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## TARGETING THE LEADERSHIP OF TERRORIST AND INSURGENT MOVEMENTS: HISTORICAL LESSONS FOR CONTEMPORARY POLICY MAKERS

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In a world where the struggle against terrorism and insurgent movements has become the top priority for many policy makers, there is a growing need for research that examines what happens to militant movements after the death or arrest of a leader. Do groups tend to disband, schism, or become more radical? What characteristics of a group make it more susceptible to certain changes after the loss of a leader? Using thirty-five case studies drawn from more than forty countries, this paper analyzes the effect that the death or arrest of a leader has on social, political, and religious movements. Its conclusions are drawn from an analysis of the groups' characteristics and an assessment of the effects the loss of a leader had on the survivability and evolution of the movement. The analysis provides some guidance for policy makers focused on incapacitating leadership as part of a broader effort to combat terrorist and insurgent movements.<sup>1</sup>

American policy makers and government officials around the globe are focusing much attention on disrupting terrorist and insurgent movements in order to prevent future attacks and incapacitate their networks. Part of

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the strategy focuses on breaking up financial networks and denying operatives the freedom to operate by cutting off communications and limiting the amount of space in which they can train. The most visible side of the war against terrorism and insurgent movements, however, is the U.S.-led effort to capture or kill top leadership. The Clinton administration's cruise missile attack on a suspected bin Laden training camp and the Bush administration's hellfire missile attack on a caravan of suspected al Qaeda leaders in Yemen demonstrated the widespread belief that incapacitating a leader of a movement helps to prevent future attacks. Indeed, President Bush has made the capture or assassination of Usama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein one of the central elements of his anti-terrorism and anti-insurgency efforts.

There is no doubt that some leaders, including bin Laden and Hussein, should be brought to justice, but little evidence exists that either supports or refutes the idea that the capture or death of a leader will lead to a group's downfall. This begs the question: How much should the United States and its allies focus on incapacitating leadership? This study attempts to address this question by determining the implications of the loss of leadership for radical groups.

Past analyses of leadership and group behavior have tended to focus on psychological issues. Scholars have attempted to identify factors that lead individuals to join cults, partake in guerilla fighting, or participate in revolutionary movements. In addition, many scholars have explored the characteristics of leadership, attempting to identify personal traits of leaders that tend to attract large followings (Dunn 1972). More recently, scholars have focused their attention on factors that lead individuals to join extremist organizations, especially terrorist groups (Hoffman 1998). Little attention, however, has been paid to the analysis of the evolution of a movement after its leader is killed or otherwise incapacitated. Do movements tend to radicalize after the loss of a leader? Do certain characteristics—a strong reliance on an ideology, a hierarchical structure, or a lack of popular support—tend to make a group more or less resilient when faced with a crisis of leadership? Exploring the answers to these questions is the focus of this study.

Our analysis examines how the death, arrest, or disappearance of a leader affects political, social, and religious movements. Through an examination of case studies, we focus on two separate but related topics. First, we examine what happens to movements after the loss of a leader, focusing specifically on whether the group disbands, becomes more or less radical, schisms, or remains essentially unchanged. Second, we attempt to

determine why some groups might fail after the loss of their leader, while other groups might thrive. To investigate these questions, we attempt to identify a number of common characteristics that might make a group more or less resilient to crises of leadership. Finally, we examine what happens to movements if they fail to fulfill their stated goals or objectives. With respect to these issues, we created four hypotheses:

1. If a group fails to fulfill a stated goal, we expect that the group might experience internal disputes, but that the group will ultimately continue to operate under a revised objective.
2. When the leader of a group is assassinated, we expect that the group will become radicalized as the leader becomes a martyr in the eyes of the group's membership.
3. When the leader of a group is arrested, we expect that the group might suffer a brief lull in action as leadership disputes are settled, but that in the long term, the group will experience few changes.
4. If a leader dies of natural causes, we expect that the group will continue to operate without much change because, in many instances, prior knowledge of a natural death would allow the leader to create a clear line of succession.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to test our hypotheses we collected a fairly large sample of case studies (N=35; 19 groups with a total of 35 leadership crises). These religious, political, and social movements were chosen after examining the histories of more than forty countries. We focused on countries where we knew a movement had developed, or that have been plagued with instability, especially post-colonial states. We also limited our inquiry to events after 1750. During the course of our research, we discovered other relevant cases that we had not learned about through specific country evaluations. When appropriate, we included these studies in our analysis.

We focused on movements that attracted a significant base of support, loosely defined as having more than one hundred followers. While somewhat arbitrary, this number allowed us to eliminate insignificant and obscure groups. Excluding groups with a small number of followers significantly reduced our sample size, but our conclusions gained more modern-day applicability from our exclusive focus on movements with broader bases of support.

Movements included in our analysis had a clearly defined leader or small group of leaders. In most cases we chose groups with only one leader, allowing us to make more concrete assertions about causal relationships between the loss of a leader and the future evolution of the movement. However, we also included some groups that relied on a central cluster of leaders. We included these cases in order to examine how group (as opposed to individual) leadership or previous conflicts over leadership affected the group after the loss of a leader. We excluded cases, however, in which a movement initiated by one leader became splintered into subgroups with many leaders after the spread of a rebellion begun by the movement. In these instances, there was no overarching leader who coordinated or directed attacks, making it difficult to draw connections between the loss of a leader and the future of the movement.

We acknowledge a degree of selection bias in our sample set. Groups that engage in radical behavior and achieve some level of initial success are more likely to be studied and recorded than those that do not. Thus, the vast amount of research in the field focuses on groups that have taken noteworthy and dramatic action, and tends to ignore less radical and less successful movements. Since it is not possible to identify the entire population of relevant movements, there is no way of obtaining a truly representative sample. Within these constraints, we made every effort to engage in a systematic selection process, as described above.

Our definition of “movement” is intentionally broad and encompasses a wide array of guerrilla, terrorist, religious, and revolutionary groups. This broad definition allowed us to focus on a larger number of case studies, but the varying characteristics of the movements raise a number of concerns. Most importantly, some critics might argue that our all-encompassing approach makes it difficult to draw conclusions that are applicable to cases outside of our sample. Nevertheless, the case study groups exhibit a number of shared characteristics, and, as our analysis shows, our conclusions apply to a variety of cases beyond those included in this study.

**TABLE 1: CASE STUDIES EXAMINED**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Year(s) of Operation</b>	<b>Type of Movement</b>
Action Directe	France	Early 1970s-1986	Revolutionary
Aum Shinrikyo	Japan	1984-Present	Religious
Branch Davidians	United States	1934-Present	Religious
Christian Scientists	United States	1879-Present	Religious
Easter Rebellion	Ireland	1916	Anti-colonial
Huk	Philippines	1946-1956	Revolutionary
Irish Republican Army (IRA)	Ireland	1916-Present	Anti-colonial
Iron Guard (Legion of the Archangel Michael)	Romania	1922-1940	Revolutionary/Religious
Katipunan	Philippines	1894-1896	Anti-colonial
Mahdia	Sudan	1881-Early 1900s	Revolutionary/Religious
Mormon Church	United States	1823-Present	Religious
Muslim Brotherhood	Egypt	1928-Present	Anti-colonial/Religious
Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI)	Indonesia	1920-1957	Revolutionary
Propagandists	Philippines	1881-1893	Anti-colonial
Red Army Faction	Germany	1972-1992	Revolutionary
Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path)	Peru	Early 1960s-1992	Revolutionary
Tupac Amaru II	Peru	1780	Anti-colonial
Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)	Cameroon	1948-1963	Anti-colonial
Zapatistas	Mexico	1910-1920	Revolutionary

### **Charismatic Leadership**

As mentioned above, many scholars have focused on various styles of leadership, but few have examined what happens to movements when a crisis of leadership arises. While this study is more concerned with the latter issue than the former, we outline one major form of leadership—charismatic leadership—to bolster our understanding of the possible outcomes

when crises emerge. While the leaders of a number of our selected groups would not be properly classified as charismatic, all of them faced problems and pressures similar to those of charismatic leaders.

Max Weber defined charisma as a “quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities.” These powers or qualities, according to Weber, “are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader” (Weber 1964, 358). Charismatic leaders gain their authority through qualities uniquely their own, not through the positions they might hold. They are seen as visionaries who demonstrate strong emotional expression; high levels of activity; sensitivity to the current problems of the status quo; involvement in the lives of their followers; superior rhetorical and persuasive skills; and exemplary behavior by making the same sacrifices they demand from their followers (Weber 1964, 358).

Sociologist Lorne Dawson argues that movements headed by charismatic leaders are prone to a high degree of volatility. He asserts that legitimacy based on charisma is inherently unstable, on account of the leader’s inability to deal with four central issues: 1) maintaining the persona of the leader; 2) moderating the effects of the psychological identification of followers with the leader; 3) negotiating the routinization of charisma; and 4) achieving new successes. Dawson argues that in order to remain in a position of power, charismatic leaders must be seen and heard from on a regular basis, through both staged public displays and small appearances before rank and file members of the group. However, the leader must balance this exposure with an aura of mystery and sense of supernatural power, which demands occasional self-segregation. Such isolation has the potential to stem negative feedback from group members. This, in turn, may lead to future decisions being made without the consideration of all necessary information and a subsequent failure and internal fracture over direction (Dawson 2002).

A further requirement for a charismatic leader to remain in power, according to Dawson, is the ability to encourage followers to identify with the leader. Followers of charismatic leaders tend to superimpose all of their own desires, goals, and frustrations onto the leader, making attacks on the leader from both inside and outside of the movement seem like attacks on the followers themselves. Opponents can thereby be demonized, and the psychological attachment of followers to their leaders has the

potential to incite a fanatical response. In addition to fomenting external violence, this psychological attachment can lead to internal disputes and hostility. Because a certain level of identity loss can accompany followers' superimposition of values and goals onto their leader, this process can lead to resentment, aggression, or rebellion. The leader's survival may depend on his or her ability to channel frustration outward toward external threats. Alternatively, repressed resentment can be directed internally, toward dissident members or those threatening the leader's position.

Dawson explains that the potential success of a charismatic movement can also pose problems for a leader. Success can lead to growth of the movement and a need to bureaucratize, which leaders may be inclined to resist. Growth can also make personal contact between the leader and the rank and file much more difficult, which can result in weaker attachments. Furthermore, a leader might feel that the delegation of power to subordinates is unacceptable, fearing that lieutenants may begin to usurp decision-making power and create a following of their own.

An additional problem for a charismatic leader can be the need to constantly achieve new successes, coupled with the leadership problems that such successes can fuel. Successes are vital to the recruitment of new members and the viability of the organization. However, with respect to charismatic movements, new recruits can serve as a double-edged sword, both stabilizing the group by preserving its sense of urgency and zealotry, and destabilizing it by preventing the development of strong and lasting bonds given the high turnover. Furthermore, an inability to recruit because of a lack of new achievements may spur desperate measures to keep current followers active. Such measures might include efforts to perpetuate or deepen the sense of crisis or mission within the group; often this is done through prophesying. While many prophecies fail, most groups nevertheless continue to operate without significant change. It is usually the leader's challenge to neutralize or rationalize the failure quickly and authoritatively (Dawson 2002).

## **ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENTS AFTER A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP**

To examine a leader's impact on a group in the context of a leadership crisis, we first used our case examples to consider how the killing, arrest, or natural death of a leader affected his or her movement. We divided the cases into four broad categories representing different potential outcomes: "radicalized"; "failed/disbanded"; "became less radical"; or "continued with few changes." The results are listed in Table 2. "Radicalization" refers

to a dramatic change in ideology that led the group to engage in more violent behavior; “failed/disbanded” describes instances in which the crisis in leadership caused a catastrophic failure of the group; “became less radical” describes instances in which the group adopted a new, less extreme, ideology; and “continues with few changes” refers to instances in which the group continued with little noticeable change in its doctrine or behavior. It is notable that some groups initially became more radical following a crisis in leadership, but in the long run returned to an approach that closely resembled their original one. In these instances, we focused on the longer-term effect of the crisis, and thus labeled these groups as “continues with few changes.”

## TABLE 2: WHAT HAPPENS TO A GROUP AFTER A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP?

Note: As noted in the methodology section, many of the groups experienced more than one “crisis in leadership.” The numbers in parentheses correspond, respectively, to each of the crises experienced by such groups.

Nature of Crisis	Radicalized	Failed/ disbanded	Less radical	Continued/ few changes	Total
Leader killed		6 PKI (4) Zapatistas Tupac Amaru(2) UPC (2) Iron Guard Katipunan	5 PKI (1) PKI (2) Muslim Brotherhood (2) Mahdia (2) UPC (2)	7 Tupac Amaru (1) Easter Rebellion PKI (3) UPC (1) Branch Davidians Mormons Muslim Brotherhood (3)	18
Leader arrested	1 Propagandists	2 Action Directe (2) Sendero Luminoso(2)	1 Aum Shinnikyo	7 RAF (1,2,3,4) Muslim Brotherhood (1,3) HUK	11
Leader died of natural causes				2 Mahdia (1) Christian Scientists (1)	2
Total	1	8	6	16	31

In short, we generally ignored aberrations in the findings as long as they lasted less than two months. Additionally, if a group suffered more than one crisis, we counted each individual case as a separate incident even though it affected the same movement. This allowed us to include more cases and avoid considering only the final outcome of the movement.



The results in Table 2 show that very few groups have radicalized after a crisis in leadership. Indeed, of the thirty-one cases of leadership crisis that we examined, only one group became more radical. In that case, the radicalization occurred after the arrest of the group's leader. This finding differs from what we expected. Our second hypothesis was that assassinations would most likely lead groups to become more radical. Making a martyr out of a leader, we assumed, would lead to a strengthening of resolve and the subsequent radicalization of the group. Our findings provide no evidence to suggest that our hypothesis is correct. In fact, a group appears much more likely to disband or become less radical after the assassination of a leader. This suggests that the psychological impact of the assassination of a leader is not sufficient to spark a radical transformation in a group's ideology. An additional explanation for our finding is that the assassination of a leader might often be accompanied by widespread attacks on the movement that disrupt much more than the top leadership, precipitating the failure of the group. Another possibility is that the assassination of a leader often greatly disrupts the movement, possibly causing a loss of funding, internecine fighting, and/or the loss of the leader's unifying and charismatic personality.

A related finding is that the assassination of a leader is more likely to cause a group to fail or disband than is an arrest of the leader. This may be because a group is more likely to remain intact if members believe that their leader will eventually return to power. Alternatively, as in the case of Action Directe in France, leaders may be communicating with active members of the group from their prison cells, thereby perpetuating their influence (Dartnell 1995).

Table 2 also reveals that the natural death of a leader normally results in "no change" to the movement. This finding supports our fourth hypothesis. It is an expected result given the early warning typically associated with a death by natural causes. If the leader is getting old or is in bad health, the group is likely to make preparations to define a clear line of succession. Also, the natural and presumably expected death of a leader is unlikely to spark the type of emotional response that would lead a movement to transform itself. However, since we have only two cases of natural death in our sample set, it is difficult to draw general conclusions from these cases.

Looking at the aggregate indicators, our analysis suggests that about half of the movements (slightly more than fifty percent) continue with "business as usual" after a crisis in leadership. At first glance, this suggests that something other than the leader is critical for group cohesion.

Ideology and religion, for example, may be more important than the characteristics of the leader. But the results might also reflect a tendency among leaders to make arrangements in case they might be incapacitated. If a group is highly institutionalized and has clear lines of succession, then the loss of a leader would presumably be less likely to cause major changes in its direction.

The results in Table 2 beg the following question: What was different about the one group that radicalized after the arrest of its leader, considering that ten other groups in the same category did not radicalize? Part of the answer lies in the comparative history of the Propaganda movement and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI), two leftist groups that aimed to overthrow colonial forces. The PKI, which operated in Indonesia from 1920-1957, experienced a series of arrests that eventually led the group to become less radical. The Propaganda movement, which operated in the Philippines from 1881-1893, also experienced the arrest of a leader, but the group subsequently became more radical (Hindley 1964). One of the primary differences between the two groups was that the PKI did not have a spiritual leader. The Propagandists, on the other hand, were originally headed by Jose Rizal, a charismatic and spiritual leader who appealed to a broad base of people on an intimate level. Once Rizal was arrested, members of the Propaganda movement created a group that specifically sought to revive the “spirit of Rizal” under new leadership (Schumacher 1997). This movement, without Rizal’s knowledge, induced many followers to undertake an armed struggle against the occupying forces, something that Rizal and the original Propagandists opposed. This example suggests that the particular characteristics of leadership influence the evolution of a group subsequent to a crisis in leadership. Specifically, it suggests that the arrest of a spiritual leader, like Rizal, contrasted with the arrest of a logistical leader, like those who dominated the PKI, might be more likely to induce a group to become more radical.

## **ANALYSIS OF EMERGENT THEMES**

Our analysis focused next on common group characteristics. We charted the characteristics of each group according to two criteria: 1) whether the group survived a crisis or disbanded, which we term a failure; and 2) the context of the group’s survival or failure.

Our first finding relates to groups that had significant levels of internal dispute prior to a crisis in leadership or a failure to fulfill a stated goal. Out of nine situations where internal disputes existed, seven groups survived the crisis. Of these seven surviving groups, five broke up into compet-

ing factions after the crisis, and all five of these survived the schisms and continued to exist. We surmise from these results that a group that experiences internal disputes is likely to split into factions immediately following a crisis, but will also be more likely to survive it. This type of group may not reunite in its pre-schism form, but its strongest faction or factions will be able to continue the movement in coexistence with competing organizations.

Looking at these cases more closely, it seems that the presence of internal disputes might indicate something important about the nature of a movement. In this study, we define “purging” as either the removal of membership through violent means or isolation from the group, or as an internal control mechanism sweeping out pockets of dissent within the group. Out of the six case study groups that conducted purges, five factionalized when a crisis occurred. (The exception is Aum Shinrikyo in Japan.) The only observed variable accounting for the differences in the ultimate outcomes for these five groups—i.e., whether they survived or failed after the factionalization—is the presence or absence of internal disputes. In three of the five groups—the Mormon Church, the Branch Davidians in the United States, and the Irish Republican Army (IRA)—internal disputes existed along with purges. Each of these three groups survived factionalization. In the other two groups—the Iron Guard in Romania and Sendero Luminoso in Peru—there were strict purges that did not allow for any internal dispute, and factionalization ended in the failure of the group (Castro 1999; Nagy-Talavera 1970). We posit therefore that groups that factionalize but lack experience with dispute resolution are ill-equipped to deal with factionalization successfully. However, groups that have allowed some level of debate and dissent are inherently more adaptable in the face of internal challenges and are thus more likely to emerge from a schism. This type of group may not reunite in its pre-schism form, but its strongest faction or factions will be able to continue the movement in coexistence with competing organizations.

Our second finding deals with the role of institutions in influencing the survival of a group after a major failure, such as a defeat in battle or the failure of a prophecy to come true. The Mahdia in Sudan, the IRA, Sendero Luminoso, and the fifth incarnation of the Red Army Faction (RAF) in Germany all faced such crises in the courses of their existence. However, the first three groups, which had a hierarchical command structure, survived the failure, while the RAF, which was led by a council, ultimately failed (Yonah and Meyers 1982). These findings suggest that organizations with a hierarchical command structure might be better suited to deal with setbacks than groups with a more decentralized command structure.

Our findings also reflect the importance of religious ideology in a group's evolution. Of the eleven cases of a group with a strongly identifiable religious component, only the Iron Guard failed completely and ceased to exist after its leader was arrested and killed. In the Iron Guard's case, the group's discipline waned and membership levels dropped off significantly until the group was incorporated into the state system of government, which brought about its demise. However, the ten other groups managed to weather leadership crises, whether they took the form of death, arrest, or failure. Their membership may have decreased in number and moderated, but a clearly defined membership still existed. This outcome suggests that religious beliefs may be among the strongest sources of cohesive attachment for a group. While certain doctrines may change, the fundamental claims inherent in religion tend to persist in the face of obstacles that may stymie other ideologically-based, but non-religious, movements, such as Marxist and nationalist movements.

Interestingly, the attribution of divine or supernatural power to a leader is not limited to religious or spiritual groups. Sendero Luminoso, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), and the rebellion led by Tupac Amaru II in Peru were not religious movements, but they were all marked by leadership perceived as divine or otherworldly (Castro 1999; Weigert 1996). Religious movements that featured leadership with attributed divine or supernatural qualities include Aum Shinrikyo, the Branch Davidians, the Mormon Church, and the Mahdia. All seven of these groups with leaders that claimed supernatural gifts survived a crisis.

An interesting exception to this finding concerns Sendero Luminoso's second crisis, which we have not included in this seven-group sample. When leader Abimael Guzman Reynoso was arrested, the group factionalized and ultimately failed. However, this case is highly unusual because of the unique circumstances surrounding Guzman after his arrest. While serving his life sentence, Guzman entered into an agreement with the Peruvian authorities, whom he had been dedicated to defeating (Palmer 1992). In exchange for more comfortable prison conditions, Guzman agreed to try to help negotiate an end to the "People's War" Sendero had been waging for over a decade—the very conflict Guzman had exhorted his followers to fight for fifty years, if necessary. His betrayal, in the eyes of his followers, devastated the movement that had been built entirely around his philosophy and charisma. The absolute discrediting of his leadership also negated whatever effect his former divine or supernatural status once had on the group. We did not include this second Sendero crisis in this specific grouping because of these unusual circumstances.

We also found that groups that rely highly or exclusively on a leader's teachings for their doctrine display a universal trend toward survival. Each of the five groups with an extreme dependence on their leader's philosophy—Aum Shinrikyo, the Branch Davidians, the Christian Scientists, the Mormon Church, and Sendero Luminoso under a still credible Guzman—survived their crisis. And four of these groups—all except for the Christian Scientists—exhibited characteristics of both a perceived divine or supernatural leader and a high reliance on the leader's philosophy (Knee 1994). It thus appears likely that groups possessing one or both of these characteristics have a high probability of surviving a leadership crisis or a failure to meet an important goal.

As we expected, when the two groups in our study with clear lines of succession suffered a loss of leadership, they survived with no apparent adverse effects (in fact, one of the groups became stronger). However, we were surprised to find that groups without clear lines of succession did not necessarily suffer failure or disruption when crises of leadership occurred. In short, the lack of a clear line of succession by no means doomed a movement to failure, but a clear line of succession facilitated success.

While most of the movements we studied used violence, only some of these groups organized their memberships into forces resembling formal armies. Groups that used squads or individual members to carry out terror attacks, for example, were not considered approximations of armies in our study, whereas groups that waged land battles against an opposing force for territorial control were considered to resemble armies. Remarkably, of these army-based movements, a loss of leadership led to one of two outcomes situated on either end of the spectrum: the movement either strengthened or failed. The only more moderate outcome was experienced by the Mahdia of Sudan, which were organized as an army and persisted after the death of their leader without a major change in their strength. The Mahdia are a unique case, however, because their leader died of natural causes.

Of the five groups included in this subset of "leadership crisis within an army-based group," the two that became stronger after the crisis—Easter Rebellion of Ireland and Huk of the Philippines—possessed much more formalized and hierarchical armies than the other three—the UPC of Cameroon, the Zapatistas of Mexico, and Tupac Amaru of Peru. Perhaps there is a critical level of organization that a movement must attain before a leadership crisis will prove to be advantageous. It may be that a guerrilla movement or a loosely organized army does not generally have

the levels of discipline, obedience, and institutional strength needed to survive the loss of a leader.

Some groups and movements that were originally moderate or non-violent shifted toward a more radical outlook or plan of action over the years preceding a crisis. However, the shift was temporary in the four case studies where we observed such a phenomenon. Aum Shinrikyo in Japan, the PKI in Indonesia, the Mahdia in Sudan, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt all radicalized but soon reverted back to a state more closely resembling their original positions after suffering a failure or setback.

In the case of Aum Shinrikyo, the sect originally was based on self-purification and the search for enlightenment (Bromley and Melton 2002). However, when its leader Shoko Asahara began to make prophetic statements about an impending cosmic battle between good and evil, a worldview of paranoia, isolation, and violence began to take hold and spread throughout the membership. With the failure of these apocalyptic prophecies, botched sarin gas attacks on the Tokyo subway system, and the subsequent arrests of the leadership and some members, the group no longer actively worked to hasten the apocalypse. Instead, members shifted their focus to their own purification and search for enlightenment.

The PKI's primary goal, after its original formation as a political party, was to fight colonial activity and the powers of the bourgeoisie in Indonesia. However, it suffered from fairly weak leadership and was relatively inactive until more radical leaders took over with the aim of inciting revolution by the local peasantry. Despite these efforts at radicalization and mass uprising, the PKI lacked substantial popular support. After the government killed or imprisoned the radical leaders, communists who followed the original, less radical ideology took charge and the PKI once again participated in a more moderate way in Indonesian politics.

The Mahdia were led by Mohammed Ahmed, a Muslim religious leader. At the time of the movement's founding, Ahmed, like many other Muslim clerics, had a following but did not claim any sort of divine authority. This changed when Ahmed claimed to be the Mahdi of all Islam, stating that anyone who did not bow to his authority was an infidel and subject to destruction. This radical worldview incited his followers to try to take over all of Sudan. After a number of initial successes, including a smooth transfer of authority after Ahmed's death, the group lost an important battle that caused it to reevaluate its aims. The Mahdia decided not to pursue a takeover of Egypt, abandoning outwardly directed aggression and accepting their previous successes as sufficient.

The fourth case is that of the Muslim Brotherhood. At its founding in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood existed as a social service organization,

providing schooling, medical care, and food in place of the Egyptian government. However, as its leader, Hasan al-Banna, grew increasingly frustrated with the nationalistic Wafd government, he began to make preparations for combating the British forces and the Wafd regime (Moen and Gustafson 1992). Following some minor attacks, the Brotherhood assassinated the Prime Minister, which led the government to kill al-Banna in early 1949. The group was decimated and left unable to function. However, the Wafd government resurrected a more benign Brotherhood in 1951 in the hopes of consolidating Wafd political power. Because the reincarnation of a deradicalized Muslim Brotherhood was largely engineered by the Wafd government, this represented a less “natural” deradicalization than was experienced by the other three movements.

Drawing conclusions from these four cases, it appears that the failure of newly adopted radicalism does not guarantee the failure of the movement as long as the group is able to return to its original purpose. It is important to note that after reversion to its original ideology or function, the possibility for reradicalization still exists. For example, the PKI experienced a cycle of radicalization, failure or arrest/death of the leader, and deradicalization on more than one occasion (Van der Kroef 1965).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our analysis, especially regarding the importance of leadership character for group survival, has implications for future scholarship in the fields of leadership and movements. Additionally, it has implications for policy makers examining how groups will behave after a crisis in leadership. We explore these implications along with our initial hypotheses below.

Our first hypothesis—that a group that fails to fulfill a stated goal will suffer internal disputes but ultimately survive under a revised objective—is largely supported by the data. Only one out of four cases of failure to achieve an important goal ended in the failure of the group. Each of the three that survived had a complex, institutionalized, hierarchical group structure; the one that failed had a more decentralized and informal structure. Thus, groups with more centralized, hierarchical structures may be better equipped to deal with operational failure than informally structured groups.

Furthermore, the data confirmed that groups that radicalize as they develop but subsequently face a crisis (either of leadership or of goal failure) tend to continue under a revised objective. Specifically, the movements with these characteristics in our sample tended to revert to a condition more closely resembling their original, relatively moderate state.

Our second hypothesis—that when the leader of a group is killed by

an external force the group will become radicalized—was invalidated by the evidence. In twelve of the eighteen relevant cases, the group continued with little change or actually deradicalized after the killing of a leader; in the other six, the group disbanded. Not a single case emerged where a group radicalized after its leader was killed, suggesting that the psychological impact of a killing does not in and of itself incite a radical transformation in a group's ideology. Historically, it is also common for the killing of a leader to be accompanied by broader attacks on the movement that disturb the rest of the membership, making the group's failure more likely.

Our third hypothesis—that the arrest of the leader will not significantly alter the ideology or operations of the group in the long term—was confirmed by our study. Seven out of eleven movements that lost a leader permanently or temporarily to arrest were able to continue without great change. This confirmation implies that an arrest has a different impact on a group than a killing. As an imprisoned leader is still alive, the group may hold onto the hope that the leader will one day be freed and will return to the movement. Thus the group may be less motivated to generate great change. Some leaders have been able to communicate with their groups from prison, via coded messages or lawyers, thereby providing their group with a feeling of continuity and security that would diminish the likelihood of the group undertaking radical change.

Finally, our fourth hypothesis—that the death of a leader from natural causes will not have much of an impact on the group—was supported by the data. We found only two cases in which the leader died of natural causes, but both of those groups experienced smooth transitions and no major changes of direction after the deaths. Importantly, the deaths of the leaders of both groups were anticipated due to their sickness and old age. While it is difficult to draw general conclusions from a sample of two cases, we speculate that groups that have prior knowledge of an impending natural death would tend to take steps to prepare for the death and construct a clear line of succession.

At the beginning of our study, we presented a broad range of questions that focused on the relationship between leaders and movements. Has our analysis brought us closer to answering these questions? Problems with selection bias, noted in the methodology section, limit our ability to make generalized statements about how a crisis in leadership affects a movement. Indeed, while we feel that we conducted a comprehensive search, it is possible that our research overlooked some groups. Nevertheless, we present



below two generalized conclusions that may, at a minimum, inform future research on leadership and provide some guidance to policymakers.

One important finding is that the way in which a leader is neutralized matters. Our research suggests that a movement will react differently during a crisis of leadership depending on whether the leader is killed, arrested, or dies of natural causes. As noted earlier, movements that witness the killing of a leader appear to be more likely to fail than movements in which the leader is arrested. In addition, movements in which the leader dies of natural causes appear to be the most resilient to a crisis in leadership.

Another noteworthy finding is that the leadership of a group can generally change or be seriously challenged without threatening the group's survival. After a crisis in leadership, twenty-three of the thirty-one groups we examined remained together, while only eight disbanded. This suggests that the loss of a leader may not necessarily cause the group to disband. Put another way, other characteristics of a group may be more important in keeping a group together than the individual characteristics of a leader. As we noted earlier, even groups that tend to rely on the teachings of their leader for guidance are relatively resilient to the loss of that leader. Indeed, in most cases, another individual was capable of filling the role of leadership in a relatively short period of time. One other important point to keep in mind, however, is that while the loss of a leader does not necessarily cause the group to fail, it may lead the group to become less radical.

These conclusions have implications for two cases of contemporary relevance, those of Saddam Hussein and Usama bin Laden. Although Saddam Hussein was not the charismatic leader of a revolutionary or religious movement, he did inspire a loyal militant following that has been fighting the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Although Hussein, prior to his arrest, was in hiding during most of the occupation, and probably had little or no direct operational control over his followers, he remained a popular leader *in absentia* in the eyes of these fighters. It is also likely that, until his arrest, many of his followers were conducting attacks not only with the aim of removing the U.S. presence in Iraq, but also in the hope of returning Hussein to power.

However, if Saddam Hussein somehow becomes discredited while under arrest, this situation could change. As observed earlier, the discrediting of an arrested leader can devastate a group that otherwise contains the characteristics most closely linked with survival. If it was revealed that Saddam Hussein had begun to aid the United States or coalition parties, for example, or if he made a public statement at a future trial expressing

culpability or regret for his past actions, it is possible that such moves would lead those who once fought in his name with hopes of his return to power to become disillusioned and no longer fight with zeal.

The second case concerns the hunt for Usama bin Laden. The al Qaeda leader is the charismatic head of a religiously motivated terrorist movement who commands loyalty both within and outside the organization. As noted above, groups with a religious ideology and those highly dependent on a leader's personal charisma and philosophy have demonstrated an ability to maintain their activity with few or only moderate changes when faced with a crisis of leadership. For policy makers working on eliminating the terrorist threat posed by al Qaeda, this finding seems to suggest that incapacitating bin Laden would have relatively little effect on the group's resolve or ability to conduct attacks. According to our findings, the death of the leader should have a greater effect on the organization than arrest, but the ideological fervor of al Qaeda and its members' attachment to bin Laden might compensate for this tendency and translate into a continuation of the group's vitality. Furthermore, even if bin Laden has not designated a successor to head the organization if he is removed, our findings provide little evidence that such a situation would lead to the group's demise. This suggests that those fighting the war on terror should not look only to the killing or arrest of bin Laden, but that they should continue to devote resources to a widespread dismantling of the organizational structure and financial apparatus of international terrorist groups, as well as to combating the causes that motivate individuals to join such movements in the first place.

Findings from our study related to organizational structure and survivability may also provide some guidance to policy makers working to dismantle al Qaeda. Al Qaeda's structure, which was once rather organized and hierarchical, seems to be becoming more diffuse. As counter-terrorist efforts continue to dismantle lines of communication, it is likely that top al Qaeda leaders will be less able to maintain an overarching authority that can command and control the entire network. As the al Qaeda network moves further away from the centralized structure that once characterized it, it may become increasingly susceptible to the loss of Usama bin Laden.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We thank Robert Axelrod for his advice and guidance during the completion of this project. Of course, any mistakes are our own.

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