

**SURVIVAL BY SUICIDE: Motivation of Suicide Operations in the Middle
East**

By

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Suicide attacks are a prevalent topic in modern international media. The devastation in the United States caused by suicide tactics on September 11, 2001 encouraged the development of counter-terrorism policies that could provide effective security and reduce the worldwide sense of vulnerability. The necessity for international collaboration on research regarding terrorism has reached a new level of importance. The application of social and psychological research and theory has led to a proliferation of theories regarding the motivating factors behind suicide operations. Previous research concluded that suicide bombers were Islamic fundamentalists that were poor, uneducated, and detached from reality. (Blackwell, 2003) More recent research by Pape (2005) has resulted in the conclusion that modern perpetrators of suicide terrorism attacks are middle-class, are more educated than those in their surrounding community, and are free from psychological disorders. Further, it has been found that groups that implement suicide operations implement attacks primarily on the basis of foreign occupation rather than religious ideology. (Pape, 2005) Foreign policy needs to place an emphasis on the target cultures' ideals in order to execute a more effective solution to the prevalence of suicide terrorism.

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Survival by Suicide

Suicide terrorism has been a rising trend since the 1980's around the world (Pape, 2005). Many of these attacks have been perpetrated by Muslim terrorist organizations claiming these actions are being committed in the name of their faith or political agenda. These outward claims have caught the eye of the media, creating hysteria and wide spread panic. Today countries are scrambling to create foreign and domestic policies that will put an end to terrorism and suicide bombing, especially in the Middle East.

Unfortunately the widespread presumption that suicide terrorism is uniquely isolated within Islamic fundamentalism is misleading and has encouraged foreign policies that may hinder relationships within the international community and ultimately bring harm to many innocent people by exacerbating violent tactics. There is a clear need to understand what drives and motivates the organizations that implement suicide operations. Further, we must come to a deeper understanding of the individuals that are capable of carrying out such an extreme act so that preventative efforts can be an effective solution.

In a collection of suicide operations that took place throughout the world between 1980 and 2003, it was found that there were 315 that were successful, meaning the perpetrator took their own life while attempting harm towards others (Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism, 2010). Suicide operations that were authorized by national government were removed from the data set. Surprisingly the majority of these suicide attacks were not carried out by Islamic fundamentalist organizations The Tamil Tigers of Ealam, Sri Lanka are the leading instigators of

suicide bombings. The group has a Marxist-Leninist political agenda whose members come from Hindu families but adamantly oppose all forms of religion (Pape, 2005). According to the Central Intelligence Agency's world fact book (2010) the United States of America is the number one consumer of petroleum products creating a massive demand for crude oil. Throughout our history this demand has largely been fulfilled by several Middle Eastern countries. To ensure continued collaboration with these countries it is important that tension is kept to a minimum. Suicide attacks in the Middle East toward coalition troops and the attacks of September 11, 2001 have the ability to negatively affect this relationship. It is for this reason that my research will focus on suicide attacks that are tied to Islam and/or the Middle East.

When analyzing these attacks it was found that nearly all of the suicide operations have one thing in common: a specific strategic goal to compel modern democracies to withdraw military occupations from areas that local organizations consider to be rightly theirs. Contrary to popular belief, religion is not usually the main motivating factor for the specific operations. Religion is a secondary factor, usually reserved as a strategic tool to push forth the broader strategic objective and as a recruiting tool to find new members (Triandis, 2009).

Pape (2005) found three major patterns within international suicide operations that took place between 1980 and 2003. First, nearly all of the suicide attacks were implemented by a larger organization and not random acts of terrorism by individuals. The perpetrators used these attacks as a strategic move towards their organization's political agenda.

Second, democratic states are the largest and most vulnerable target of suicide operations. The majority of all the successful suicide attacks in the past two decades have been against the

United States, Israel, India, France, Russia, Sri Lanka, and Turkey. All of these countries were democracies during the time of the attack.

Third, suicide terrorist operations are strategically implemented as part of a broader political/ religious objective. Those responsible for such campaigns have been terrorist groups trying to establish or maintain political self-determination and urging western democratic forces to withdraw from the territory. Al-Qaeda provides a good example of this pattern. Osama bin Laden's main objective is the expulsion of all American and Western forces and the abolishment of Western influences in the Persian Gulf (Cottam et al., 2004). Osama bin Laden states,

For over seven years the United States has been occupying the lands of Islam in the holiest of places, The Arabian Peninsula, plundering its riches, distancing its rulers, humiliating its people, terrorizing its neighbors, and turning its bases in the Peninsula into a spearhead through which to fight the neighboring Muslim peoples... We... call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths, and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's US troops and the devil's supporters allying with them, and to displace those who are behind them so that they may learn a lesson. The ruling to kill Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it, in order to liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque and the holy mosque [Mecca] from their grip, and in order for their armies to move out of all of the lands of Islam, defeated and unable to threaten any Muslim. (December 23, 1998, quoted in Frontline)

Understanding these acts has been of paramount importance to the United States since September 11, 2001. In one day 19 Al- Qaeda hijackers were able to kill nearly 3,000 people. For many, the most difficult part of understanding these attacks was the willingness of 19 men to take their own lives in order to accomplish their goal. To most people this is unnatural and required researchers to develop unique approaches.

In dissecting these attacks it is most important to understand that the hijackers' suicide was essential to complete such a large scale operation. It would be nearly impossible for a plane

to be flown into a highly populated building without physically being guided by an individual. Second, suicide operations create an element of surprise that allow the hijackers to exploit counter-terrorism measures already in place. Third, these horrific acts victimize the international community, giving the world a sense of complete vulnerability. This also poses a serious concern for government; how are we to punish individuals who are willing to kill themselves? Without effective consequences, there would be no reason for these attackers to hesitate in continuing their attacks.

According to the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (2010), beginning in the 1980's terrorist organizations have waged 18 separate suicide bombing campaigns that are characterized by internationally recognized terrorist groups strategically targeting another group. These groups have become increasingly reliant on suicide attacks to achieve major political goals. According to Pape (2005), these groups include but are not limited to: Hezbollah in an attempt to drive out United States, French, and Israeli forces from Lebanese territory. Several Palestinian groups in an attempt to have Israel relinquish their control of the West Bank and Gaza. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in an effort to compel the Sri Lankan government to accept an independent Tamil homeland. Al-Qaeda pressuring the withdrawal of the United States' presence in the Persian Gulf.

Suicide operations have become increasingly popular in the Middle East against western forces. Suicide terrorism has also become the most deadly form of terrorism in the world. Data collected by the Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (2010) suicide attacks account for only 3 percent of all incidents of global terrorism between 1980 and 2003, but these attacks were responsible for 48 percent of all terrorist related fatalities. This makes the average suicide

bombing attack twelve times more deadly than any other form of terrorism (figures from September 11, 2001 not included). For figures regarding Palestinian Suicide operations between 2000-2005 see figure 1 and table 1. When presented with these facts it is clear that something must be done to deter the implementation of terrorist suicide operations. In addition to the current seek and destroy missions of current terrorist organizations, preventative measure must be created. To create preventative measures the motivating factors behind suicide operations must be determined.

Modern Suicide Terrorism

First, a distinction must be made between suicide terrorism and non-suicide terrorism operations. Besides the obvious difference in implementation, non-suicide terrorism is generally much less defined. Non-suicide terrorism occurs under a wide variety of circumstances and for a much wider array of goals. Force used by non-suicide operations varies and there is usually no distinct pattern to such acts. Crenshaw (2000) captures the difficulties that impede concrete definitions of terrorism:

The problem of defining terrorism has hindered analysis since the inception of studies of terrorism in the early 1970's. One set of problems is due to the fact that the concept of terrorism is deeply contested. The use of the term is often polemical and rhetorical. It can be a pejorative label, meant to condemn an opponent's cause as illegitimate rather than describe behavior. Moreover, even if the term is used objectively as an analytical tool it is still difficult to arrive at a satisfactory definition that distinguishes terrorism from other violent phenomena. In principle, terrorism is deliberate and systematic violence performed by small numbers of people, whereas communal violence is spontaneous, sporadic, and requires mass participation. The purpose of terrorism is to intimidate a watching popular audience by harming only a few, whereas genocide is the elimination of entire communities. Terrorism is meant to hurt, not destroy. Terrorism is preeminently political and symbolic, whereas guerilla warfare is a military activity. Repressive "terror" from above is the action of those in power, whereas

terrorism is a clandestine resistance to authority. Yet in practice, events cannot always be categorized (p. 409).

Crenshaw (2000) further believes that the wide-ranging tactics that can be used by terrorists complicates matters even worse. Methods range from kidnappings and hostage taking to assassinations. The goals and motivations behind terrorism are almost endless complicating terrorist group classification.

Suicide terrorism, on the other hand is marked by extensive planning prior to implementation. This is especially true of the attacks that have been carried out in the Middle East. Hezbollah has a well organized structure of leadership that appoints members to different tasks helping to ensure productivity and efficiency of operations. (Jones, 2009) Terrorist organizations that implement suicide operations have been found to share several features. Pape (2005), found that these groups are usually weaker than their opponents and have less resources available to them; their political views are usually widely accepted by the community that surrounds them; members within the organization have a close-knit membership and sense of loyalty to their leaders; and they have a well structured system of rituals that can act as symbols of one's devotion to the cause. Many of these groups often receive support in the form of money and resources from other communities or Governments that believe in the organization's agenda. Cottam et al.(2004) reports that the membership of Al-Qaeda has been shown to be extremely diverse, containing members from the many Middle Eastern countries as well as individuals from European countries and even as far away as the Philippines. These outside supporters often provide this support covertly and when asked, deny any connection to the group. Suicide terrorism also tends to be more lethal than other forms of terrorism. This is attributed to the

attackers' only purpose in the operation; to use their own death in the most efficient way that will provide the maximum amount of death and destruction to their target.

Why Use Suicide Terrorism?

Terrorism is used by non-government organizations to intimidate and inflict fear into their enemies. Schmid, and Jongman, (2008) believe that there are two main purposes of terrorism: to gain supporters for the cause and to manipulate the opposition. They also believe that terrorism can take on many forms and be used for a variety of reasons: demonstrative, destructive, and suicide.

“Demonstrative” terrorist operations are attacks that can be used as a form of publicity for the organization. These acts are well planned and precise. Often these operations are announced to the public in advance so that public attention is shed on the target audience. Hostage taking and airplane hijacking fall into this category. The goal is to receive attention and sympathy for their political agenda. Violence is kept to a minimum so that there is a smaller chance of losing sympathy towards their cause. These operations also are used as recruiting tools to attract individuals that are attracted to the organizations beliefs and practices.

“Destructive terrorism” is more violent than “Demonstrative terrorism.” These operations are risky for a terrorist organization because they tend to divide communities into “for or against” attitudes towards the cause. These attacks are more aggressive with the objective being

maximum destructive impact. Palestinian organizations that implement these types of operations towards Israel are likely to lose sympathy from the Jewish community but still maintain support within the Muslim community.

“Suicide terrorism” operations are by far the most extreme and violent forms of terrorism. These missions have much higher rates of fatalities and destruction than other forms of terrorism. These not only include suicide bombing operations in which the attacker blows himself or herself up but any operation in which the perpetrator engages with the mindset that they will continue fighting until they are killed. These operations can be used for various reasons and forms of publicity but generally the main goal is destruction. Attacks are highly effective at creating a sense of vulnerability in the target community. However, these attacks receive the least amount of support from outsiders and often lead to violent counter attacks that can alienate supportive communities.

A Brief History of Suicide bombing in the Middle East

History is full of suicide operations, in which people gave their lives for their cause, but when did the modern suicide operations come about and where did they start? Groups that strategically placed explosive devices on themselves or in vehicles and then used themselves to detonate such devices were practically unheard of prior to the 1980's. Prior instances of suicide operations were much less common and generally isolated to the Japanese kamikaze pilots of World War II, but even these are difficult to label as acts of terrorism since they were implemented by a National government (Pape, 2005). Schweitzer (2000) believes that modern suicide operations are designed to cause devastating levels of destruction, through which it creates a profound level of fear and anxiety within a target audience. Its main goal is to produce

a negative psychological effect on an entire population, rather than just the individuals that were directly involved with the attack. Schweitzer (2000) believes these operations began in Lebanon during the beginning of the 1980's.

October 23, 1983 marked the beginning of successful and strategic implementation of suicide bombing operations. On this day, Hezbollah perpetrated a suicide car bombing against a United States Marine Barrack that claimed the lives of 241 Marines. Almost immediately after the first attack there was a second suicide bombing that killed 58 French soldiers. The immense success of these attacks led Hezbollah to continue a total of 36 suicide bombing attacks against the United States, France, and Israel between 1983 and 1986.

The popularity of these attacks began to spread to other terrorist organizations. In 1994, The Muslim groups Hamas and the Islamic Jihad began to strategically use suicide bombing operations against Israeli troops as well as civilian targets. Between 1994 and 1997, Hamas carried out 18 separate suicide bombing attacks against Israel.

In 1995 Al-Qaeda began implementing suicide attacks against United States forces that were occupying the Persian Gulf. September 11, 2001 marked the most destructive suicide attack in history. 19 members of Al-Qaeda were able to hijack four commercial airplanes and navigate them into the Twin towers in New York and the pentagon in Virginia. Al-Qaeda has had so much success with these attacks that they have not stopped the use of suicide operations to this day (Chicago Project of Security and Terrorism database, 2010).

In 2003 the United States began “operation Iraqi Freedom.” The goal was to remove Saddam Hussein from power and dissolve his Ba’ath party Government. It did not take long before Iraqi insurgents began using suicide bombings against coalition troops.

The Notion of “Jihad”

Directly translated the word jihad means “struggle.” It is a popular concept in all sects of Islam and is mentioned numerous times within the Quran. Most religious scholars attribute this “struggle” to mean that it is a Muslim’s duty to constantly strive towards a more pure faith. In the West, the word Jihad is often misunderstood to mean “holy war.” There is some truth to both of these ideas of jihad.

In the Islamic faith the world is considered to be divided into two very different domains. One of these domains is where Muslim rulers have established a system of laws based on the teachings that were revealed to the Prophet Muhammed by Allah. This domain is referred to as the “realm of peace.” Within this realm Muslims are constantly engaged in an internal jihad against their own selfishness, laziness, and other sinful behavior. The second domain, which encompasses everything outside of the “realm of peace”, is designated as the “realm of war.” This realm is where there is Islamic structure to society. In the “realm of war” it becomes a Muslims duty to wage an external jihad by any means necessary to spread the practices and laws stated in the Quran. After the “realm of war” has been completely destroyed all of earth will become the “realm of peace” and the external notion of jihad will no longer be necessary (Jones, 2008).

The Islamic idea of the world being divided into two realms may motivate and encourage radical actions such as suicide bombing but this is not unique to Islam. Many religions throughout history with differing ideologies have helped facilitate extremist groups. This has nothing to do with the religion itself; rather religion is used to further facilitate “for us or against us” attitudes that eventually lead to the phenomenon known as groupthink. According to Janis (1972), groupthink is an irrational style of thinking within a group that can lead to poor decision making such as suicide operations. Groupthink is likely to occur in situations that are high in stress and threat, making the Israeli-Palestinian conflict an ideal breeding ground for the concept. Conflict over land rights and occupations creates stressful situations that develop a need for group cohesion to find a way to eliminate the perceived threat. Cohesion within these groups leads members to have a minimal amount of disagreement in decision making. Strong sanctions are sometimes made against individuals who criticize any decision that is made by someone holding a higher position. Extremist groups are also often isolated from outside influence that could influence major decision making. Isolation also helps in making members more subservient to the group. Members eventually become willing to sacrifice themselves if they believe it is for the greater good of the group and their agenda.

Psychology of Terrorism

According to Blackwell (2003) “suicide attacks present a conundrum to neo-Darwinian thinking, which sees human behavior as a set of selected responses to long standing evolutionary problems.” Previous research conducted generally concluded that these attacks were largely motivated by poverty, maniacs, and individuals that lacked education. However, recently researchers disagree and have come to the conclusion that the majority of perpetrators of suicide

operations are not “poor, psychopathological, or uneducated.” In fact Jones (2009) concludes that one of the most amazing thing about terrorist acts is that they often committed by very ordinary people. The vast majority of studies on the large-scale genocidal acts committed by the Nazis during World War II also concluded that there was no distinct psychopathology that could be attributed to why people were committing such heinous acts. The overall conclusion was that the ring leaders of the Third Reich were very ordinary people conducting work in an extraordinarily evil system. After reviewing all of the psychological work done on the perpetrators of the Holocaust, James Waller (2002) concluded that all the evidence supports “the reality of the propensity of ordinary people to commit extraordinary evil.” Blackwell (2003) believes that evolutionary theory also questions why individuals are willing to pay such high costs when the benefits are ultimately public goods.

During the 1960’s Stanley Milgram conducted a series of experiments into the obedience of authority. In his experiment Milgram took 40 men into a university laboratory and told them that they were to deliver increasing levels of electric shock to an individual in the next room if the person in the next room made an error in a word test. The subject, who was to receive the shock, was an actor who was in on the experiment and did not actually receive the electrical shocks. As the experiment went on, the participant was to increase the intensity of the shock with each error, as this happened the actor in the separate room would cry out in pain. The study found that about 2/3rds of the participants in the study would listen to the request of the researcher regardless of how it was affecting the individual in the room. Milgram concluded that a majority of people are willing to become obedient to authority figures (Milgram, 1974). Unfortunately this alone does not fully explain terrorist behaviors, especially those of suicide bombers.

In an experiment conducted by Philip Zimbardo at Stanford University, Zimbardo found that authority can sometimes facilitate sadistic behaviors. Zimbardo recruited a group of college undergraduates and assigned them into two separate groups. One group was to act as if they were prisoners and the other group was to act as if they were prison guards in a mock prison that had been set up. By the third day Zimbardo found that many of the participants that had been randomly assigned as prison guards became increasingly cruel and sadistic towards the prisoner group. The aggressive behavior escalated to such an extent that the experiment was terminated by day 6. The experiment demonstrated that it is in fact very easy to elicit cruel and sadistic behavior towards other people, even when the perpetrators do not show any abnormal psychological traits and have not been socialized to elicit violent behaviors (Zimbardo et al, 1999).

Although both of these experiments can be used in further understanding individual aspects in terrorism, they do not exactly show the entire cause of this phenomenon. The need for a multidimensional model becomes apparent due to the lack of ability to isolate terrorism in only one dimension. It is much more likely that terrorist tendencies are created by an interaction between strategic, social, and individual dimensions,

Waller (2002) created a social-psychological model that incorporates several different factors into a comprehensive determinate of terrorism amongst ordinary individuals. In this model, Waller (2002) suggests that there are four factors that must be measured. The first two factors are “dispositional” and are believed to reveal certain individualistic characteristics of the perpetrators themselves. The first of the “dispositional” factors is referred to as the “ancestral shadow.” This factor, largely based on evolutionary psychology, is used to determine certain

behaviors that have become dominant through “natural selection.” Several naturally occurring behaviors such as the drive towards social dominance and ethnocentrism can be easily manipulated in order to commit extreme acts. Waller (2002) believes that it is these behaviors that are often the target of various religions and institutions that can create racist views and “us versus them” thinking that can contribute to terrorism.

The second “dispositional” factor involves the ways in which our inherited traits can be shaped by culture to make individuals more easily susceptible to commit terrorist acts. Here again religious and cultural belief systems can easily generate an external locus of control by allowing individuals that are seen as dominant and hold positions of power to more easily manipulate recruits they believe are susceptible to committing suicide operations. Under this factor, religious and cultural beliefs can be used to justify violent acts towards others, especially when the target group is used as the scapegoat by another. If ethnocentric ideals are reinforced in conjunction with the scape-goating of outsiders and their cultures and ideologies it can be easy to facilitate moral disengagement from physical acts of violence.

Waller’s (2002) third factor is considered “situational,” and measures the “cruelty of a culture.” If the first two factors interact correctly, then an individual may be susceptible to suicide operations. If these individuals are put into a violent culture, they will begin to be habituated to acts of violence. This is done through a series of escalating commitments to the culture itself. These commitments, in turn, provide a numbing of the individual conscience and assimilation into a group, providing a false sense of anonymity and making them vulnerable to peer pressure. The result of this action is what Waller (2002) refers to as the “merger of role and person,” and is very similar to the findings of the Stanford prison experiments (Zimbardo et al.,

1999). The idea of a group being able to recruit and transform individuals into perpetrators of terrorism is a popular conclusion of many psychological studies (Cottam et al., 2004). However, the idea that through brainwashing techniques anybody can be turned into a terrorist is unfortunately false. Not everyone who belongs to a terrorist organization takes part in terrorist acts, just as not everyone in the Milgram (1974) study continued to shock the actor.

The fourth factor of Waller's (2002) model is what is psychologically accomplished in the mind of the would-be attacker. It is generally accepted that before a terrorist act is taken place the perpetrator has been led to dehumanize the victims and cannot empathize with them. This is often accomplished by attaching blame for current situations on the target so that a perpetrator believes that the target populations deserve what they are going to get. As Waller (2002) points out here, dehumanization of the victim is absolutely essential in perpetrating an act of terrorism. This fourth factor is similar to the theory of moral disengagement (Bandura, 1998;2004).

The psychologist Albert Bandura (1998, 2004) describes moral disengagement as the mechanism behind an individual's ability to become desensitized to the heinousness of their actions. Moral disengagement also assumes that the majority of people who carry out acts of terrorism are themselves fairly ordinary, absent of any serious psychological deficiencies. Bandura (1998, 2004) believes that the average person has inhibitions towards the idea of killing other individuals if they do not directly present a threat to their well being. So, in order to commit these acts the individual must disengage from these inhibitions. The specific mechanisms used for disengagement of empathy and compassion towards others are the "redefinition of harmful conduct as morally justified," "minimizing the harm done," and

“dehumanizing the victims and blaming them for the harm done to them” (Bandura, 1998).

Bandura believes that people will need a moral justification before they are able to engage in reprehensible actions, such as murder. He further argues that “the conversion of socialized people into dedicated fighters is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather it is accomplished by cognitively redefining the morality of killing” (Bandura, 2004). He also points out that religious institutions have a long history of providing moral justification of mass bloodshed. Hafez (2006) further agrees with Bandura (2004) on this point when it is applied to his study of Palestinian suicide bombers. He States:

Discursive practices that transform accepted religious ethics and symbols into vehicles for mobilizing violent militants are necessary for individual moral disengagement. Self-regulatory mechanisms that inhibit people from killing and maiming others must be overcome before one can engage in extreme violence. Moral disengagement is the process by which these cognitive codes are deactivated by transforming immoral conduct into ethical imperatives. Religious reframing can enable moral disengagement by imbuing acts of extreme violence with meaning, purpose, and morality. It transforms cruel terror into sacred missions in the minds of terrorists (Hafez, 2006: p.169).

Displacing the moral dilemma of killing is just one step on the way of transforming normal people into terrorists but it has the potential to be extremely effective. Bandura (2004) believed that the shaping or transformation of moral disengagement takes place gradually. Groups may or may not start out with intentions of becoming increasingly violent, and may or may not have a leader that directs their progress, but due to many variables groups may start to evolve in that direction.

Hafez (2004) believes that terrorism should not be looked at in terms of personality but should be viewed as an effective tactic for weaker groups that are facing more advanced military powers. When measured this way suicide operations become the smartest and most advanced

weapon in a terrorist group's arsenal. Suicide bombing missions are extremely effective due to their high level of accuracy, destruction and their ability to create fear for a long time following the attack. Suicide bombing operations in Iraq against coalition troops have been linked to the post-traumatic stress disorder epidemic that occurred among U.S. troops from 2003- to the present (NPR, 2005).

Another approach to terrorist activities was put forth by Weinberg & Eubank (1994). They believed terrorist activity was expressed differently depending if it took place in a "collectivist" culture or an "individualistic" culture. According to their theory a larger emphasis is placed on "in-groups" versus "out-groups" in collectivist cultures, such as the Middle East. When an individual is in a collectivist culture their identity is derived from the social structure of their society. This makes a distinct relationship between their individual well-being and that of the group. Individualistic cultures place value on personal goals that reflect on the individual accomplishments and identity. Therefore Weinberg and Eubank (1994) conclude that those living in collectivist cultures are much more likely to take part in terrorist organizations than those living in individualistic societies. According to this theory, the prevalence of suicide terrorism in the Middle East can be attributed to the close knit society that feels threatened by occupation forcing members of society to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. If this theory is true then any religion that is prevalent in a society and not only Islam could be a determining factor in terrorist operations.

Triandis (2009) agrees with most scholars that the evaluation of terrorism is complex and has many variables that need to be taken into account. He believes that religion has a role in modern terrorism but is not the most influential factor. Religion is more likely to be used as a

recruitment tool by claiming things such as, “Join us to help your Muslim brothers who are being attacked by the Americans.” (pp.147) Religion also assists in convincing future perpetrators that they are doing “God’s work” or “they will destroy the enemies of God.” (pp. 147) Suicide terrorism recruits are told by leaders within their group that their God will be pleased with their sacrifice and reward them upon completion. Even when religion plays a major role in the culture of a group, ultimately it is still political agendas that drive suicide operations.

Motivation of Suicide Bombers

Finding the motivating factors behind such an extreme act as suicide bombing can be very problematic. Generally perpetrators of such actions keep their plans secret, except to those in their organizations that must know. Also individuals who pursue the act of suicide bombing feel that their actions speak louder than words requiring no further explanation or justification. Bombers are usually extremely passionate people who feel that giving their life for a cause is a perfectly sane act. According to Sprinzak (2000):

Recruiters will often exploit religious beliefs when indoctrinating would-be bombers, using their subjects’ faith in a reward in paradise to strengthen and solidify preexisting sacrificial motives. But other powerful motives reinforce tendencies toward martyrdom including patriotism, hatred of the enemy, and a profound sense of victimization (p. 69).

Often the perpetrators are not forced to participate in an act of suicide bombing, but are recruited by leaders of organizations because they appear to have a predisposition to be willing to do so (Cottam et al., 2004).

Al- Qaeda provides a good example of a terrorist organization that is highly organized and provides mass cross-cultural appeal. Al- Qaeda has recruited individuals from all over the world. Many come from Middle Eastern countries but many come from other western nations and are converted to Islam before joining. One of the leaders of Al-Qaeda is the infamous Osama bin Laden. The organization was founded in Afghanistan during the 1980's to provide resistance to the Soviet occupation. After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan came to an end, Al-Qaeda evolved from a freedom fighting organization to an internationally recognized terrorist organization (Jones, 2008). It would be easy to infer that years of conflict with communist forces that favored a secular state led to a strong desire to cleanse Islamic lands of non-Muslims, hatred for those they feel do not support Islamic ideals, and a strong sense of victimization from world super-powers. Unsurprisingly the feelings that have been cultured by Al-Qaeda provide the perfect recipe for suicide bombing operations.

The psychology of any political extremist group or organization is incredibly complex but they also share many similar patterns regardless of the specific religion. Many times the leader of extremist organizations such as Al-Qaeda are people who have watched their own governments fail them in wars, fail to provide the masses with basic human needs, and fail to provide an environment for ordinary people to be represented. If these feelings are added to a personal sense of failure it is easy to see how an individual's level of frustration, cynicism, and feelings of victimization could escalate to extreme proportions (Cottam et al., 2004). These feelings are often turned towards a target an individual believes is responsible for their failures. Previous research has already shown us that attribution of blame to an "out-group" is often created intentionally by the organization because it has shown to be effective.

Joining extremist groups helps these people satisfy survival needs as well as providing a welcoming environment that shares the same feelings. These organizations also provide members with an agenda of what is wrong and how the problem should be fixed. These groups are usually highly exclusive and close knit with a hierarchical organization of members, similar to the military. Strict training regiments are established, with strict punishments for those who do not fully commit to the cause, especially those who defect. Group members who are seen as being highly dedicated to the cause often receive the most admiration and respect from group leaders.

The perceived enemies of extremist groups are usually dehumanized and depersonalized and considered the root of all of their problems. Often this is done by associating the enemy with animals or inanimate objects. Often members have not come into direct contact with the enemy (Such as Al-Qaeda members who target the United States) but are shown propaganda that can falsely portray the enemy. If the members have come into contact with the enemy it was not in a positive manner and only strengthened their feelings on the subject (Cottam et al., 2004).

Suicide Bombing and Society

It is a common misconception that suicide bombers are often out of touch with society and that terrorist organizations that use suicide bombing as a tactic are not favored by the community that surrounds them. In reality suicide bombing is heavily influenced by social approval. An individual who is willing to take their own life in an act they believe is for the greater good, is far more likely to follow through with that act if society actually honors and supports it. Generally most suicide bombers justify their action by claim of altruistic motives.

The thought process is that the small sacrifice of their life and the deaths surrounding their actions is for the greater good (Sprinzak, 2000).

Terrorist organizations are bound to their community, usually by political motives, in unstable areas of the world. Suicide bombing is generally just a small cog in terrorist organizations activities within their respective communities. Members of these organizations usually are heavily involved in the community and have active roles in religious institutions, schools, and ceremonies. This activity helps strengthen the bonds of terrorist organizations and the public surrounding them to a level that supporters are simply not willing to turn against them over actions that they claim were committed for the benefit of the people. This helps create individuals who are willing to sacrifice themselves for their community more confident that they will be considered a martyr (Jones, 2008).

Hezbollah is a great example of how a terrorist organization that supports suicide bombing can be held in high regard by a community. Hezbollah, located in Lebanon, is an organization that devotes a large amount of time and resources to its Shia Islamic community. It was organized to defend against Israeli and Western troop occupation in Lebanon. In the 1980's they began to build hospitals, schools, and provide no interest loans to Shia families that were in need and began to receive massive support by the Lebanese community. (Pape, 2005) Hezbollah members think of themselves as altruistic individuals devoted to the welfare of the community rather than radical international terrorists.

According to Pape (2005), by the late 1980's 67% of Southern Lebanese believed that Hezbollah was a more legitimate organization than the official Lebanese Government. With this massive amount of local support, Hezbollah started a campaign in cooperation with other Shia

leaders that encouraged suicide operations against Western targets. Leaders traveled and gave hundreds of speeches that explained the need for self-martyrdom operations if they wanted the liberation of the Shia homeland to occur. The words of community leaders were spun in a way that redefined suicide and murder into glorious concepts of martyrdom and self defense. Leaders took care to circumvent the suicide stigmas because it is not allowed in the Islamic faith. They focused on what they thought was unjustified occupation of their homeland and that out of desperation drastic measures needed to be taken to secure a place for their people. Hezbollah's Spiritual leader Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Falallah states:

The self-martyring operation is not permitted unless it can convulse the enemy. The believer cannot blow himself up unless the results will equal or exceed the loss of the believer's soul. Self-martyring operations are not fatal accidents but legal obligations governed by rules (Interview, Fall, 1985)

In order for a Muslim to accept the taking of one's own life they would have to believe that the end outcome would be greater than the individual life itself. Furthermore, Pape (2005) states that Hezbollah's campaign to promote suicide bombing relied on three central themes: response to occupation, conventional inferiority mandates self-sacrifice, and the enemy is vulnerable to coercive pressure.

Response to Occupation: the first and most important theme is that the main purpose of martyrdom operations and armed conflict is to end the unwelcome occupation of Western forces in the Shia home land. In 1985, Hezbollah's famous "Open Letter" declared:

America and its allies and the Zionist entity... have attacked our country, destroyed our villages, massacred our children, violated our sanctities, and installed over our heads criminal henchmen.... We have risen to liberate our country, to drive the imperialists and the invaders out of it, and to determine our fate by our own hands.

Conventional Inferiority Mandates Self-Sacrifice: The second theme of martyrdom emphasized that suicide operations can be justified due to the lack of sophisticated weapons that were available to Hezbollah in response to Western forces. The Shia community had to use suicide operations out of desperation. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hezbollah elaborated:

Speaking about the experience... In Lebanon, in order to carry out an operation with an outcome of 8 or 9 dead soldiers, it would need training, equipping, observations, frontier groups, rockets, explosives.... After all these preparations, the outcome would only be 3 or 4 deaths due to the strong fortifications of the enemy. On the other hand, one single [Martyr] without any training or experience, driving a bus without any military backups or supporting groups, was able to kill 8 or 9, wound 21, and scare the entire "Israeli" entity.

The Enemy is Vulnerable to Coercive Pressure The last theme in Hezbollah's martyrdom campaign emphasized the expectation that Western and Israeli forces would be more vulnerable to coercive pressure if suicide attacks were used regularly. In Hezbollah's "Open Letter" it is stated:

With the blood of its martyrs and the struggle of its heroes, the Islamic resistance has been able to force the enemy for the first time in the history of the conflict against it to make a decision to retreat and withdraw from Lebanon without any American or other influence.

With the massive amount of community involvement, campaign organization, and distribution of media it is not surprising that many of these martyrs are supported by their peers. Entire communities have been habituated to violence that has occurred first hand in their communities. When suicide operations are not condemned by community and spiritual leaders, it should be no surprise that the public does not condemn these actions either (Pape, 2005).

The Average Suicide Bomber

We have already learned that suicide operations can be very complex in nature; they require complex, task-specific timing from the individuals carrying out the operation. A suicide operation can consist of an incredible workload to monitor possible targets and various aspects of security around the target that must be taken into account. Suicide bombers must also reach their suspected targets undetected by blending in with local populations. When the target is reached they must use their best judgment of timing and effective implementation of themselves as a weapon for maximum destruction. It is obvious that suicide operations are no easy task and require a more educated and able bodied individual in order to be effective.

Benmelech & Berrebi (2007) conducted a study on human capital and productivity of suicide bombings. The goal was to study the relationship between the human capital of suicide bombers and the outcomes of their final attacks. Their hypothesis was that human capital is an important factor in suicide bombing in relation to the effectiveness of the attack. Further they believe that more able bombers will be more efficient in destructive force if they are assigned to targets of greater value. The high cost of clumsy and incompetent suicide bombers suggests that higher value targets are more likely to implement individuals with higher intelligence. Higher priority targets will have a higher level of self reward that a terrorist organization would rather bestow to more important individual within their respective organizations.

On the supply side of the formula they follow Iannaccones's (2006) model of "rational sacrifice," in which suicide bombers are likely to obtain benefits from their suicide-related involvement. Iannaccone (2006) writes:

The benefits will start well before the sacrificial acts (as when the volunteer is honored by his comrades or rewarded by his leaders) and extend well beyond (and, perhaps into a life after death).

It is obvious that there is glory to be found in the life of suicide bombing from a cultural perspective. Benefits of this occupation include fame, honor, and recognition for the perpetrator and shame, humiliation, and destruction to the enemy.

Benemelech & Berrebi (2007) designed an equilibrium model that can be used in application to terrorist targets and the human capital assigned to the targets. The theory is that more able bodied suicide bombers will be assigned by their respective organizations to targets that are associated with a greater amount of victory. This theory consistent with the profiles of the individuals involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks. The majority of the attackers had received formal academic educations. Average age of the September 11 perpetrators was 24.2 years of age. This is close to the 21 average years of age for Palestinian suicide bombers (Benemelech & Berrebi, 2007). It is possible to conclude that due to the high level of difficulty involved in the September 11th attacks, older and more educated individuals were selected for the mission.

Krueger and Maleckova (2003) have a similar model that emphasized supply and demand. They believe that suicide terrorism may offer greater benefits for individuals with higher education (supply), and that terrorist organizations may prefer to recruit individuals with higher education (demand). This is similar to how most paramilitary organizations work. If a specialized unit only takes the most elite individuals, then they are more likely to be assigned to more prestigious targets, in turn boosting their community image and popularity. The link between education and suicide bombers could also be attributed to a certain demographic of individuals who simply have a higher level of discipline. A person who is highly disciplined in

academic pursuits is also likely to be disciplined in all aspects of their life that could include devotion to political and religious agendas resulting in higher levels of sacrifice.

The Israeli Security Agency (ISA) published a report that analyzed the information collected on 148 Palestinian individuals that had successfully carried out a suicide bombing between the years 2000 and 2005. Of the 148 individuals, 140 of them were males and 8 were females. The youngest of the perpetrators was 12 years of age and the oldest was 48 years of age. The average bomber was 21 years of age. Of these individuals over 18% had received some level of higher education beyond high school, making the education rate of the suicide bombers more than twice that of the entire Palestinian population (Berrebi, 2003).

Conclusion

Terrorist suicide operations are difficult to study due to the almost endless amount of variables that can be taken into account. Through analyses of many sources we have discovered that suicide terrorism, or any terrorist actions for that matter cannot be predicted by one isolated factor. The complex interaction between individual and situational factors provides a web of combinations of individuals that may be capable of carrying out such an attack.

We have discovered that suicide operations are rarely a random act of terrorism. They are generally well thought out strategic missions implemented by larger organizations with clear cut political agendas. It has also been found that democratic states are most likely to be targeted by suicide operations. These same democratic states have had much trouble implementing policies to correctly identify and defend against such attacks.

Suicide attacks have been regularly implemented internationally since the 1980's but these attacks did not become a primary concern for the United States until after September 11, 2001 when terrorist suicide operations dealt the largest and most devastating attack to ever take place in American history. When dissecting the attacks of September 11, 2001 three major patterns were discovered. First, the attacks were clearly designed with the intent that the perpetrator would not survive. Second, by designing these attacks around the perpetrators demise they were able to bypass many of the counter-terrorism policies that were already in place. Third, not only did the suicide operations greatly increase the physical lethality of the attack, a secondary psychological effect that was perhaps more devastating became apparent. The attacks struck a sense of fear and vulnerability into citizens of the United States and also around the world. Finding a preventive solution to the attacks became of the utmost importance for international policy makers. Unfortunately designing a policy to threaten and deter terrorists who are willing to take their own lives has proven to be difficult and required a complex approach.

Many terrorist groups in the Middle East began to realize the effectiveness of suicide operations against technologically advanced opponents in the beginning of the 1980's. September 11, 2001 initiated almost immediate occupation of Afghanistan by Western troops, with the occupation of Iraq soon following. Many citizens of Afghanistan and Iraq felt their land had been wrongfully occupied and continued to see Western forces as a threat. The sense of being violated combined with the fact that Western forces had much more advanced weapons led to a rise in terrorist organizations' implementation of suicide operations. Suicide operations proved to be one of the most effective tools in a terrorist organizations arsenal by providing much larger levels of death and destruction compared to traditional methods of warfare (Pape, 2005).

Originally suicide operations were believed to be uniquely isolated to Islamic terrorist organizations but recent statistics analyzing all terrorist suicide operations worldwide have shown that the majority of suicide attacks are conducted by groups that are not located in the Middle East and that have secular political agendas. While it is true the majority of the attacks that have taken place in the Middle East have been implemented by groups that claim to be Muslim, it has been determined that religion itself is not one of the primary factors in suicide bombing (Hafez, 2004). Religion is usually used as a secondary factor that helps with the recruitment of terrorist organizations, collectivist identity, and isolation from outside influences that may contradict the opinions of terrorist organizations' leaders (Triandis, 2009).

Researchers that wish to conduct studies on the motivations of suicide operations were immediately met with the inability to isolate single individual factors that could determine terrorist behaviors. It was quickly realized the need to determine a multi dimensional model that could analyze terrorist activities using both individual as well as situational factors (Waller, 2002).

Researchers and the public have often been confused about the relationship between organizations and the greater community. It has been found that suicide operations are often greatly overshadowed by the amount of time and resources these groups placed on community support. Many groups that are internationally recognized terrorist organizations have well structured leadership with clear cut political agendas and goals that have been developed in response to feelings of forced application of Western ideals and policies (Triandis, 2009).

Original research on suicide bombings concluded that attacks were perpetrated by individuals that lived in poverty, were uneducated, and mentally unstable (Blackwell, 2003).

Modern research has shown the opposite (Pape, 2005). More often than not perpetrators of terrorist suicide operations are of average social economic status, have a higher level of education than the population that surrounds them, and are free from any diagnosed psychological issues.

Certain Islamic ideals may contribute to acts of terrorism but this is not unique to Islam. Any organized religion has the ability to facilitate attitudes that place blame on a target groups. Further belonging to an organization that relies on a specific ideology can lead to isolation and the phenomenon known as groupthink (Janis, 1972). Collectivist organizations can lead to for-or-against-us attitudes that can cause members to dehumanize outsiders. Dehumanizing outsiders has been shown to lead to higher levels of violence. This has been attributed to the theory of moral disengagement. Moral disengagement occurs in ordinary individuals who originally possessed natural inhibitions towards killing others. By dehumanizing potential targets innate mechanisms are disengaged, removing unpleasant emotional responses towards violence (Bandura, 1998;2004).

In sum, it seems that suicide terrorism is generally a response to foreign occupation and cannot be attributed to a single religion. Learning from past situations and understanding the importance of cultural sensitivity has serious implications for the way foreign policies should be designed and implemented by all nations. For future success in international security and an overall reduction in suicide attacks, policies need to be designed and implemented around culturally sensitive solutions in the target population rather than the application of solutions designed around the victim's cultures.

Data and Figures

Table 1

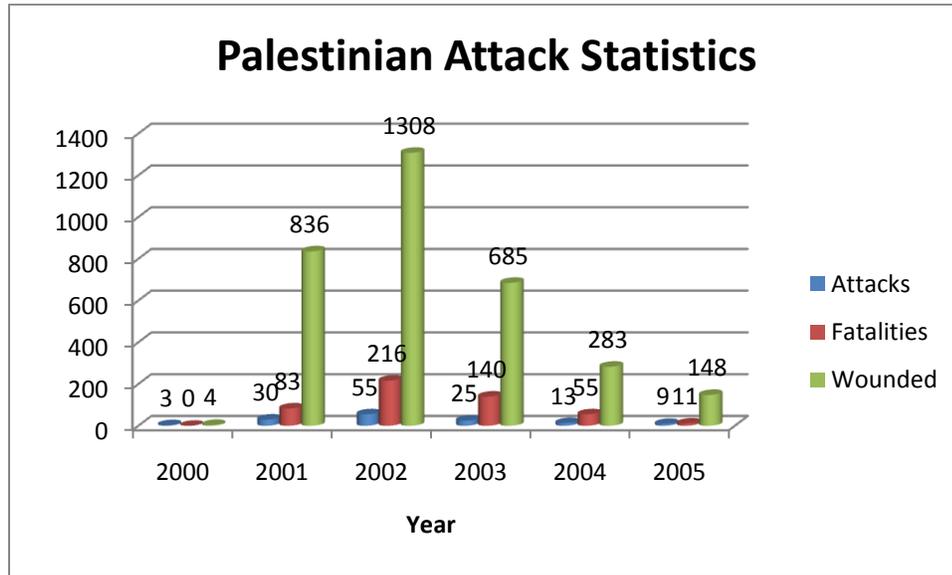


Figure 1

Year	Number Killed			Number Injured			
	# of Attacks	Min	Max	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Standard Deviation
2000	3	0	0	0	1.3	3	1.5
2001	30	2.8	22	5.5	27.9	170	40.4
2002	55	3.9	29	6.2	23.8	144	27.6
2003	25	5.6	23	7.8	27.4	115	36.7
2004	13	4.2	16	5.3	21.8	100	30.2
2005	9	1.2	5	2.2	16.4	88	31.8
Total	135	3.7	29	6.1	24.2	170	32.6

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