

Foreword by Professor Rod Dubrow-Marshall

Once in a while, only occasionally in a generation perhaps, a writer will come along with new insights and ways to explain a common phenomenon and it just takes your breath away! You wonder – why didn't I think about it like this before? Of all the many volumes and tens of thousands of words written on destructive cults and the growth of research internationally on this subject (as shown by the International Journal of Cultic Studies), there are very few new theories or frameworks that have the potential to reframe our entire understanding of the cult phenomenon. You are about to read a potential paradigm shift and, whether as a layperson or an academician, you need to set aside your preconceptions and hold on for the ride – it will definitely be worth it!

This book, *Destructive and Terrorist Cults: A New Kind of Slavery*, is the second by Masoud Banisadr, following *Masoud - Memoirs of an Iranian Rebel*, his autobiographical account of his time in MeK (Mojahedin-e-Khalegh). His second book is a perceptive and analytical portrayal of how destructive cults manipulate emotions and beliefs and bind their followers as slaves to the cult leader.

Destructive and Terrorist Cults: A New Kind of Slavery clearly defines and describes the contemporary array of destructive and harmful cults in society and the range of influence practices that are used to recruit and then inculcate members through 'mind control' and then 'brainwashing' techniques. Applying a new and unique mathematical model that demonstrates the close relationship between belief and emotion, a meta-analysis of these techniques is presented, which transcends the historic debates over agency and freedom of belief. Instead, this new model explains the relationship between emotions, beliefs and the capacity of individuals to become psychologically, emotionally and socially entrapped in ideological webs led by charismatic and deceitful leaders.

Importantly, this analysis resonates with other critical new insights into the process of self-categorization and 'totalistic identity' in cults (Dubrow-Marshall, 2010) and demonstrates how a complete understanding of cultic identity and its psychological bondage needs to draw on philosophical and biological conceptions and understandings of the self, the mind and the brain. Using MeK as a unique and rich source of idiographic data, the book vividly demonstrates how the process of psychological indoctrination in destructive cults creates a new form of slavery, thereby not only redefining historical definitions of bondage but also offering significant advances in our understandings of undue influence building on Lifton's (1951) theory of 'Thought Reform' and social psychological conceptions of social identity and emotional commitment (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). At its core, *Destructive and Terrorist Cults: A New Kind of Slavery* provides a unique insight into the damaging environments of modern extremist groups, an analysis of how members become slaves to the ideological cause, but critically how members can escape this bondage, in part aided by the greater knowledge that analytical accounts like this and new research in the cultic studies field can bring to victims, survivors and families. A compelling yet optimistic account of ideological entrapment, Banisadr's book sets out a prescient and persuasive new theoretical framework that advances our understanding of destructive cults and how they can be avoided and ultimately transcended. It takes the field of cultic studies forward significantly and offers many new and exciting challenges for researchers to further unravel the mechanisms of destructive cult abuse and practical insights into how the perpetrators of this abuse and destruction can be ultimately defeated.

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