London, UK: Praeger, 1992), 71–80.

system. This reinforces the idea that a violent non-state actor needs to maintain the fear of its target audience to enhance or carry out their different goals: this can mean diverse things depending on the objectives of the violent non-state actor.³⁰ It is important to note that most viewpoints of terrorism often lend themselves to the abnegation of the idea that VNSAs represent a subset of a population within larger socioeconomic systems.³¹ This concept is suggestive of the view that these groups are subject to one degree or another to the demands and needs of the populace of which they are a part.

Terrorism has been described as “the theatre of the macabre”³² and is intended to injure an enemy politically and psychologically. Though this is an accurate interpretation, often when it is viewed this way, VNSAs are perceived to be either crazed or irrational.³³ This can result in a certain obliviousness regarding both the internal rationality of violent acts and the idea that VNSAs want to win whatever it is that they are fighting for or against. In almost every case, a VNSA’s goal is in direct opposition to that of the goals of the state wherein the group’s goal is to either to displace or to force the state to grant them concessions. That said, its objective is to grow large enough in resources (people, guns, and money) to do so, whereas the objective of the state is to prevent that from happening. It is essentially a competition over political space with terrorism as the strategy.³⁴

VNSAs are generally founded around a core of hard-core supporters, but they must also get big enough to “win.” However, the decision to support one side or another is often influenced not only by the individual’s preferences, but also by the individual’s interactions with others and their perception of events.³⁵ Stated simply, VNSAs need populace support

³⁰ Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 49–79; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 1–44.

³¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 1–44.

³² Augustus R. Norton and Martin H. Greenburg, “International Terrorism: An Annotated Bibliography and Research Guide,” (Boulder, CA: Westview Press, 1980) 2.

³³ Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 153; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 242.

³⁴ McCormick and Horton and Harrison, “Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars,” 321–367; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 237.

³⁵ McCormick and Giordano, “Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerilla Mobilization,” 295–320.

and the time in which to gain it while conducting terrorist activities; how much support they need is dependent upon what their end state is.

VSNA goals, strategies, modes of violence and weapons are intrinsically linked.³⁶ Actors with pragmatic politically minded goals, like some revolutionary terrorist groups, generally have a broad domestic constituency, and are focused on mobilizing the populace and building sympathy. As such they are more likely to focus on the theatre aspect of terrorism vice the macabre. Ethno-nationalist VNSAs that are hoping to effect the withdrawal of an occupier often design their strategy around spoiling and provocation and are, therefore, more violent than revolutionary terrorists like Narodnaya Volya.³⁷ On the other end of the spectrum, VNSAs with less pragmatic political, religious or apocalyptic goals generally have minimal interest in gaining the support of the enemy populace. Further, they are often the most violent, largely because their worldview frequently promotes violence as a sanctified act within the group's narrative though constraints can be placed upon them by their constituencies.³⁸ In sum, groups with more pragmatic (achievable) goals generally use terrorism as a strategy to correct a defect in a disequibrated system, but those with less pragmatic goals often want to erase the existing social structure.³⁹ Groups that desire the erasure of the existing social structure often have a dualist perspective.

A dualist perspective is one that perceives people as “good or evil” or “us versus them.” It is important to note that any violent non-state actor group can adopt or evolve into having a dualist perspective though most such groups generally have a predisposition towards dualism in their group narratives. As can be seen in the case studies, dualism is often a justifier in increasing modes of violence and the decreasing of constraints.⁴⁰ To better scope the

³⁶ Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 49–79; Law, *Terrorism: A History*, 278.

³⁷ Kydd and Walter, 49–79; Law, 278.

³⁸ Law, *Terrorism: A History*, 278; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 90–91.

³⁹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 90–91.

⁴⁰ Catherine Wessinger, “Introduction: The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence,” in *Millennialism, Persecution and Violence*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 2000), 3–16.

discussion of these actors a brief overview of the terminology relevant to these groups is necessary before moving on.

Though many are somewhat familiar with groups with apocalyptic narratives like al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, few understand purely apocalyptic groups; the term apocalyptic millennial group covers a range of entities, from Islam and the Catholic Church to Scientology and Aum Shinrikyo. The interesting question is how does a group transition from belief in the Second Coming of Christ to a belief that their group is the only thing standing between humanity and the apocalypse? Millennialism is a belief in the collective salvation of a select group. Some apocalyptic millennial groups believe that by being faithful and waiting, salvation will come, some are armed and will defend themselves if they think they are under attack, still others believe that a divine or superhuman plan empowers them to overthrow the existing social or political structure.⁴¹ Catastrophic millennial groups have a pessimistic view of history's projection in that they believe things are only worsening, and that to achieve the collective salvation of the group, the existing social and political structures must be destroyed and created anew. Conversely, progressive millennial groups tend to believe that the "end" will arrive non-catastrophically via cooperation with the divine or superhuman will.⁴² Another example of a dualist perspective that will be discussed in this thesis is right wing terrorism.

Right-wing terrorism is commonly perceived to be among the most irrational kind of contemporary violence, largely because the attacks targeting immigrants, minorities and refugees are often viewed as unsophisticated and unthinking violence.⁴³ This is not necessarily an accurate perception. Many right-wing extremists earnestly believe that the very survival of their nations depends upon the removal of whomever they have designated as "other" and therefore detrimental to the safety and strength of "their" nation and society. As

⁴¹ Wessinger, "Introduction: The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence," 3–16; Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," in *Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem*, eds. Thomas Robbins., Susan J. Palmer (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 49–52.

⁴² Wessinger, "Introduction: The Interacting Dynamics of Millennial Beliefs, Persecution and Violence," 3–16; Catherine Wessinger, "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," 49–52.

⁴³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 249–251.

unpalatable as it is to believe, this form of violent non-state actor does not operate merely to target as many “others” as possible, but because they view their group as a catalyst that will incite the establishment of a new government. That said, they formulate their violence per their constituency and with few exceptions will operate below a perceived threshold of violence to prevent suppressive actions from the government.⁴⁴

As discussed in the preceding pages, groups with less pragmatic goals have fewer constraints placed upon them by their disparate audiences in regard to their violent acts and as such are more likely to carry out actions that would be considered abhorrent by the constituencies of more pragmatically minded, violent non-state actor groups. That said, we can posit that their modes of violence are also less constrained, perhaps because their signal needs to communicate their commitment to their goal on a wider scale than a group that likely has a larger constituency and a better chance of negotiations. Further, by understanding the relationship between these types of groups and their audiences’ experts can make assessments regarding future attempted usage of emerging technology.

D. MODES OF VIOLENCE: TACTICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Terrorists use the gun and the bomb as delivery systems for the real coercive instruments in their arsenal: surprise and shock.

Daniel R. Morris⁴⁵

Arguably, when one asks a layperson about terrorism in the modern age, that person’s response will likely correlate in some way to suicide bombing. If we were to break down what a basic suicide bombing entails, it would consist of the individual as the carrier, the vest, the explosives, and the trigger; the suicide bombing is the mode of violence that in turn is composed of smaller “technologies”⁴⁶ which allow the mode of violence to be carried out. Imagine for a moment that the explosives were packed with radioactive material; though the

⁴⁴ Hoffman, 249–251; Jacob N. Shapiro, *The Terrorist’s Dilemma* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013) 3, 5–6, 11, 188.

⁴⁵ Daniel R. Morris, “Surprise and Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32, no. 1 (February 2009): 1–27, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1080/01402390802407392>.

⁴⁶ W. Brian Arthur, *The Nature of Technology: What it is and How it Evolves*. (New York: Free Press, 2009), 1–14, 39–41.

mode of violence remains the same, the level of destruction, risk and fear associated with our hypothetical group and their mode of violence would increase exponentially. Suicide bombing is just one example of the different modes of violence used by VNSAs to affect their goals. The decision to adopt suicide bombing is a strategic signaling choice used to support disparate groups' goals.⁴⁷ As previously discussed, this thesis is focused on the idea of mode of violence as an inherent strategy choice that is made up of both tactics and technology. Scoping mode of violence in this manner allows for a better understanding of the groups that adopt more destructive modes of violence and are therefore more likely to reach for more advanced technology.

Technology has been defined in a variety of ways throughout history; the definitions range from very specific to the more general that can encompass the idea of technology as one component, as well as the concept of technology as a Carrier Strike Group.⁴⁸ Rapid technological advancements and our changing understanding of technology further complicate our ability to define it. As an example, emerging and disruptive technologies have been variously described as scientific discoveries that can allow small groups and individuals to obtain technological parity with states or large organizations, as “strategic” technologies,⁴⁹ or more specifically as defined by Snow as, “radical leveling technologies.”⁵⁰

Snow coined the term radical leveling technologies to define the new set of technologies that can upset existing balances of power and potentially allow VNSAs access to increasingly destructive or disruptive technology that was previously out of their reach. Her

⁴⁷ Michael C. Horowitz, “The Rise and Spread of Suicide Bombing,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, no. 1 (May 2015): 69, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1146/annurev-polisci-062813-051049>; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House, 2005), 9–11; Hoffman and McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” 243.

⁴⁸ Carl Mitcham, *Thinking Through Technology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994) 143; Arthur, *The Nature of Technology: What It Is and How It Evolves*. 1–14, 39–41.

⁴⁹ Natasha E. Bajema., *WMD in the Digital Age: Understanding the Impact of Emerging Technologies*. Emergence and Convergence, Research Paper No. 4 (Washington D.C, Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction, National Defense University, 2018); <https://wmdcenter.ndu.edu/Publications/Publication-View/Article/1672667/wmd-in-the-digital-age-understanding-the-impact-of-emerging-technologies/>; Edna F. Einsiedal, “Introduction: Making Sense of Emerging Technologies,” in *Emerging Technologies: From Hindsight to Foresight*, ed. Edna F. Einsiedal (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2009) 3–9.

⁵⁰ Snow, “Entering the Matrix: The Challenge of Regulating Radical Leveling Technologies,” 1–4.

thesis underlines the shortening of the technological pathway for both state and non-state actors for increasingly destructive/disruptive weapons.⁵¹ This concept is essential to understanding the puzzle contained within this thesis. By understanding the intricacies of the relationships between a VNSA, their different audiences and the modes of violence adopted, we can potentially understand which actors may adopt emerging technology and possibly where pressure can be applied in order to mitigate the risks posed by these shortened pathways.

As previously discussed, the juxtaposition of technology and terrorism is an understudied relationship,⁵² and, as such, it is vital to look at technology within the context of its use by VNSAs as a subset to their disparate modes of violence as opposed to a more general interpretation. With that said, this thesis will use W. Brian Arthur's technological principles and apply them to our understanding of technology in the case studies contained herein.⁵³ This thesis posits that Arthur's concept can be applied to the study of the relationship between less constrained VNSAs and technology by looking at their use of technology to carry out violent acts as a mode of violence (suicide terrorism) as opposed to merely the use of a tool (AK-47). As there are currently no known cases of terrorist attacks using emerging technology or radical leveling technologies, this will allow us to generalize the types of attacks based upon the signal that the actor is hoping to communicate by their use of specific modes of violence.

⁵¹ Snow, 1–4.

⁵² Paul Wilkinson, "Editor's Introduction: Technology and Terrorism," in *Technology and Terrorism*, ed. Paul Wilkinson (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 1993), 1–10.

⁵³ W. Brian Arthur's three definitions of technology are a "means to fulfill a human purpose," "technology as an assemblage of practices and components," and "technology as a collection of devices and engineering practices available to a culture." As Arthur explains it, multiple meanings are needed because technology fits into distinct categories and, as such, each evolves differently. For instance, technology-singular (an AK-47) comes into being as a new idea and is developed through the modification of its specific parts. Whereas a technology-plural (suicide terrorism), will originate by building around certain phenomena and mechanisms by developing and altering its parts and practices, and technology-general is the entirety of all the technologies that evolved from combinations of old technologies. Arthur goes on to explain that technologies are recursive, in that they are built from other technologies, ergo what is said about technology-singular must be said about the others as well; Arthur, *The Nature of Technology: What it is and How it Evolves*, 1–14, 39–41.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the case studies contained herein, while the type of tool used in the mode of violence did not necessarily change with the shifting of the independent variables what did change was the level of destruction sought by the violent non-state actor. As an example, while the Chechen separatists ineffectively utilized a “dirty bomb”⁵⁴ and had numerous plans to attack nuclear facilities,⁵⁵ their preferred mode of violence remained the use of innovative or conventional means to conduct attacks with an increased destructive capability. The one actor who preferred using advanced, chemical and biological weapons was Aum Shinrikyo. Interestingly, this supplements the findings of Adam Dolnik in that he determines that it is the actor’s attachment to a particular type of weaponry or innovation process that is the strongest characteristic in a group’s decision to innovate.⁵⁶

Each mode of violence discussed throughout the remainder of this thesis will be placed into a category of either high-cost technology or low-cost technology with the following definitions:

- High-Cost Technology: mode of violence using advanced, chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear tools
- Low-Cost Technology: mode of violence using conventional or innovative tools

The intent of bracketing the modes of violence in this manner is to allow a better understanding of the groups that adopt more destructive modes of violence using conventional technology vice those that do so using more advanced technology. As previously stated, with no known cases of terrorist attacks using emerging technology or radical leveling technologies, the hope is that this will allow us to generalize the types of attacks based upon

⁵⁴ Michael Specter, “Chechen Insurgents Take Their Struggle to a Moscow Park, *New York Times*, November 24, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/24/world/chechen-insurgents-take-their-struggle-to-a-moscow-park.html>.

⁵⁵ Simon Saradzyhyan, Russia: Grasping the Reality of Nuclear Terror,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 607, no. 1 (September 2006), 64–77, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1177%2F0002716206290964>.

⁵⁶ Adam Dolnik. *Understanding Terrorism Innovation* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2007), 156, 173–175.

each actors shifting modes of violence. Notably, both low-cost and high-cost technology attacks can have measurable effects on disparate organizations target audiences. Consider the effects of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 or the September 11, 2001 attacks juxtaposed against the Tokyo subway attacks in 1995. The Oklahoma City and the September 11th attacks were low-cost technology attacks and the Tokyo subway attacks were high-cost technology attacks. Which had more psychological impact? Which had the most far-reaching effects?

In the following pages process tracing will be used to determine whether there are one or more causal pathways between the independent variables of goals and influence needs and the dependent variable of mode of violence. The independent variables will influence the violent non-state actor's communication and signal needs and will therefore affect their mode of violence. In turn, each actor's choice of mode of violence can yield valuable clues regarding the conditions under which a less constrained actor will reach for more destructive modes of violence (see Figure 3). This understanding can then be applied to the likelihood of an actor choosing to adopt emerging or radical leveling technology if it is available to them.

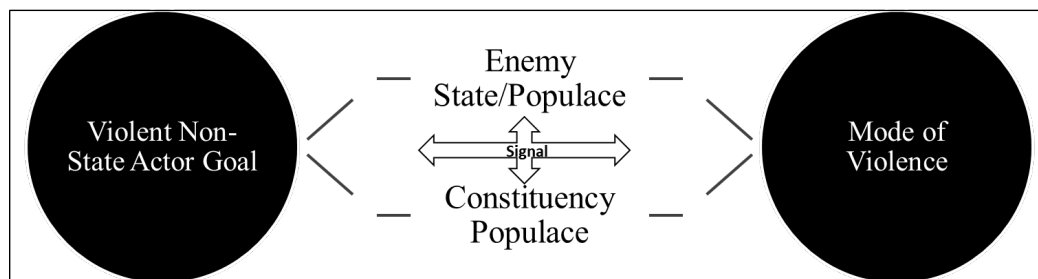


Figure 3. Pathway to mode of violence. Figure repeated from page 8 for readers' convenience.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Adapted from McCormick and Horton and Harrison, "Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars," 321–367; McCormick and Giordano, "Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerilla Mobilization," 295–320; Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 152–168; Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 49–79; Gibbons, "An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory," 127–149; Sandler and Arce, "Terrorism and Game Theory," 319–337. Hoffman, and McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 243.

E. ORGANIZATION

This thesis is organized into five chapters, beginning with the case studies in Chapters II-IV in the following order: Chechen Separatists; the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord; and Aum Shinrikyo. Chapter II shows the evolution of the Chechen Separatists from a conventional force to one with an increasingly dualist perspective that began to reach for progressively destructive modes of violence to affect their end state. Chapter III shows the evolution of the Covenant, the Sword and Arm of the Lord from a small religious group to one whom was eventually charged with sedition against the United States government. Chapter IV shows the evolution of Aum Shinrikyo from a yoga and meditation group to one whom sought to overthrow the Japanese government using high-cost technologies. Notably, each of these actors shifted their mode of violence in conjunction with a change in either one or both independent variables. Chapter V will seek to apply the arguments from our comparative case studies specifically as they apply to establishing a foundational understanding of the technological choices made within groups operating on the right hand side of the continuum of violence. The finding that except for the Aum case where there was a stated predilection for advanced technologies each case showed that even when the actors had the option to pursue high-cost technology options they chose to continue their use of low-cost technology, though the destructive capacity of their choices shifted, has particular significance to future analysis. Specifically, when analyzed against the backdrop of the lowering costs of emerging and radical leveling technologies.

II. CHECHEN SEPARATISTS

The Chechen Separatists were a group that evolved from a conventional force to a force that increasingly turned to the targeting of civilians in an escalating attempt to influence the Russian government to negotiate the secession and self-determination of Chechnya. They were selected for this study because of their evolutionary path towards a dualist perspective, their targeting of civilians and the limited constraints under which they operated. Ultimately, it was found that during each phase of the conflict the constraints placed upon the Chechens by their audiences shifted, further, their influence needs shifted as their constraints changed. More importantly, as their constraints lowered and their goal became less achievable, their perspective became increasingly dualist and their modes of violence shifted to reflect the desperation that the separatists felt at being unable to affect their end state. Essentially, as they became more desperate, the modes of violence that they chose became either more destructive or more brutal. The intent in the following case study is to present a narrative of the Chechen conflict from its inception until the end of the second Russian-Chechen war followed by an analysis of the two independent variables (shifting goals and audience needs) and how they affected the dependent variable (mode of violence chosen).

A. PRE-WAR PERIOD: POLITICS AND PREPARATION

On November 1, 1991, popularly elected Chechen President Dzhochar Dudajev announced Chechnya's independence and secession from Russia, beginning a decades-long struggle for stability.⁵⁸ By April 1993, internal divisions had led the Chechen Parliament to conduct a vote of no-confidence in President Dudajev and his Council of Ministers; impeachment proceedings were initiated in May. Following that, a small number of pro-Moscow administrative districts announced that they intended to secede from Grozny, escalating internal tensions to the point that clashes took place between President

⁵⁸ Stasys Knezys and Romanas Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 15; Diane Curran, Fiona Hill, and Elena Kostitsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya: A Sourcebook 1994 – 1996*. Strengthening Democratic Institutions Project (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, March 1997), 6.

Dudajev's forces and the opposition. Further, an opposition-backed referendum was held on June 15, 1993, wherein most voters voted against President Dudajev's continued rule. It is important to note, however, that fewer than 36,000 people were estimated to have voted in the referendum. To mitigate dissatisfaction, Dudajev altered his Council of Ministers to include the opposition. This did not stem the internal strife.⁵⁹

Having denounced Chechnya's right to self-determination in 1991, but then largely doing nothing, Moscow began its support to the opposition in August 1994. This resulted in a disastrous Russian-backed attempt to take the city of Grozny.⁶⁰ The strategy for taking Grozny was underpinned by faulty information and inaccurate analysis of the situation in Chechnya. The attack included Russian weaponry and officers who had been recruited by the Russian Federal Counter-Intelligence Service (FSK), Moscow was so confident of success that it had Interior Ministry troops on standby to assist in restoring order following the successful attack on November 25, 1994.⁶¹ It was a humiliating defeat; so much so that when 70 Russian servicemen were apprehended Dudajev stated that they would be tried under Sharia law and executed. Shortly after that, President Yeltsin signed a decree to restore law and order in Chechnya to take effect on December 1, 1994, and Russian troops entered Chechnya on December 11, 1994.⁶²

B. 1994–1996 RUSSIAN-CHECHEN WAR

Once Russia decided to use force in Chechnya, the rest of the conflict can be broken up into three periods: the preparations of the Russian armed forces to mount an incursion into Chechnya coupled with air strikes against military objectives; the movement of the Russians into Chechnya and the takeover of the Presidential Palace in Grozny; and the expansion of combat into the flatlands and mountains, which was terminated due to the

⁵⁹ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 7–8.

⁶⁰ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 15, 44–51; Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 8.

⁶¹ James P. Gallagher, "Russia's Best-Laid Plans Go Awry in Chechnya," *Chicago Tribune*, December 4, 1994, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1994-12-04-9412040440-story.html>.

⁶² Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 8–9; Gallagher, "Russia's Best-Laid Plans Go Awry in Chechnya,"

terrorist attack by Shamil Basayev in Budionovsk. It is important to break out each of these periods, as the range of factors and constraints inherent to each drove the use of technology by Chechen forces.⁶³ Before doing so, however, it is important to understand the military and weapons status of the Dudajev's forces at the onset of the first conflict.

The formation of the Chechen armed forces had begun almost immediately following President Dudajev's election.⁶⁴ Soviet withdrawal allowed the Chechens to take over functioning military bases, training centers, and other facilities, as well as relevant weapons and military equipment. By the end of 1992, Chechnya had a regular army, National Guard, self-defense units, the presidential guard, the armed formations of the Caucasus Nations Confederation, and disparate units under Internal Affairs Ministry and the National Security Service. Further, almost 80% of all Russian weapons and equipment within Chechnya was eventually co-opted by the Chechen armed forces.⁶⁵ Reportedly, the Chechen government was able to acquire approximately 40,000 automatic weapons, 153 cannons, and mortars, 42 tanks, 18 vehicle mounted rocket guns, 55 armored personnel carriers, 130,000 hand grenades, 240 training airplanes, five fighters, and two helicopters.⁶⁶ That said, the Russians were not the only source of arms, as porous borders and poor weapons control allowed for a free flow of weaponry into Chechnya.⁶⁷ The acquisition of this equipment significantly changed the internal dynamics of Chechnya, in that local military organizations emerged, and an emotionally charged "people's war" mentality took hold.⁶⁸

During the first and second periods of the conflict (27 October–10 December 1994 and 11 December 1994–19 January 1995), the Russian Army was responsible for the disarmament of "illegal armed formations" and the establishment of martial law in

⁶³ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 3–6.

⁶⁴ Knezys and Sedlickas, 33–37.

⁶⁵ Knezys and Sedlickas, 33–37.

⁶⁶ Knezys and Sedlickas, 38–39; Valery Tishkov, *Chechnya - Life in a War-Torn Society*. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), 64.

⁶⁷ Knezys and Sedlickas, 39; Tishkov, 64.

⁶⁸ Tishkov, 64.

Chechnya. However, they underestimated both the Chechen forces and the broader populace. In their preparatory stage, the Russian Army had failed to account for the strength of the Chechen forces. They did not have the support of the local populace, their units were poorly resourced, and the command structure was bogged down by confusion and bureaucracy.⁶⁹ Illustrative of this, on December 21, 1994, there was an estimated 40-mile long human chain of Chechen civilians along the Moscow-Baku highway protesting the assault on Grozny, several with banners declaring sentiments such as “Chechnya will always be free.”⁷⁰ This protest reportedly resulted in several key Russian Commanders stating on television that they would not lead their soldiers into Chechnya.⁷¹ Despite this, Russia continued a heavy bombardment campaign in the city of Grozny and the Director of the FSK, Sergei Stepashin, stated that mercenaries and mujahedeen from Afghanistan and Latvia were amplifying Chechen ranks.⁷² Conversely, the Chechen separatists were well resourced and were able to utilize simple and yet effective tactics to counter the Russians that were supplemented by their light equipment, portable antitank weapons, their mobility, and their use of all technology in support of their “attack and retreat” tactics.⁷³

During and immediately following the battle of Grozny, members of the Chechen government, the Russian government, and the international community expressed concern over the barbarity of Russian methods.⁷⁴ Notably, the Russian Duma and the Russian Human Rights Commissioner appealed to President Yeltsin to cease the massacre of non-combatants with indiscriminate bombing and to reopen negotiations. Further, the Russian Military Council of the Internal Forces of the Interior Ministry disseminated a pamphlet to Russian troops that denounced the looting and cruelty towards Chechen civilians. The United States, France, and Germany also voiced apprehension over the civilian casualties

⁶⁹ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 43–70.

⁷⁰ Michael Specter, “A 40-Mile Chain Against Russian Troops,” *New York Times*, December 21, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/21/world/a-40-mile-chain-against-russian-troops.html>.

⁷¹ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*, 9; Specter, “A 40-Mile Chain Against Russian Troops.”

⁷² Specter, “A 40-Mile Chain Against Russian Troops,”

⁷³ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 71–89.

⁷⁴ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*, 9–11.

in the city.⁷⁵ In June 1995, a Russian-based human rights organization called “Memorial” published two studies on civilian deaths in Chechnya that documented the November 1994–January 1995 assaults on Grozny and the April 1995 assault on the town of Samashki. The Grozny report listed approximately 25,000 non-combatants and 3700 children under the age of 15 as having been killed in the assault, and the Samashki report listed 107 non-combatants killed.⁷⁶

After the fall of Grozny, the Russians began shifting their focus to capturing the Chechen-controlled areas outside of Grozny, and Chechen fighters moved south to recover and regroup in the southern Caucasus Mountains. This began a period of guerilla warfare against a superior force.⁷⁷ Throughout this period, President Dudajev offered the Russian High Command several opportunities for a cease-fire to allow for negotiations to take place, but the Russian response did not allow for flexibility in negotiation; their rejoinder was always that the Chechens must disarm and surrender. It was during this period that Russian journalist, Pavel Felgenhauer, reported that Russian Commanders believed the Chechens would not be able to continue operations without support from abroad. Illustrative of this, Chechen forces encountered growing food shortages and dwindling weapons and supplies, which shifted Chechen tactics from confrontations with the Russians to attacks within enemy-controlled territory. Russian tactics also changed to reflect a “scorched earth” policy wherein the nature of the conflict shifted from that of a disarmament campaign to what amounted to genocide. Chechen desperation was demonstrated during a statement by President Dudajev that openly threatened a transfer of the war to the cities of Russia, foreshadowing future escalatory terrorist modes of violence.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*, 9–11.

⁷⁶ Steven Erlanger, “Russian Troops Take Last Chechen Cities,” *New York Times*, April 1, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/04/01/world/russian-troops-take-last-chechen-cities.html>; Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 10.

⁷⁷ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*, 10.

⁷⁸ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 127–157; Erlanger, “Russian Troops Take Last Chechen Cities,”

Worsening Russian tactics, dwindling Chechen weapons and supplies, and retaliation for the deaths of civilians in village raids were likely what precipitated the movement of Chechen commander Shamil Basayev and his fighters into Budionovsk.⁷⁹ The terrorist operation in Budionovsk was carried out with approximately 70 fighters, who used grenade launchers and automatic weapons to hold close to 2000 people hostage at the local hospital. Basayev demanded that Russian federal troops withdraw from Chechnya in exchange for the release of the prisoners. Before this attack, negotiations for the cessation of hostilities in Chechnya was being conducted by Russian delegates who arguably viewed a settlement as a lower priority item. However, once the hostages were taken and attempts to recover them by Russian military failed, Prime Minister Chernomyrdin entered the negotiations. Five days after the attack, the Prime Minister had agreed to cease Russian military action in Chechnya, open negotiations and grant amnesty to Basayev and his forces.⁸⁰ This was a low-cost technology attack that had strategic implications for the conflict.

While Shamil Basayev's surprise attack on the Russian city of Budionovsk in June 1995 acted as an impetus to bring the Chechens and the Russians to the negotiating table, the military accord that they signed had begun to disintegrate by late 1995.⁸¹ This disintegration was aggravated by Chechen commander Salman Raduev's hostage-taking attack on the Dagestan village of Kizlar in retaliation for the Russian operations against Chechen villages, and a subsequent military confrontation on the border that caused the deaths of both hostages and Russian military members and allowed most of the Chechen forces to escape. This was so humiliating for the Russians that⁸² President Yeltsin told reporters that Moscow would wipe out Chechen strongholds and further stated that, "mad

⁷⁹ Knezys and Sedlickas, *The War in Chechnya*, 127–157; Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 10–11.

⁸⁰ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna. 10–11.

⁸¹ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna. 10–12.

⁸² "Yeltsin's Hollow Victory," *Newsweek*, January 28, 1996, <https://www.newsweek.com/yeltsins-hollow-victory-177128>; Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 10–12; Hugh Pope, "Hijackers Free Hostages on Black Sea Ferry," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 1996, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-01-20-mn-26653-story.html>.

dogs must be shot.”⁸³ The Kizlar attack also precipitated the seizure of a Turkish Ferry by an ethnic Abkhazian group in the Port of Trabazon as a sign of solidarity with Raduev’s forces, who were at that time encircled by the Russian military in the Russian village of Pervomayskaya. The hijackers, reportedly with links to the Chechen conflict, threatened to blow up the ferry unless the Russian army ended the siege on Raduev’s forces; passengers of the ferry were mostly Russian.⁸⁴ Peace negotiations were further hampered by an attempted assassination on Russian commander of the Interior Ministry Troops, Anatoly Romanov, after which Russia put its participation in abeyance. In response, Chechen leadership also suspended their participation and requested international observers and United Nations troops before they would resume participation. Russia rejected this request and continued to refer to the Chechen conflict as an internal conflict.⁸⁵

To further complicate the situation, Russian-supported elections were held in Chechnya on December 17, 1995, which confirmed Moscow appointed President Doku Zavgaev.⁸⁶ This effectively nullified effective negotiations with pro-Dudajev forces, further alienated the populace, and did nothing to address the escalating violence precipitated by Russian forces. Voter participation in the election was minimal, and the legitimacy of the election was questioned by both pro-Dudajev forces and Russian anti-war figures. The Congress of the Chechen People consequently signed a decree which called the elections illegal. Russian bombing raids and an escalation of operations in Dudajev-controlled territory triggered further divisions in Moscow and the Russian Defense Ministry; they further incited Chechen military commanders and alienation of the Chechen populace.⁸⁷ By early 1996, the Chechen war had become a major campaign issue for the Russian presidential elections, and opinion polls were indicative of a Russian populace that was opposed to the war in Chechnya despite the Russian government claim

⁸³ “Yeltsin’s Hollow Victory,” *Newsweek*.

⁸⁴ Pope, “Hijackers Free Hostages on Black Sea Ferry”; Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*, 13.

⁸⁵ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna, 11–15.

⁸⁶ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. 11–15.

⁸⁷ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna, 11–15.

that Chechnya was mostly under Russian and the Moscow-backed Chechen government's control.⁸⁸

In part, to address the unpopularity of the war, Russia initiated a dual policy of high-level negotiations coupled with military actions that were intended to decimate separatist forces and shore up the authority of Zavgayev's regime. The brutality of the assaults caused even the Moscow-backed Chechen government to protest the high civilian casualties. Members of the Russian Duma Defense Committee concluded in a report that the "so-called clean-up operations increased civilian casualties and the inflow of fresh volunteers to separatist units."⁸⁹ Further, they found that support for Zavgayev's government was extremely low among the Chechens and that the morale of Russian troops was likewise low, so much so that none of the officers thought that the tactics being used would result in success against the separatists. This policy also resulted in several diplomatic maneuvers to include a visit to Chechnya by President Yeltsin, a press blackout and a Yeltsin initiated peace plan that would allow Russian troops to withdraw from areas without conflict, while operations against "bandit formations" would be allowed to continue.⁹⁰

On August 9, 1996, Chechen separatists attacked Grozny concurrently with attacks against two neighboring cities, Argun and Gudermes, this was an attempt to force the Russians back to the negotiating table and as stated by Aslan Maskhadov on *Ekho Moskvy* radio to illustrate to "Russia and the world community...that the war is not over."⁹¹ The swarming attacks resulted in the complete rout of Russian forces. Negotiations were conducted on August 18, 1996, between senior Russian and Chechen commanders, simultaneously; Russian helicopters began dropping leaflets over Grozny warning civilians to flee the city within 48 hours. Fighting began to intensify around Grozny with Russian

⁸⁸ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna, 2.

⁸⁹ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna, 18.

⁹⁰ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna. 14, 18; Lee Hockstader, "Yeltsin Orders Truce in Chechnya," *The Washington Post*, April 1, 1996, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/04/01/yeltsin-orders-truce-in-chechnya/f8b3ac90-1ce0-4bbb-948b-9b67cf08d266/?utm_term=.450800f73c25.

⁹¹ Curran, Hill, and Kostitsyna.. 44.

military commanders stating that they would continue to use force against the Chechens. On August 21, 1996, President Bill Clinton sent a letter to President Yeltsin asking him to reopen negotiations. Several other countries also expressed concern over the deteriorating situation. The following day, newly appointed Russian Secretary of Security Council Alexander Lebed began a round of negotiations which resulted in the Khasavyurt Accords.⁹²

C. 1996–1999 INTERWAR PERIOD

The first war ended with the withdrawal of Russian forces and a tentative Chechen victory; however, the Chechens demonstrated an inability to govern themselves or care for their populace once the war concluded. Chechnya essentially became a lawless state made up of competing power blocs, minimal government control, a vulnerable populace, no jobs, economy or infrastructure. Exacerbating this situation was the radicalization of Islam and the unforeseen consequences of that radicalization.⁹³ It is important to note that all evidence indicates that radicalization was a consequence vice a cause of the first Chechen war, this is indicative of the shifting dualist perspective of the movement.⁹⁴

While initial reactions to the Khasavyurt Accords were optimistic, there were several internal and external signs that were indicative of future fractures amongst the signatories of the agreement.⁹⁵ Upon the election of Aslan Maskhadov as the new Chechen President with approximately 64.8% of the vote, President Yeltsin appointed a commission to create a power-sharing treaty with the Chechens. However, Maskhadov appointed a commission to negotiate inter-state relations. During the same timeframe, 300 members of former President Yanderbiev's presidential guard gathered in Grozny to protest some of Maskhadov's decisions, and on March 3, 1997, 3000 people attended a rally led by Yanderbiev and Chechen commander Salman Raduev where Raduev threatened to attack

⁹² Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. 45–46; Hockstader, "Yeltsin Orders Truce in Chechnya,"

⁹³ Schaefer. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 144–178; Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 3–4.

⁹⁴ Schaefer, 164–170.

⁹⁵ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 3–4.

Russian cities.⁹⁶ Further aggravating these fractures were the competing interests among the different power blocs within Chechnya, particularly among those who had become radicalized or dependent upon Islamic funding during the first Chechen war. Many of the commanders began to believe that Wahhabism was a better ideology to ensure Chechen independence and a steady flow of cash and resources from Islamic supporters abroad. Further, the formation of an Islamic state in Chechnya was perceived to be a way to gain support and solidarity with other Islamic states.⁹⁷

The radicalization of Chechen leadership coupled with the lack of aid from Russia undermined President Maskhadov's regime and allowed Islamic organizations to expand their influence within Chechnya. Russia's implementation of a border blockade and troop movements further weakened Maskhadov's credibility and arguably pushed him into an alliance with the more radical power blocs. This resulted in the imposition of Sharia law on February 3, 1999, and the creation of a Shura.⁹⁸ This shift to Wahhabism allowed the Russians to put a purely radical vice a separatist face on the Chechen conflict, and arguably influenced the decision of Shamil Basayev and Omar ibn al-Khattab to invade and commit acts of terrorism in Dagestan in 1999. This was evidenced by Khattab's oath to defend threatened Muslim groups around the world, and Basayev's call for an invasion of Dagestan. Notably, Chechen President Maskhadov was opposed to the invasion, but most of the fighters supported Basayev and not the President.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Curran, Hill, and Kostritsyna. *The Search for Peace in Chechnya*. 61–63.

⁹⁷ Schaefer. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*. 164–170; Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 4–7; Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 41–46; Matthew Janeczko, “‘Faced with Death, Even a Mouse Bites’: Social and Religious Motivations Behind Terrorism in Chechnya,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 25, no. 2 (March 2014) 442, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1080/09592318.2014.903975>.

⁹⁸ Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 48–49; “Caucasus Report: February 10, 1999,” *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, February 10, 1999, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1341979.html>.

⁹⁹ Schaefer. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 175–176; Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 6–7; Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 41–46.

D. 1999–2009 RUSSIAN-CHECHEN WAR

The second Russian-Chechen war began following two controversial events: the attacks in Dagestan by the Islamic International Brigade in support of the Shura of Dagestan, and the Moscow apartment bombings.¹⁰⁰ In an almost classic case of provocation,¹⁰¹ the Chechens believed that they could support the Dagestanis who wanted to secede, arm, train and equip them, they also believed they could cause some sort of overreaction by authorities that required Chechen support, and then spin the conflict in the media in such a way as to gain support against the Russians. Unfortunately, for the Chechens, they misunderstood the Dagestani populace and failed to secure their support before invading. This resulted in the mobilization of local authorities and the eventual defeat of the invasion by the Russians. At this same time, several suspicious apartment bombings in Russia were blamed on the Chechen separatists, though notably never claimed by them nor proven to have been conducted by them. These two factors gave the Russians the justification they needed to invade Chechnya; President Maskhadov and the disparate Chechen power blocs perceived the invasion as a violation of the Khasavyurt Accord and thus began the second Russian-Chechen war.¹⁰²

When the Russians invaded Chechnya for the second time, they came prepared with better logistics and training, as well as overwhelming firepower; the Chechens on the other hand, had the weapons that were left over from the previous war and very little ammunition.¹⁰³ Further, Prime Minister Putin's campaign did not distinguish between the moderate separatists and terrorists. The initial target of this was President Maskhadov, whose requests for meetings were repeatedly refused and his envoy placed in jail. Vladimir Putin (then in charge of the Russian response) went so far as to state that Maskhadov was

¹⁰⁰ Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 179–187; Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 2, 3–4.

¹⁰¹ Kydd and Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” 51.

¹⁰² Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 179–187; Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 2, 3–4; Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 43–44.

¹⁰³ Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 187–194.

not the legitimate president. Russian media precipitated the anti-Chechen hatred and depicted the conflict as a dualist one of “us vs. them.”¹⁰⁴ Making matters worse, the Chechens intended to fight the Russians the same way that they had fought the first war, only this time they had no reliable source of weapons or ammunition besides what they could build themselves.¹⁰⁵ Thus began what essentially became a guerilla war that could be broken out into four phases following the capture of Grozny by the Russians in February 2000: Bez Predel (No Limits) from February 2000–May 2002; Basayev’s War (Terrorism) from May 2002–October 2005; Latency from October 2006–December 2007; and the Caucasus Emirate Phase.¹⁰⁶ This thesis will focus on the first three phases of the conflict and bracket off the last as the Caucasus Emirate’s evolution into the Islamic State affiliate Vilayat Kavkaz is outside of the scope and intention of this paper.

During the Bez Predel phase of the war, the Chechens focused primarily on targeting legitimate military and government targets, and conflict was still clearly intended to be a guerilla war against the Russian government. However, continued punitive tactics by the Russians influenced the strategies of the Chechens until suicide bombs (a method of low-cost technology attacks) vice “attack and retreat” tactics became the norm. This was a period that saw the introduction of black widows into the fight and an average of ten suicide attacks per month. Further, the continued predations by Russian forces upon the Chechen people underwrote the insurgency.¹⁰⁷ September 11, 2001 reinforced Russian policies in Chechnya and allowed the Russians to alienate the moderate separatists from the international community and empowered the radicals.¹⁰⁸ By the end of 2001, a reported 3220 Russian military members had been killed, with 9,000 wounded; even more Chechen

¹⁰⁴ Anna Politkovskaia, *A Dirty War: a Russian Reporter in Chechnya* (London: Harvill, 2001), xxix; Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 49.

¹⁰⁵ Billingsley, *Fangs of the Lone Wolf: Chechen Tactics in the Russian-Chechen Wars 1994 – 2009*, 169.

¹⁰⁶ Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 192.

¹⁰⁷ Schaefer, 192–194.

¹⁰⁸ Wilhelmsen, “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Islamisation of the Chechen Separatist Movement,” 50.

fighters were reported as casualties, and approximately 100,000 refugees had fled Chechnya.¹⁰⁹

It was in late 2002 / early 2003 that the Chechen separatists seemed to become aware that they had lost the support of the international community, and their focus became the Russian national will.¹¹⁰ Contrary to earlier tactics, which had been a mix of terrorist, guerilla and conventional activities, this period of the conflict was primarily one of low-cost technology terror attacks. The separatists made a critical miscalculation in that they assumed eventually that one of their attacks would be big enough to force the Russians to the table. This miscalculation was a layover from the first Chechen war when the Budionovsk attack resulted in demands being met, and negotiations renewed. The separatists did not realize the depth of their mistake until the Beslan School Siege that began on September 1, 2004. This resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Russian schoolchildren, yet still Russia refused to negotiate. It was arguably this response coupled with the continued support of the Russian populace for their government that drove the separatists into temporary latency. The number of terrorist and insurgent attacks decreased exponentially after the Beslan School Siege and the separatist movement seemingly underwent an identity crisis until the announcement of the Caucasus Emirate in October 2007.¹¹¹

E. WHAT DROVE THE MODE OF VIOLENCE?

The Chechen Separatists evolved from a conventional military to an insurgency and finally to what essentially became a terrorist organization. This shift was precipitated by their changing strategies and audience needs and was manifested by their increasingly brutal use of low-cost technology modes of violence and various plots to obtain nuclear technology. Of the two independent variables, goals and audience, only the audience variable changed throughout the conflict however that was likely sufficient to impact the dependent variable and change the mode of violence that was selected.

¹⁰⁹ Tishkov, *Chechnya - Life in a War-Torn Society*, xvii.

¹¹⁰ Schaefer, *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus*, 200–230.

¹¹¹ Schaefer, 200–230.

During the first Russo-Chechen War the separatists transitioned from a conventional force to one that successfully leveraged large-scale terrorism as a strategic asset. Their signaling needs were heavily impacted throughout the war by dwindling resources, an increasingly brutal enemy and a desperate need to bring the Russian's back to the negotiating table. Further audience elements included the support of their domestic constituency, a war-weary enemy population, a fractured enemy government, international sympathy, and a unity of purpose. During the first and second phases of the war, the Chechens were facing an enemy with superior resources that was ill prepared for combat operations, and, because of this, they were able to maintain a primary strategy of attrition using low-level technologies and innovations. However, the third phase of the war introduced an increasingly brutal and better-resourced enemy, dwindling weaponry, radicalization and an assumption that attacks such as Budionovsk would provide much needed influence and negotiating power over the Russian government and populace. These factors arguably shifted the overarching strategy of the separatists from one of attrition to one of intimidation and outbidding,¹¹² which precipitated the group's increasingly destructive use of low-cost technologies and various plots to gain access to high-cost technologies.

While there are numerous examples wherein the Chechens attempted to gain high-cost technologies to affect their stratagem, one of the most chilling was the story told to a reporter about a radioactive parcel buried in a Moscow park. According to Shamil Basayev, this parcel was one of four radioactive packages that he and his followers had smuggled into Russia. Basayev stated that, "Today the war seems to many people to be over, nothing is really over. Now the war has become like a slow fuse or a trip wire. It doesn't look like it's burning on the outside, but a small event can trigger a big explosion."¹¹³ A further illustration of this mentality was a plan annotated in President Dudayev's archive to send Slavic-looking fighters to capture a Russian atomic submarine in 1995 or 1996 to coerce Moscow into withdrawing troops. Dudayev's archive also had plans detailing plots to blow

¹¹² Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 51.

¹¹³ Specter, "Chechen Insurgents Take Their Struggle to a Moscow Park."

up nuclear power facilities, military airfields and oil refineries.¹¹⁴ That said, it is particularly interesting to note that, once the separatists realized that their more destructive low-cost technology attacks were essentially failures in that they were not furthering the Chechen end state, such attacks dropped exponentially.¹¹⁵

During the second Russo-Chechen War the separatists became increasingly desperate to affect their end-state which had become an increasingly unpragmatic goal. Their signaling needs were evidenced by the increased destructiveness of their modes of violence to amplify the signal they were attempting to send. Further audience needs included competing power blocs, a war-weary Chechen populace, a united Russian population and government, and a less sympathetic international community. This was a significant change to the independent variable of audience and precipitated an increased use of destructive low-cost technology modes of violence against civilian targets to affect their goal, which, despite claims to the contrary remained that of the right to self-determination and secession.¹¹⁶

The supposition that high cost or emerging technologies may not be the right tools to affect the strategies of disparate VNSAs brings us back full circle to the question of whether VNSAs reach for technology merely because it is available. Based upon the study of the modes of violence used by the Chechen separatists in this thesis, the shift was predicated upon their need to increase their signaling to affect their audience and accomplish their goals. What is perhaps most notable about the Chechen case is that there was minimal outcry on the part of the civilian constituency of the separatists against the modes of violence used against Russian civilians; perhaps due to the depredations of the Russian military during both conflicts and the failure of the Russian government to redress those depredations.

¹¹⁴ Saradzyhyan, "Russia: Grasping the Reality of Nuclear Terror," 64–77.

¹¹⁵ Schaefer. *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus: From Gazahat to Jihad*, 233–236.

¹¹⁶ Janeczko, "'Faced with Death, Even a Mouse Bites': Social and Religious Motivations Behind Terrorism in Chechnya," 441.

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III. CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

The Covenant, the Sword, and the Arm of the Lord (CSAL) was a group that evolved from a small Christian community to a group that was charged with sedition against the United States government. They were selected for this study because of their evolutionary path from a peaceful non-state community to one that participated in activities and modes of violence intended to destabilize the government. However, unpragmatic that goal may have been. Their shifting strategies and audience needs impacted them to the degree that they began a series of low-cost technology modes of violence against a variety of civilian and government targets, though their modes of violence remained on the lower end of the destructive scale. The intent of the following case study is to present a narrative that includes the groups belief system and their evolutionary pathway while focusing on the two independent variables (shifting goals and audience needs) and how they affect the dependent variable (mode of violence chosen).

A. CHRISTIAN IDENTITY: POLITICS AND POPULACE

Christian Identity, hereafter referred to as Identity, is a belief system whose adherents comprise disparate independent churches, Bible study groups, political organizations and communal settlements throughout the United States.¹¹⁷ The core beliefs of this organization are that white, Aryan people are direct descendants of the tribes of Israel, that the Jewish people are biological descendants of Eve and Satan (two seed-line theory), and that the Last Days are soon to begin. It is hard to identify the size of the movement, since the groups that subscribe to the Identity ideology range from the Ku Klux Klan to certain Posse Comitatus groups. Further, many members belong to small churches throughout rural American and live quiet and law-abiding lives.¹¹⁸ Illustrative of this are

¹¹⁷ Stephen E. Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO LLC, 2011), 133–134.

¹¹⁸ Michael Barkun, “Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement,” in *Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 247–249; Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right* (Chapel Hill, and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 158–191; Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 133–140.

the Identity communities in LaPorte, Colorado; Schell City, Missouri; and Elohim City, Oklahoma.¹¹⁹ That said, there are those who believe that the Identity belief system justifies violence against the enemies of God to include minorities and most government entities above the local level.¹²⁰

Notably, the seminal document of the Christian Identity movement is a novel called the *Turner Diaries*.¹²¹ This book depicts a group called “The Order” who uses terrorism as a strategy against the United States after the confiscation of privately owned weapons. Their terrorist strategy involves the targeted killing of Jews, minorities and government officials, the poisoning of water supplies, economic sabotage and the use of a truck bomb to decimate the FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C. The turning point in the novel is when the group seizes Vandenberg Air Force Base and takes over their nuclear missiles and warheads, then launches them and eradicates several American cities. Ultimately, a race war is initiated through this use of terrorism, and all non-whites are exterminated.¹²²

Those that believe in Identity are post-tribulationist, which means that they believe that the tribulation will be a race war in which nonwhite people will attack and seek to destroy the white population and that the Antichrist will be a Jew.¹²³ Though Identity ministers do not necessarily advocate violence for the sake of violence, their belief in the distinction between God’s laws and those of man’s allow individual groups under the umbrella of Identity to justify the use of violence based on prejudice.¹²⁴ As stated by Bruce Hoffman, Identity group’s violent adherents are very similar to other religious extremist

¹¹⁹ Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 133.

¹²⁰ Barkun, “Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement,” 247–249; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 158–191.

¹²¹ Law, *Terrorism: A History* 316–329; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 225–228; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 121; Mark Juergensmeyer, “Christian Violence in America,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 558, no. 1 (July 1998) 88–100, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.1177%2F0002716298558001008>.

¹²² Law, *Terrorism: A History* 316–329; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 225–228; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 121; Juergensmeyer, “Christian Violence in America,” 88–100.

¹²³ Law, *Terrorism: A History*, 316–329; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 225–228; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 121.

¹²⁴ Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 134.

groups like Islamic Sunni and Shi'a extremists in that they turn intangible political ideas and objectives into religious requirements. Further, like jihadist groups, many Identity adherents see themselves as being involved in an ongoing and existential battle against evil and, as such, do not recognize innocents.¹²⁵ Illustrative of this are the approximately three dozen violent acts and plots by groups affiliated with Christian Identity since the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.¹²⁶ Some examples include plots to blow up natural gas processing plants, poison water supplies, and a raid in Tyler, Texas that recovered a cache of sodium cyanide, suitcase bombs, half a million rounds of ammunition and sixty pipe bombs.¹²⁷ However, perhaps the most well known example of a Christian Identity group that chose violence is the CSAL.¹²⁸

B. THE COVENANT, THE SWORD AND THE ARM OF THE LORD

Zarephath-Horeb, later renamed the CSAL, was founded in the 1970s by James Ellison as a community for spiritual growth and where Christians could “dwell safely away from the government of the Antichrist.”¹²⁹ The group settled upon a remote 220-acre farm in Northern Arkansas.¹³⁰ They were a post tribulationist group who initially believed that their mission was to feed and care for the Christians who would come to them during the tribulation. In order to accomplish this mission, the group believed that they not only

¹²⁵ Scott Stewart, “What White Supremacism and Jihadism Have in Common,” Stratfor Global Intelligence, March 26, 2019, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/what-white-supremacism-and-jihadism-have-common#/home/error>; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 107–127.

¹²⁶ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 107–127.

¹²⁷ Office of the United States Attorney Eastern District of Texas. *Prison Sentence for Possessing Chemical Weapons*. (Texas: Department of Justice, 2004); Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 107–127; Paul Harris, “They Seemed Normal but Plotted to Kill Thousands,” *The Guardian*, March 20, 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/mar/21/usa.terrorism>.

¹²⁸ Barkun, “Millenarians and Violence: The Case of the Christian Identity Movement,” 247–249; Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 158–191; Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 149–154.

¹²⁹ Kerry Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City* (Ontario: Voyageur Pub., 1998) 67–78.

¹³⁰ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord,” assessed April 30, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Covenant-the-Sword-and-the-Arm-of-the-Lord>; Federal Bureau of Investigation. *The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord File: 100-HQ-48722*, 1982 (Kansas City: MO, U.S. Department of Justice, 1982) <https://vault.fbi.gov/The%20Covenant%20The%20Sword%20The%20Arm%20of%20the%20Lord%20>.

needed rural housing and enough supplies to support themselves, but they would also need to prepare militarily to defend themselves against the predators who would become prevalent once the end times arrived. They believed that approximately 90% of the population would die soon after the tribulation began and that they, the elect, would precipitate the rule of Christ.¹³¹ In the late 1970s the group purchased \$52,000 worth of weapons, equipment and training.¹³² Despite this, the group remained a small non-violent survivalist group until their introduction to Christian Identity in late 1979.¹³³

On April 7, 1988 an Arkansas jury consisting of all white members acquitted key members of the nation's largest white supremacist organizations, including the Aryan Nations, the Ku Klux Klan, CSAL and the Order, of all charges of conspiring to take over the federal government and assassinate a federal judge and a federal agent. The prosecution stated that the accused had previously met with the intent incite a rebellion against the United States government and begin an all-white nation in the Pacific Northwest.¹³⁴ Among the items recovered from the CSAL compound was "a 30-gallon drum of cyanide, numerous automatic assault rifles, a fully operational LAW guided rocket a Lewis machine gun, handguns, rifles, C-4 explosives, land mines, hand grenades and thousands of rounds of ammunition."¹³⁵ How did a small commune of fundamental Christians become an active participant in a plot to overthrow the United States government using modes of violence that were foreshadowed by the *Turner Diaries*?

By late 1979 the group had become more convinced of the need to defend themselves against predation. They began participating in a "military day" every Sunday,

¹³¹ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate*, 67–78.

¹³² Noble, 73.

¹³³ Noble, 67–78.

¹³⁴ Bill Simmons, "13 White Supremacists Acquitted in Arkansas Murder and Sedition Trial," *Washington Post*, April 8, 1988, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1988/04/08/13-white-supremacists-acquitted-in-arkansas-murder-and-sedition-trial/21c30cbe-c120-40ac-8fec-33420d1b0d2e/?utm_term=.28a61d5a54e6; "13 Supremacists Are Not Guilty of Conspiracies," *New York Times*, April 8, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/04/08/us/13-supremacists-are-not-guilty-of-conspiracies.html>.

¹³⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord File: 100-HQ-48722*.

where they practiced maneuvers, drills and swore to serve their military commanders, God's army and to shoot any traitors or deserters in the back. Additionally, they began converting their weapons to fully automatic and building homemade silencers and grenades,¹³⁶ presumably in the factories on their compound, which they used to produce weapons for group use and for sale to other groups and individuals.¹³⁷ This environment was fertile ground for the introduction of an ideology that enhanced their belief in the impending apocalypse. It was into this environment that James Ellison presented sermons from a well-known Identity preacher named Dan Gayman. This coupled with their exposure to the patriotic, tax protesting ideology of the Christian-Patriots Defense League, solidified their changing goals and emerging dualist thinking. Reflective of this, they invested in and converted additional weapons and built an obstacle course and mock four-block town to practice urban warfare. An additional sign of the group's devolution was their participation in insurance fraud by assisting James Ellison's sister to burn down her trailer house. They justified this as an act in the war against the Beast (two "demons" associated with Lucifer in the biblical book of Revelations), who in the minds of the group was now synonymous with the United States government.¹³⁸

During a visit to the Christian Patriot's Defense League in January 1981, James Ellison preached that the group was preparing for war against the American government; shortly thereafter the group decided that the name Zarephath-Horeb was too complicated for the public, and that they needed a name that would be representative of their paramilitary mission.¹³⁹ It was decided that "the Covenant" spoke of the covenants that God had made with the group and those that they had made to one another; "the Sword" spoke of the God's coming judgment upon America; and "the Arm" was representative of the people whom God would use to direct that judgment. In addition to their name change,

¹³⁶ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 79–80.

¹³⁷ Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 133–162.

¹³⁸ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 81–97; Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 150–151.

¹³⁹ Noble, 99–107.

the group also began publishing a monthly newsletter highlighting Identity teachings, survivalism, military tradecraft, and right-wing rhetoric.¹⁴⁰

It was during this period that the group initiated measures that would allow them to escalate their ability to conduct violent acts while making a name for themselves amongst other right-wing and Identity groups. They bought a 30-gallon barrel of cyanide reportedly so they could poison water supply systems in major cities. They also had one of their munition's personnel place some of the cyanide into the sealed tips of their hollow-point bullets. There were internal plans to blow up area dams and take control of the counties surrounding the compound. They also began offering survival training at their "End Time Overcomer Survival School," where attendees paid a fee of \$500 and reportedly learned urban and rural warfare.¹⁴¹ With this, the group arguably solidified their belief that they were both the armorer and the trainer for the militant of Identity and the right wing.¹⁴²

Illustrative of this, CSAL began publishing statements and declarations to reflect what they saw as their purpose in the fight against "evil." The first of which was a statement that told of a prophecy received by a group member which stated that "he would establish our name across the United States, to be a Beacon of Light." They also published their "Declaration of Non-Surrender," which stated, "we accept the principle that it is better to stand, and if need be fall for the cause of Christ and Country than to submit to the coming attempt of satanic and socialistic world order."¹⁴³ What made CSAL stand out from other Identity groups at the time was that Ellison was radical in his beliefs, and there was no one within his group who would curb his more violent impulses as long as they remained consistent with the group's narrative.¹⁴⁴ The CSAL's belief in its ability to act and effect

¹⁴⁰ Noble, 99–107.

¹⁴¹ Noble, 99–107, 120; Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 150.

¹⁴² Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Roots of Religious Violence in America," in *Misunderstanding Cults: Searching for Objectivity in a Controversial Field*, ed. Thomas Robbins ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 484.

¹⁴³ Kaplan, "The Roots of Religious Violence in America," 484; Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 105–106.

¹⁴⁴ Kaplan, 486.

their goals spawned the idea for the CSAL National Convocation in October 1982. Attendees included members from the Aryan Nation, Christian-Patriots Defense League, the Klan, and Robert Millar, founder of Elohim City.¹⁴⁵

Shortly after the 1982 National Convocation, approximately two-thirds of the core group departed the compound due to Ellison's desire to take a second wife; this coupled with the death of Gordon Kahl arguably acted as the impetus to the group's escalation from violent rhetoric to violent acts.¹⁴⁶ Federal and local law enforcement were sent to arrest Posse Comitatus member Gordon Kahl in February 1983 for probation violations; this attempt resulted in a shoot-out where Kahl's son and two U.S. marshals were killed. Kahl fled and ended up hiding in Arkansas with affiliates of CSAL, where he was subsequently killed by law enforcement on June 3, 1983.¹⁴⁷ The group saw this as a sign from God that they should retaliate; further, since this had happened near their compound, they felt that they had to act or lose all credibility. Complicating matters further was the outcry from the various Identity and right-wing organizations calling Kahl's death a heroic struggle and asking CSAL what they intended to do about it.¹⁴⁸

In part to maintain the credibility of the CSAL, Ellison traveled to the Aryan Nation Annual Congress in Hayden Lake, Idaho, and stated that, "for every one of our people they kill, we ought to kill one hundred of theirs!"¹⁴⁹ Plans were reportedly discussed to finance the movement through illicit acts. A list was drawn up detailing those that needed to be killed. Perhaps more concerning was the Aryan points system that was drawn up where points would be awarded to those who committed illegal acts; stealing would be worth a

¹⁴⁵ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 109–112.

¹⁴⁶ Kaplan, "The Roots of Religious Violence in America," 486–487; Noble, 117–123.

¹⁴⁷ "History – No Greater Tragedy – February 13, 1983," U.S. Marshals Service, February 13, 1983, <https://www.usmarshals.gov/history/muir-cheshire/kahl.html>; Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 129–13; Frank Rajkowski, "Flashback Friday: Manhunt for Gordon Kahl Ended in Bloody Shootout 35 Years Ago," KSTP News, last modified June 01, 2018, <https://kstp.com/news/flashback-friday-manhunt-for-gordon-kahl-ended-in-bloody-shootout-35-years-ago-us-marshals-medina-north-dakota-posse-comitatus/4931110/>.

¹⁴⁸ Noble, 130–131.

¹⁴⁹ Noble, 130–131.

point, killing a minority would be worth five points, and so on.¹⁵⁰ The attendees also discussed Louis Beam's idea of "leaderless resistance"¹⁵¹ wherein independent cells that they referred to as "silent warriors" would be created to commit acts of violence without coordination and communication with other cells.¹⁵² When Ellison was asked what types of attacks they would conduct, he responded by stating: "dumping cyanide into the reservoirs of major cities, killing federal agents, blowing up an ADL building or overpasses in major cities; maybe even blowing up a federal building."¹⁵³ Notably, it was the Hayden Lake meeting in 1983 that the prosecution for the Fort Smith Sedition Trial pinpointed as the beginning of the conspiracy to overthrow the government.¹⁵⁴

CSAL subsequently prepared a document that declared "War in '84" that was entitled ATTACK–Aryan Tactical Treaty for the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom, the group envisioned 1984 as the year of the Second American Revolution with themselves as a part of the new founding fathers.¹⁵⁵ The declaration indicated the group's intent to meet any government force with equal if not greater force. The group's initial acts were all low-cost technology modes of violence and included the pouring of gasoline through the front mail slot of a church that had gay members, the bombing of a Jewish Community Center, the taping of a large amount of dynamite to a natural gas pipeline, and the robbery and murder of a pawnshop owner. Except for the murder, none of these attacks resulted in major damage to property or people.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Noble, 130–131.

¹⁵¹ Interestingly, this concept is later described by the jihadi theorist, Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, who believed that jihad would come to be defined by terrorism carried out by individuals or independent cells. Lawrence Wright, "The Master Plan," *The New Yorker* 82, no. 28 (September 11, 2006).

¹⁵² Law. *Terrorism: A History*, 316–329; Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 130–131.

¹⁵³ Noble, 132.

¹⁵⁴ "The Leader of the Aryan Nations Church One Of," UPI, March 29, 1988, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1988/03/29/The-leader-of-the-Aryan-Nations-Church-one-of/6614575614800/>

¹⁵⁵ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 133 – 134.

¹⁵⁶ Noble, 133 - 134; Kaplan, "The Roots of Religious Violence in America," 489.

These low-cost technology modes of violence were all perceived to be incremental steps to a greater goal; As Ellison stated: “we need something with a large body count to make the government sit up and take notice.”¹⁵⁷ That attention-getting attack was identified as the Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City. After conducting reconnaissance on the building, Ellison instructed the group’s munitions expert, a prior Green Beret, to build a rocket system that could destroy the building. Despite the low-cost technology manner of the attack, CSAL members estimated that approximately 500 men, women, and children would die in the attack. Which would have made it the largest domestic terrorist attack ever conducted in the United States at that time. Fortuitously, during testing, a rocket exploded in the munitions expert’s hands. This was taken as a sign from God that the attack should not go forth.¹⁵⁸

It was during the Second National Convocation in November of 1983 that two things of note occurred: James Ellison was proclaimed “King James of the Ozarks” by Elohim Cities Richard Millar and Ellison and his deputies decided that the war would begin on December 26, 1983.¹⁵⁹ The initial plan consisted of a plot to assassinate federal Judge Waters, federal prosecutor Asa Hutchinson, and FBI agent Jack Knox in retribution for the death of Gordon Kahl. Ellison notified both Richard Butler of the Aryan Nations and Robert Miles of Mountain Kirk, a Klan affiliate, of his plans. However, on their way to carry out the targeted assassinations, members of the group were in a head-on collision. Ellison took this as a sign that the mission should be aborted. This created censure from the right-wing movement and a degradation in the credibility of the group. Another failed plot occurred when CSAL member Kerry Noble aborted an attempt to blow up a gay church with a briefcase containing C4 explosives and dynamite. While sitting inside during the service, he stated that while he knew the attempt would be successful, he also knew that it would not start the revolution they wanted.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Noble, 134.

¹⁵⁸ Noble, 134 – 135.

¹⁵⁹ Noble, 137 – 147.

¹⁶⁰ Noble, 137 – 147.

By mid-to-late 1984 a combination of money and legal issues ratcheted up the pressure on CSAL and ultimately resulted in a three-day siege on the CSAL compound.¹⁶¹ On June 30, 1984, a CSAL member, Richard Wayne Snell, was pulled over in DeQueen, Arkansas, by an African American police officer whom he subsequently shot and killed. Snell fled but was caught at a roadblock in Broken Bow, Oklahoma. Several weapons in his vehicle were tied to CSAL and Ellison. In July of 1984, the group's munitions expert, Kent Yates, was arrested on a federal weapons violation. Finally, on April 15, 1985, the anti-paramilitary provision was signed into law by Governor Bill Clinton.¹⁶² On April 21, 1985, law enforcement officers surrounded the compound with a search warrant, and on April 22, 1985, Ellison surrendered without incident.¹⁶³

In August of 1986, both James Ellison and Kerry Noble agreed to testify against 14 other right-wing members in what became the Fort Smith Sedition Trial.¹⁶⁴ On April 27, 1987, 14 individuals were charged “with seditious conspiracy, interstate transportation of stolen property, receipt of stolen money and conspiracy to murder federal officials.” Supporting the indictment were 130 overt acts of travel and meetings about the overthrow of “the government, homicide, sale, and purchase of automatic weapons, armed robbery” that resulted in more than \$4 million and the subsequent dispersal of the money, all members were acquitted.¹⁶⁵

C. WHAT DROVE THE MODE OF VIOLENCE?

CSAL is a group that evolved from a peaceful religious group to one that plotted to overthrow the United States government and its strategies, influence needs and modes of violence shifted accordingly. This shift was precipitated by their changing goals and

¹⁶¹ Noble, 137 – 147.

¹⁶² Noble, 137 – 147.

¹⁶³ Federal Bureau of Investigation. *The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord File: 100-HQ-48722*.

¹⁶⁴ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 189–190.

¹⁶⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation. *The Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord File: 100-HQ-48722*; Simmons, “13 White Supremacists Acquitted in Arkansas Murder and Sedition Trial.”; “13 Supremacists Are Not Guilty of Conspiracies,”

audience needs and illustrated by their choice to adopt low-cost technology modes of violence. Of the two independent variables, goals and audience, both the goal of the group and their audience needs evolved and impacted the dependent variable.

CSAL was a relatively peaceful group that transitioned to declaring war against the United States government.¹⁶⁶ CSAL's signaling needs were heavily impacted by the need to maintain credibility and influence needs over its core constituency and other right wing extremist and Identity organizations. At the outset the group had a dedicated closed constituency who considered the "enemy" to be the unknown predators that would unfailingly threaten them after the tribulation period began. This was consistent with its goal to maintain the status quo of the group, and the integrity of the compound. Once the group accepted the Identity ideology, its constituency, its enemy and the goal of the organization began to shift. The goal became regime change and to some extent social control. The constituency became an open system wherein CSAL needed to maintain credibility and influence over both the inner and outer constituencies. Further, the strategy became a mix of provocation and intimidation.¹⁶⁷ This was illustrated initially by the name change, publication of various statements and prophecy, and the group's perception of itself as the armorer and trainer of the Identity and right-wing movements. However, this shift was most notable once they decided to escalate to active rather than preventative modes of violence.

Once the schism within the group occurred, the group lost its ability to temper Ellison's more violent impulses. Further, the group's need to maintain a positive image amongst Identity and right-wing groups arguably acted as a forcing mechanism which resulted in the group's initial participation in low-cost technology modes of violence as a means of signaling to their disparate audiences their intent to affect their goals. As early as 1981, the group had been preparing for war against the government, but it was the demand signal from the outer constituency following Kahl's death that caused the group to shift

¹⁶⁶ Noble, *Tabernacle of Hate: Why They Bombed Oklahoma City*, 133 - 134; Kaplan, "The Roots of Religious Violence in America," 489.

¹⁶⁷ Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 51.

their activities from petty crime to acts of terror. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the fact that it was the group's inner constituency and narrative which prevented them from escalating to more destructive low-cost technology modes of violence. Specifically, the Murrah building attack. Which did not take place because the inner constituency believed that the accident with the rocket was a sign that the attack should not take place. Further, the plan to conduct targeted assassinations of government officials was also aborted because the inner constituency believed that the head-on collision was a sign from God that the attack should not go forward. Perhaps not surprisingly, the influence needs of the inner constituency trumped those of the outer constituency.

In contrast to the Russo-Chechen case, the enemy populace and government seemed to play a lesser role in the story of CSAL. However, that may not be the case with all Identity and right-wing groups. In at least one instance, that of the Aryan Nations, the Fort Smith Sedition Trial scared Richard Butler to the point that he distanced his group from any direct action and limited them to recruitment and propaganda.¹⁶⁸ Interestingly, later suppositions posit that though the Fort Smith Sedition Trial may have driven some groups away from explicit acts of violence, others played a part in a network of Patriot and Identity insurgents who assisted Timothy McVeigh in carrying out the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in 1995. Whether suppositions of a network of insurgents assisting McVeigh is true or not, what they failed to account for was the reaction of the American populace. Far from inciting a revolution against the government, the attack had a detrimental effect on the movement as a whole; from 1996 to 2000 active Identity and right-wing groups dropped from 858 to 194.¹⁶⁹

Interestingly, CSAL limited themselves to low-cost technology modes of violence despite their access and stated willingness to use cyanide. Further, they limited themselves to low-cost technology attacks on the lower end of the destruction scale when they had the opportunity and the means to carry out what would have amounted to the largest acts of

¹⁶⁸ Atkins, *Encyclopedia of Right Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, 143, 215–216.

¹⁶⁹ Stuart Wright, *Patriots, Politics and the Oklahoma City Bombing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–22.

domestic terror in United States history at the time. This finding is relevant to the question of whether VNSAs reach for technology merely because it is available. Based upon the study of the modes of violence by CSAL, it is probable that these entities reached for the modes of violence that would allow them to maintain credibility with their constituency but that their lack of belief in their own narrative coupled with the lack of an existential threat prevented them from the necessity of reaching for more destructive modes of violence.

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IV. AUM SHINRIKYO

Aum Shinrikyo was an organization that began as a yoga and meditation group and ended as the first known violent non-state actor to use a weapon of mass destruction.¹⁷⁰ Aum was chosen for this study because of their evolutionary path from a peaceful progressive millenarianism perspective to that of a dualist catastrophic millenarianism stance, their targeting of civilians and the limited constraints under which they operated. It is important to note that Aum Shinrikyo's overarching objective was never destruction for the sake of destruction.¹⁷¹ The group's evolutionary pathway was characterized by a growing hostility toward it by the Japanese public and government and a corresponding shift towards a dualist and catastrophic millenarian perspective by the group.¹⁷² This transition was driven by the groups changing strategy and audience needs from their inception to their ending. Furthermore, it was a result of their changing internal strategy and narrative, constituency, and their shifting perception of the "outside" world that resulted in their swing from proselytization to violence.¹⁷³ As this shift occurred, the group attempted to adopt increasingly destructive modes of violence. The intent of the following case study is present a narrative focusing on the evolution of Aum's goals and audience needs followed by an analysis on how the two independent variables (goals and audience needs) effected the dependent variable (mode of violence chosen).

A. AUM SHINRIKYO: POLITICS, POPULATION AND STRATEGY

1. Early Years of Aum Shinrikyo: 1984–1988

Shoko Asahara's (then named Chizuo Matsumoto) group *Aum Shinsen no Kai* was established (but not formally recognized) as a religion in 1986. The group's original

¹⁷⁰ Ian Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 1; Ian Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," in *Cult, Religion & Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 191–192, 201–205.

¹⁷¹ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 134.

¹⁷² Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*. 6–7.

¹⁷³ Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," 189 – 208.

purpose was the spiritual awakening of its members, who were taught to excise bad karma and other impediments that were perceived by the group to be inherent to living within the modern and materialistic Japanese society.¹⁷⁴ This original goal began to change following a vision that Asahara received in 1985 that designated him as the *Abiraketsu no Mikoto* or “the god who leads the armies of the gods.”¹⁷⁵ In this vision, he was given the task of creating the Buddhist paradise of Shambhala. He was to transform first Japan and then the world.¹⁷⁶ Shortly after that, he had a vision which convinced him that only a chosen few would survive the apocalypse and Japan was facing imminent destruction. Further, he was Japan's only means of survival.¹⁷⁷

Despite the apocalyptic nature of his visions, Matsumoto believed that spiritual action could save the world. The group merely needed to grow large enough to create the positive energy needed to mitigate the negative karma inherent within the world. To do this, the group would need to open centers all over the world and gain 30,000 adherents who would renounce the world to live in the group's communes which would become the foundation for the future civilization. Chizuo Matsumoto soon renamed himself Shoko Asahara, and with approximately 13 followers he opened the group's first office to begin

¹⁷⁴ Reader, “Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World,” 192-193; Ian Reader, “Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence,” in *Millennialism, Persecution & Violence*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 165; Robert J. Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), 19–20; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 128; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 88–90.

¹⁷⁵ Susumo Shimazono, “In the Wake of Aum: The Formation and Transformation of a Universe of Belief,” *Japanese Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 3–4. 388, as quoted in Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 88–90.

¹⁷⁶ Reader, “Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World,” 194-195; Reader, “Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence,” 167; Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It*, 19–20; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 128; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 88–90.

¹⁷⁷ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 128–129; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 88–90; Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It*, 23.

proselytization.¹⁷⁸ The group changed its name to Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth) in 1987.¹⁷⁹

A central tenet of Aum Shinrikyo was the renunciation of the world in favor of living within the communes, called becoming *shukkesha*.¹⁸⁰ It is important to note that renouncing the world meant cutting ties with the outside world, giving all possessions to the group and signing an agreement to strive for freedom through asceticism and absolving Aum of the blame should anything happen to after renunciation. The movement's rapid expansion from 35 members in 1986 to 1300 members by 1987 opened them up to their first negative media criticism from the families of members who had renounced the world. Renunciation was to become a large source of conflict between Aum and the outside world and would eventually propel them into their first overt external acts of violence.¹⁸¹

2. The Radicalization of Aum Shinrikyo: 1988–1992

Many of Aum Shinrikyo's tenets were derived from Tibetan Buddhism and were used by Asahara to build a foundation for the movement that ultimately legitimated the internal and external violence that came to characterize the group. That said, two central beliefs acted as the main foci of this legitimation, *poa* and the accumulation of karma. *Poa* means that those who die can be assisted in obtaining a better rebirth through the intercession of a more advanced spiritual figure. Asahara's interpretation became a little more sinister. He came to believe the people's deaths were justified if they were killed in order to prevent them from living a bad life.¹⁸² Also, he initially believed that, in order to attain higher states of being, individuals needed to ascend based upon the Mahayana

¹⁷⁸ Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It*, 22; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 129; John R. Hall and Sylvaine Trinh, "The Violent Path of Aum Shinrikyo," in *Apocalypse Observed Religious Movements and Violence in North America, Europe, and Japan*, eds. John R. Hall, Daniel Philip Schuyler, and Sylvaine Trinh. (London: Routledge, 2000), 84–87.

¹⁷⁹ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 62, 88–91.

¹⁸⁰ Reader, 62–63, 82–88.

¹⁸¹ Reader, 62–63, 82–88.

¹⁸² Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 174; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 16–17, 68; Ted Daniels, *A Doomsday Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999) 155.

disciplines of Buddhism: 1. Offerings, 2. Observance of Buddhist Precepts, 3. Patience and fortitude, 4. Devotion 5. Meditation, and 6. The cultivation of wisdom. This necessitated and stimulated detachment.¹⁸³ Throughout this period the tenets of Aum Shinrikyo became more demanding of its members and increasingly dualist, this was illustrated in their use of violence and their perceived rejection from Japanese society during this period.

Asahara believed that the coercion of group members to make them perform austerities was essential to their continued spiritual growth.¹⁸⁴ This was perceived as a compassionate act to help lesser spiritual beings reach greater heights in their growth. In late 1988 one of these sessions involving forced cold water immersion resulted in the death of one of Aum's devotees, this was particularly problematic because the group planned on applying for legal recognition as a religious group in 1989. The death was covered up. However, one of the devotees involved in the death subsequently wanted to leave the group and, fearing that he would report the incident, Asahara ordered him killed.¹⁸⁵ Almost simultaneously, Asahara's teachings regarding *poa* began to shift from the traditional Buddhist interpretation to what would later justify additional murders and eventually mass destruction as an act of salvation.¹⁸⁶

Aum Shinrikyo's initial application for legal, religious recognition was rejected due to continued community concerns about *shukkesha* which manifested themselves in a series of negative media stories and an anti-Aum group that was named *Oumu Shinriyo higaisha no kai* (Aum Shinrikyo's Victims' Society). Notably, the victim's society retained a lawyer named Sakamoto Tsutsumi as its representative.¹⁸⁷ Aum devotees later murdered Sakamoto, his wife, and their fourteen-month-old son following a series of negative media

¹⁸³ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 71, 80–81.

¹⁸⁴ Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 174–176.

¹⁸⁵ Reader, 174–176.

¹⁸⁶ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 127–130, 145; Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 176; Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," 197.

¹⁸⁷ Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 176; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo* 146–148; Hall and Trinh, "The Violent Path of Aum Shinrikyo," 87.

reports regarding Sakamoto's case against Aum Shinrikyo.¹⁸⁸ Following the rejection of legal recognition, Asahara and Aum members filed an appeal and began a series of protests that ultimately resulted in a favorable verdict. It was during this period that Asahara began to preach about the conflict between Aum and the civil authorities and that he decided that Aum needed to accumulate a more solid power base. Asahara told his followers that proselytization would not be adequate to convert enough faithful to establish Shambhala. They needed political authority as well.¹⁸⁹

Aum Shinrikyo established the Shinri political party to participate in the February 1990 Japanese parliamentary elections, the elections were a humiliating defeat and were arguably a turning point in Aum's trajectory. The defeat of Aum was due in part to the continued negative press, the suspicions of the public regarding Aum's involvement the murder of the Sakamoto family despite the lack of a police investigation and the oddness of Aum's campaign.¹⁹⁰ The election was also disastrous in the sense that defections from Aum became common and their public image became so bad that one scholar commented that making fun of Aum was a national pastime.¹⁹¹ Though timelines differ, Aum's plan to begin experimenting with chemical and biological weapons began shortly after the disastrous election campaign.¹⁹² It is likely that Aum's increasing catastrophic millennialist perspective was exacerbated by both the campaign and their failure to obtain the recruitment numbers of *shukkesha* needed to avert catastrophe. Notably, Asahara's sermons following the election focused on the impending end of the world while stressing

¹⁸⁸ Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 176; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 148; D.W. Brackett, *Holy Terror: Armageddon in Tokyo* (New York: Weatherhill, 1996), 9–19; Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," 202.

¹⁸⁹ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 146–147, 153.

¹⁹⁰ Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," 202–203; Reader, "Imagined Persecution: Aum Shinrikyo, Millennialism, and the Legitimation of Violence," 176.

¹⁹¹ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 154–156.

¹⁹² Hall and Trinh, "The Violent Path of Aum Shinrikyo," 91–92.

that it would be almost impossible to save anyone outside of Aum as they were either a part of the conspiracy against Aum or complicit in it.¹⁹³

Asahara gave a three-day training seminar on the island of Ishigaki in April 1990 for Aum members and potential *shukkesha*. There were three things of note that occurred during this period. An estimated 500 attendees decided to join Aum, and 200 decided to become *shukkesha*. Asahara also announced a shift from Mahayana Buddhism (world salvation) to Vajrayana Buddhism wherein only an elect few will be saved. Separately, many believe that there was an ulterior motive to remove Aum members from Tokyo. This is perhaps substantiated as while the seminar was taking place, several senior members of Aum attempted to conduct a biological attack in Tokyo. They used an aerosol device to spray botulism toxin around the parliament building and downtown Tokyo. An attempt to spread anthrax the following month also failed.¹⁹⁴ These attempts were indicative of a paradigm shift in Aum's mode of violence. Previously, their violence had been against individuals who threatened their mission now their enemies were those who were not Aum.¹⁹⁵

This dualist perspective was further substantiated by Aum's ongoing conflicts with civil authorities and the locals surrounding the communes where the *shukkesha* lived.¹⁹⁶ Senior Aum leaders were arrested for law violations, and it was not abnormal for protests or mass fights to break out. It was common for communities to prevent the *shukkesha* from voting, getting utilities, or enrolling their kids in school. This was exacerbated by the fact that Aum members believed themselves to be superior to the unenlightened masses and played into the emerging dualist outlook of the group. Despite this, Aum invested mass amounts of resources in proselytizing and gaining overseas membership from 1991–1992. Notably, the only real success that Aum had was in Russia. They were able to recruit

¹⁹³ Reader, "Dramatic Confessions: Aum Shinrikyo against the World," 189 – 208; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 156–157.

¹⁹⁴ Hall and Trinh, "The Violent Path of Aum Shinrikyo," 79–114; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 134; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 156–157.

¹⁹⁵ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 160.

¹⁹⁶ Reader, 163 – 169.

approximately 30,000 members and several hundred *shukkesha*. However, it was in Russia where Aum first encountered the potential to gain military grade weapons. With Russia's unregulated market, Aum now had a reliable avenue for arms acquisition.¹⁹⁷

3. The Escalation of Aum Shinrikyo: 1992–1995

The success of overseas recruitment was fleeting, and defections continued throughout the early 1990s challenging the foundations of the movement and necessitating the amplification of a perceived external threat to the group.¹⁹⁸ This was reflected in Asahara's sermons throughout 1993. The sermons pinpointed the United States as the chief evil in the apocalypse and that the Japanese would inevitably be conquered. This left Aum as the sole defender of good and truth. It was around this time that Aum ceased large-scale proselytization efforts and began to concentrate on arming itself.¹⁹⁹ Asahara reportedly stated that “we need a lot of weapons to prevent Armageddon, and we must prepare them quickly.”²⁰⁰

Interestingly there was also an emergence of a “science lobby” within Aum that arguably influenced the nature of the weapons Aum chose to adopt: modern technologies as well as advanced and destructive weapons.²⁰¹ Between 1993 and 1995, Aum acquired a mix of both conventional and unconventional weapons that would rival most nation states and established what was fundamentally a shadow government structure complete with ministers. With this, the group effectively seceded from Japan and perceived themselves to be operating in opposition to it. They recruited both the technically proficient and scientists, to include two nuclear scientists to assist them.²⁰²

¹⁹⁷ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 163 – 169.

¹⁹⁸ Reader, 181–185, 187–193.

¹⁹⁹ Reader, 181–185, 187–193.

²⁰⁰ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 131; David E. Kaplan and Andrew Marshall, *The Cult at the End of the World* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1996) 85.

²⁰¹ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 185–186.

²⁰² Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It*, 30–31; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 131–132; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 198.

Aum reportedly received training from Russia's KGB and Spetsnaz in clandestine warfare, martial arts, escape and evasion, and weaponry.²⁰³ They also acquired a Mi-17 helicopter, were able to produce their own AK-47s, manufacture TNT, and either had or were in the process of acquiring VX, tabun, and soman nerve agents, mustard gas, sodium cyanide and anthrax, Q-fever and sarin. They also attempted to develop a nuclear capability. To facilitate this, the group bought acreage in Australia with the intent to mine uranium to send back to Japan where their scientists could convert it into weapons-grade material.²⁰⁴ Notably, memos seized from a senior member of Aum contained quoted prices for nuclear warheads as well as for the purchase of a property with uranium deposits.²⁰⁵

In March 1994 Asahara began speaking of the necessity of “*poaing*” humanity for their own good, he also told his closest disciples that he had received a vision telling him that war was imminent. Further, only he could save those who could be saved, and they were subsequently free to operate without moral considerations.²⁰⁶ On June 27, 1994, the group conducted its first sarin attack which was self-described as an act of war by the new “nation.” The attack was aimed at three judges who were officiating a case against Aum as well as the general public. The police blamed a local farmer. It was not until November that the police confirmed that there was sarin present on the local Aum compound. Aum blamed their enemies, and the police did not investigate further until public outcry caused them to reconsider. This coupled with a very public abduction of a public notary by an Aum member acted as a further catalyst for the police. It became public knowledge that the police would raid Aum compounds around March 20, 1995. To prevent the raid with a preemptive strike, Asahara ordered a batch of sarin to be made to carry out the March 20, 1995 subway attacks.²⁰⁷ This attack was not Aum's last attempt, but it was effectively a death knell for the group.

²⁰³ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 132–133.

²⁰⁴ Hoffman, 132–133.

²⁰⁵ Senate Government Affairs Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, *Global Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A Case Study on the Aum Shinrikyo* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1995) https://fas.org/irp/congress/1995_rpt/aum/index.html.

²⁰⁶ Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 194–196.

²⁰⁷ Reader, 208–215.

B. WHAT DROVE THE MODE OF VIOLENCE?

Aum Shinrikyo was a group that evolved from a meditation group to one that wanted power, whether political or otherwise. While their goal continues to be debated, there is a marked correlation between their shifting end-state, audience needs and modes of violence. The group's choice to adopt high-cost technology modes of violence was precipitated by their shifting end-state and audience needs. Of the two independent variables, goals and audience, both the goal of the group and their audience needs evolved and impacted the dependent variable of mode of violence.

Aum was a relatively peaceful group that transitioned to one that, in effect, seceded from Japan.²⁰⁸ Its signaling needs were heavily impacted first by the need to convert as many people as possible in order to save them and then by the need to *poa* them for their own good. At the outset Aum was a small group with a dedicated constituency and a belief that they could convert the rest. Its enemies were vague and distant. This was consistent with the goal to effect social control. Once the group failed to meet recruitment quota's and began to become the negative focus of the public, both the constituency, the enemy, and the goal of the organization began to shift. Further, its constituency became more limited, while enemies became more defined. This was illustrated by the group's rhetoric, escalating violence both internally and externally and the cessation of proselytizing efforts.

Because the group was so hierarchical, there was no one to temper the violent impulses of its senior members. Further, many members of the group fervently believed and reinforced the emerging dualist perspective of Aum. While it is important to note that Aum was a very compartmented group and many of the lower members were not aware of the actions of those carrying out low and high-cost technology attacks, the group was such that individual members were honored to be asked to show their devoutness by carrying out such attacks.²⁰⁹ Asahara had always had an apocalyptic millenarian perspective and when his perspective shifted from progressive to catastrophic the group's internal

²⁰⁸ Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save It*, 30–31; Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 131–132; Reader, *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, 198.

²⁰⁹ Reader, 198.

constituency aided and supported him because the strategy, narrative, and goals that they supported were incrementally shifted to support the escalating modes of violence. Perhaps more interesting, however, is the fact that the Japanese police consistently failed to investigate or counter Aum's actions due to a fear of infringing upon religious freedoms. Had they been investigated when the public demanded it after the Sakamoto murder, perhaps they would have been able to temper the group's commitment to Asahara.

Whether Aum's goal was the overthrow of the Japanese government or the pure destruction of non-Aum members, the details show that the group's low and high-cost technology attacks were reactive to their potential constituency, the enemy populace, and the enemy government. Regardless of whether outsiders can perceive the escalation as rational, their actions were consistent with their narrative and were perceived as rational action by them. Interestingly, it can be argued that it was the thwarting of Aum's pursuit of power via acceptable means that pushed them towards escalating modes of violence.²¹⁰ Like the Russo-Chechen case and the CSAL case, once the enemy populace and government aligned against the group, their activities ceased, their leaders were imprisoned, and remaining adherents have stayed within the bounds of social constraints.

In contrast to the Russo-Chechen and the CSAL cases, when given the choice Aum opted to use high-cost technology modes of violence vice low-cost technology modes of violence. Realistically, had they used their AK-47's in the Tokyo subway attack in March of 1995 the attack would likely have been more destructive and more effective. An interesting corollary to this is that when biological weapons proved ineffective, they switched to chemical weapons and not the arguably more reliable choice of conventional weapons.²¹¹ This is likely because Aum's narrative and strategy were dependent upon the belief that the Apocalypse would be brought about by advanced weaponry. In other words, attacking the subway with AK-47s would have been disruptive to Aum's narrative to the point that it might have introduced disequilibrium into Aum's constituency. This finding is relevant to the original question of whether non-state actors will reach for technology

²¹⁰ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 134–135.

²¹¹ Hoffman, 292–293.

merely because it is available. The finding indicates that this group reached for modes of violence that would allow them to reinforce their narrative while also affecting the group's strategies. Which is contrary to CSAL and the Chechen separatists who reached for more destructive low-cost technology modes of violence while Aum limited themselves to less destructive high-cost technology modes of violence.

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V. CONCLUSIONS

A. RESULTS

As stated in the introductory chapter, the goal of this thesis is to better understand the puzzle regarding the types of technology that VNSAs will adopt.²¹² The purpose of the research design was to allow identification of variables affecting the selection of specific modes of violence, whether low-cost or high-cost, with the added goal of contributing to the field of predictive assessments for future VNSAs. As seen in the preceding case studies, the independent variables of *goal* and *audience needs* affected the selection of specific modes of violence in the case of the CSAL and Aum Shinrikyo; however, in the case of the Chechen separatists, only the audience needs shifted though that seems to have been sufficient to effect the dependent variable. Notably, except for the Aum case in which a stated predilection existed for advanced technologies each case showed that even when the actors had the option to pursue high-cost technology options they chose to continue their use of low-cost technology options, though the destructive capacity of their choices shifted. Both the Chechen separatists and CSAL had access to high-cost technology options and yet with one exception (the dirty bomb that Basayev tipped to the reporter) neither used them.

While these cases are by no means representative of every past, current and future violent non-state actor, they do present evidence that even the most violent of the non-state actors are not in the business of adopting technology merely for technology's sake. Rather, each actor was driven and constrained by its goals and narrative as well as their disparate audience needs (see Figure 4). Significantly, in each of the three cases the actors constrained themselves. In the case of Aum, this constraint was likely due to the inconsistency of other modes of violence with their narrative; in the case of the Chechen separatists, due to the demonstrated inefficiency of using the more destructive modes of violence as a strategic tool; and for CSAL, due to a combination of their lack of belief in their narrative and minus an existential threat in the form of government countermeasures.

²¹² Clutterbuck, "Trends in Terrorist Weaponry," 130–139.

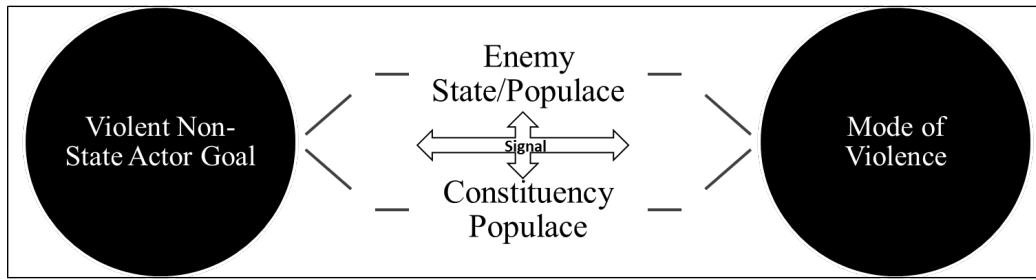


Figure 4. Pathway to mode of violence. Figure repeated from page 8 for readers' convenience.²¹³

Returning to the original puzzle, analysts and policy makers have little predictive capability regarding which groups may seek to adopt newly available technologies. When applying the results of the case studies, three things are clear: (i) There is a clear correlation between the independent variables and the dependent; (ii) Less constrained actors do have constraints upon the modes of violence that they choose; and, (iii) Less constrained actors are more likely to change their goals and therefore their mode of violence in response to perceived persecution. These findings substantiate the idea that less constrained actors are more likely to reach for more destructive capabilities but that the technology that they reach for must be consistent with their goals, narrative and audience needs.

The substantiation of need for technology use to be consistent with their goals, narrative and audience needs is demonstrative of the necessity for policy makers and analysts to fully understand the VNSAs who they hope to interdict. This understanding will allow analysts to predict the signaling strategy inherent to the choice of technology by VNSAs.²¹⁴ Additionally, as the technological pathway shortens, and VNSAs have the option to more easily obtain high-cost technology modes of violence, it is vital for policy makers and analysts to understand potential points of intercession or influence. This would

²¹³ Adapted from McCormick and Horton and Harrison, "Things Fall Apart: The Endgame Dynamics of Internal Wars," 321–367; McCormick and Giordano, "Things Come Together: Symbolic Violence and Guerilla Mobilization," 295–320; Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 152–168; Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 49–79; Gibbons, "An Introduction to Applicable Game Theory," 127–149; Sandler and Arce, "Terrorism and Game Theory," 319–337. Hoffman, and McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 243.

²¹⁴ Hoffman, and McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 245–248; Kydd and Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 49–79.

introduce the potential to prevent high-cost technology acquisition by effecting the behavior of the audiences of these VNSAs or preventing a goal shift that could act as impetus for escalation.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy makers, their advisors and analysts often have minimal understanding of the goals and audience needs that drive the choice of modes of violence among VNSAs. While it is not realistic to expect analysts and policy makers to be able to monitor every non-state actor with the potential for violence, a baseline knowledge of the VNSA continuum of violence and their pathway to disparate modes of violence is. While the figures in this thesis are a simple framework, they could be used as an effective aid to scope analysis and prioritization of the groups that need to be more closely monitored. Further, they could be used to establish red-lines and prioritization efforts among agencies responsible for monitoring VNSAs.

The establishment of red-lines and prioritization efforts could be used as a tool to coordinate national and international efforts to mitigate these actors. Namely, the coordination of terrorism policy that does not further radicalize constituencies and does not precipitate the group's evolution into more destructive modes of violence. As illustrated by Todd Sandler and Daniel G. Arce, by independently choosing their terrorism policies nations are potentially exporting attacks to third party nations.²¹⁵ For instance, U.S. over reactions to terrorist activities have precipitated a reality in which a majority of the attacks it experiences takes place in countries where they have little ability to affect the group that carried out the attack.²¹⁶ A basic understanding of the pathways by which a violent non-state actor will escalate to more destructive modes of violence and potentially reach for emerging or radical leveling technologies could lead to enhanced national and international coordination to identify and interdict these groups and their access to such technology.

²¹⁵ Sandler and Arce, "Terrorism and Game Theory," 319–337.

²¹⁶ Sandler and Arce, "Terrorism and Game Theory," 319–337; W. Enders and Todd Sandler, "Terrorism, Theory and applications," In *Handbook of defense economics*, Vol. 1, eds., Keith Hartley and Todd Sandler (North-Holland, 1995) 213–249; H.E. Lapan and Todd Sandler, "To bargain or not to bargain: That is the question," *American Economic Review* 78, no. 2. 16–20

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