

# The Cultic Dimension Of Terrorist Radicalisation

## Abstract

Whenever there is a terrorist attack, people want to know first, who did it, and secondly why they did it. There is almost a sense, that for whatever reason, terrorist attacks can be explained with a single motive. Though much research has been done on cults outside terrorism studies, the role played by a cultic mindset and behaviour in terrorist violence has been neglected.

## Conceptual Framework

To understand how cults are related to lone-actor terrorists, this study explains the concepts of nomos and mediating structures, mazeway resynthesis, psychic numbing, heroic doubling and how they interrelate.

Some cults develop a radical belief system that actively challenges the norms of society. In order to realise their utopia, terroristic acts are required. When this point is reached, the cult's leader must have convinced the initiates that there is no other available option open to them, other than committing violent acts of terrorism. This phenomenon can be observed in both the terroristic cult of Aum Shinrikyō and in Anders Breivik's cult of one, the Knights Templar.

## DWP

The DWP was a U.S., Marxist-Leninist political and non-violent cult, based in California from 1974 – 1986. Janja Lalich, an ex-member, turned academic and cult expert, has drawn on her first-hand experience to write extensively on the reasons behind the radicalisation process.

## Aum

The Japanese cult of Aum Shinrikyō was both an apocalyptic and terroristic cult, with a constantly evolving syncretic belief system devised and implemented by its charismatic leader Shoko Ashahara. It had many similarities with the DWP, yet had an apocalyptic outlook that meant it pursued its quasi-religious aims through acts of terrorism.

## Anders Breivik

Anders Breivik was a loner who was not alone. From the moment he decided that he was part of the Knights Templar, he was always part of something greater. Indeed, he was someone greater than plain old Anders Behring Breivik. He was a Justiciar Commander of an ancient warrior cult.



To make the crucial step from grievance to action it was necessary that Breivik was not just an average Norwegian, but instead he was something greater. Breivik had become a leader in the Knights Templar: he was part of a cult of ancient knights, men of action. A true warrior acts. Acting is cleansing and to cleanse society one must dispose of the üntermensch.

## Conclusion

In the lonely war-by-one of the lone-actor terrorist, they need to become a charismatic leader, obedient follower and warrior all combined in the one person. A cultic mind-set provides the ideal setting for this to take place.

## References

- Primary**  
 Breivik, Anders Behring. 2083 : *A European Declaration of Independence*. <https://info.publicintelligence.net/AndersBehringBreivikManifesto.pdf>: Author - self-published, 2011. Lalich, Janja - personal correspondence. "How I See It Today," (unpublished ms., Pelham, N.Y., 1987), 3-4 included in *Bounded Choice* Training Of The Cadre - a DWP (WDU) training manual - <http://www.icsahome.com/articles/the-cadre-ideal-lalich-csj-9-1-1992>
- Secondary**  
 Berger, Peter L. *Adventures of an Accidental Sociologist : How to Explain the World without Becoming a Bore* Amherst, N.Y. : Prometheus Books, 2011. Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy : Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. [1st ed.] ed. Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1967. Borchgrevink, Aage Storm. *A Norwegian Tragedy : Anders Behring Breivik and the Massacre on Uteya* Cambridge : Polity, 2013. Griffin, Roger. *Terrorist's Creed : Fanatical Violence and the Human Need for Meaning* Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Klandermans, P. G. "Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest." *Political Psychology* 35, no. 1 (2014): 1-22. doi:10.1111/pops.12167. Lalich, Janja. *Bounded Choice : True Believers and Charismatic Cults* Berkeley, Calif. ; London : University of California Press, 2004. Lalich, Janja. "The Cadre Ideal: Origins and Development of a Political Cult." *International Cultic Studies Association* 9, no. 1, 1992 (2016): 18th January 2016-<http://www.icsahome.com/articles/the-cadre-ideal-lalich-csj-9-1-1992>. Lifton, Robert Jay. *Destroying the World to Save it : Aum Shinrikyō, Apocalyptic Violence, and the the New Global Terrorism*. 1st ed. ed. New York : Henry Holt and Co, 1999. Michael, George. "Leaderless Resistance." *Defence Studies* 12, no. 2 (2012): 257-282. Spaaij, Ramón. "The Enigma of Lone Wolf Terrorism: An Assessment." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33:854–870, no. 33 (2010): 854-to 870. Turrettini, Unni. *The Mystery of the Lone Wolf Killer : Anders Behring Breivik and the Threat of Terror in Plain Sight* New York : Pegasus Books, 2015. Wallace, Anthony F. C. "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropologist, New Series* 58, no. 2 (1956): 264-to 281.