

Suicide Terrorism & Suicide Bombing – A Logical Choice for Terror Organizations?

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Suicide Terrorism as a Logical Strategy of Terror Groups



Suicide bombing **is not** something that is new!

Most terrorism throughout history has carried a high risk of death for the terrorists themselves.

Traditionally the main weapon of the attack was the dagger, and unless the victim could be found alone and defenseless, early terrorists or Guerilla fighters (Guerillas as fighting military forces and performing terror attacks on civilians) knew that they were unlikely to return from their missions.

We've seen makeshift bombs used by nineteenth-century anarchists & Russian revolutionaries that were so unstable that they had to be thrown from a short distance (that is, if they did not explode first in the hands of the attacker).

Those who went on an attack of this kind were fully aware of the risk and many of them wrote farewell letters to their friends and families.

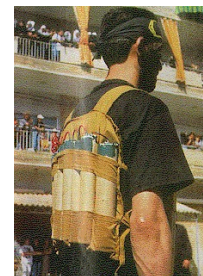
So what is different today?

Construction of Our Belts, Vests (2007)



4 Elements of all bombs: Ex; Init; PS; S/D

Our "Models"



Suicide Terrorism is not Linked to any Particular Religion or Nationality

Suicide terrorism is not linked to any particular religion or Nationality.

Far and away, the largest number of suicide terrorist attacks in recent years have come from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers), a former separatist group fighting the government of Sri Lanka.

Using suicide attackers, the Tigers managed to kill two heads of state:

- Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, 1991;
- Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, 1993.



Bus Transport Suicide Bombing Attack, LTTE, April 2007, 17 killed, 20 injured, all civilians









The Concept of Self-Sacrifice is not Specific to any Given Culture

The phenomenon reaches far beyond Sri Lanka & Israel.

Other groups that have embraced suicide terrorism include the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), a Kurdish, Marxist separatist group fighting the government of Turkey;

Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed group of Shiite Islamists based in Lebanon;

Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden's network of radical Sunni Islamists.

And while not technically terrorism (since it was Military to Military fight), the kamikaze attacks of Japanese pilots during World War II also showed a willingness to use suicide as a weapon.

The concept of self-sacrifice remains not specific to any given culture.

Part I:

Joining Terror Networks With Tactics – The Rise of Suicide Bombing

Link to Tactics - Suicide Bombing: Strategic Logic or Moral Logic?

- Current analyses & studies stress the “strategic logic,” organization, and risk assessments involved with violence by terror organizations.
- These are important but not sufficient to explain exponential growth in suicide attacks.
- *At the level of the organization, strategic calculations of utility are often critical.*
- *But for the individual and community, moral imperatives often trump utility and rational choice.*

Why Suicide Terror?

- Perception – a seemingly irrational act?
- From the perspective of a terrorist organization it is a strategy that is:
 - Well planned
 - Logical
 - Designed to achieve specific political objectives
- Suicide attacks have increased over the past two decades
- Why?

Because Terrorists, Their Leaders, & Orgs. have Learned That This Tactic Works!



What gets ordinary and even smart people to blow themselves up?

EVOLUTIONARY STRATEGIES:
Suicide Terrorism as an Organizational Strategy

Costly Signaling Strategy

- *Sacrificing* its “*best and the brightest*” signals the organization’s *costly commitment to the community, whether transnational* (Al-Qaeda, Jemaah Islamiyah) *or national* (Hamas, Hizbollah).
- This *underpins trust in the organization*, thus *increasing* the organization’s *political “market share”* in the community.

Sheikh Hamed al-Betawi

Spiritual guide of Hamas

(Open Source Interview, September 2004)

- “Our people do not own airplanes and tanks, only human bombs.”
- “Those who carry out martyrdom operations are not retarded, not hopeless, not poor, but are the best of our people.”
- “They do not flee from life. They are educated, not illiterate, successful in their lives.”

- **Recruitment** into most Jihadi groups is not like recruitment into a national police or army or university.
- Almost entirely a *grass-roots operation* that is *bottom up rather than top down* in the sense that individuals in the organizations bring in other *family members, friends, co-workers or co-worshippers*
- Organizations seek *operatives* who are usually *better educated and well off* relative to surrounding population, often with families and good careers or prospects
- Because *such people show willingness to invest in the future and delay immediate gratification*, unlike most regular army and police, and thus *can sustain resource-deficient insurgencies*

- *Decentralized kinship, ethnic and religious networks* also offer good prospects for *sustaining resource-deficient insurgencies* because they provide a social structure that underpins the maintenance of reputations and the efficient gathering of information about candidate members to ward against defection.
- In Arab society, family reputation based on purity of lineage and honor is still the main determinant of economic, social, & political status. This thick web of social ties also makes difficult for counterintelligence to penetrate.

Abu Bakr Ba'asyir
Emir of Jemaah Islamiyah
(Open Source Interview, August 2005)

- *There is no nobler life than to die as a martyr for Jihad. None. The highest deed in Islam is Jihad. If we commit to Jihad, we can neglect other deeds, even fasting and prayer. (Note: this is a radically new view of Islam)*
- *A martyrdom action cannot be postponed to care for family or because the community may suffer in retaliation. There is duty to family but duty to God always comes first. (Note: this suggests moral imperatives that prohibit trade-offs and preclude negotiation across moral frames)*
- *Of course, a roadside bomb is preferable if the martyr can be used for bigger purposes (note: this suggests rational calculations of utility within a moral frame)*

Suicide Terrorism & Suicide Bombing

The Culture of Death: Terrorist Organizations & Suicide Bombing

A Survey of the Literature: Pape (2003, 2005); Bloom (2006; 2005); & Moghadam (2006a; 2006b)

Key Questions: Is Suicide Bombing a rational tactic? Does it “make sense” for terror organizations?

Thinking about “threats” and “targets” as a terror group, what means (tactics) make the most sense?

Competing Tactics for Terror Groups

Why WMDs Are A Threat, But Also Problematic For Delivery

Reasons terrorists might use WMD

Could be cheap

Available

Effective

Difficult to detect

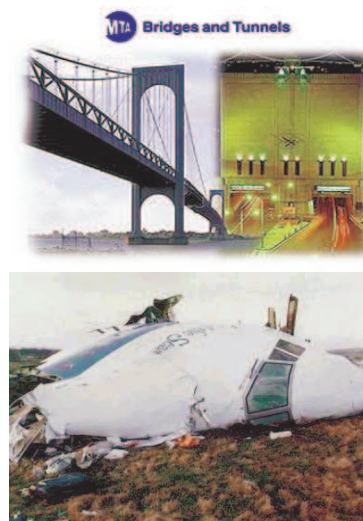
Maximum benefit/minimum resources

Difficult to build/deliver/assure capability



Potential Threat Matrix - "Targets"

- Airports
- Apartment buildings
- Bridges/tunnels
- Buses and stations
- Chemical plants
- Civilian airliners
- Critical infrastructure
- Cruise ships
- Cultural icons
- Dams



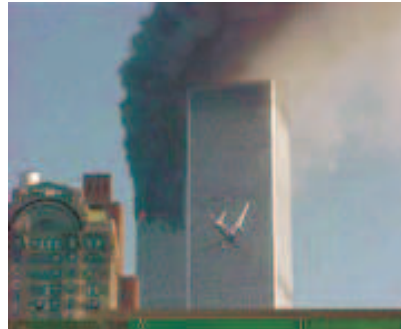
Threat Matrix - "Targets," cont'd

- Financial institutions
- Government offices
- Government officials
- High-profile corporations
- High-profile individuals
- Large events/gatherings
- Military installations
- Nuclear reactors/related facilities
- Rail targets
- Shopping malls/high density locations
- Water facilities



Tactics Associated w/ Threats

- Biological
- Bombing
- Chemical
- Cyber-based strikes
- Hijacking
- Hostage taking
- Kidnapping



Tactics & Threat, cont'd

- Nuclear
- Radiological
- Sabotage
- Shooting
- Vehicular bombing
- Suicide bombing



The Improvised Explosive Device (IED) as the Terrorist's "Weapon of Choice"

- Inexpensive to produce
- Various detonation techniques available, may be a low risk to the perpetrator
- Suicidal bombing cannot be overlooked
- Suicide bombs are the ideal "smart bomb"
- Other advantages include their attention-getting capacity-ability to control casualties through time of detonation and placement of the device
 - Easily deniable should the action produce undesirable results.
 - From 1983 through 1996, approximately half of all recorded terrorist incidents involved explosives.

Common Terrorist Tactics: Bombing as Tactic

The IED as the preferred weapon of choice: Examples

- 07 July 2005, London bombings were a series of coordinated three suicide bombings that struck public transport system killing 56 and injuring 700.
- 12 October 2000, suicide attack on the Navy destroyer *USS Cole* in the port of Aden in Yemen. 17 sailors, 39 injured.
- 07 August 1998, bombs exploded almost simultaneously at the U.S. Embassy buildings in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Killed 153 and left over 4,500 injured. Severely damaged both installations.
- 25 June 1996, Hezbollah exploded a fuel truck packed with 3,000-5,000 lbs of explosives at the Khobar Towers in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia; 20 killed and 372 wounded.
- 23 October 1983, terrorists using a truck bomb destroyed the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. 245 killed and 146 wounded.



USS Cole Attack, 2000

Part II

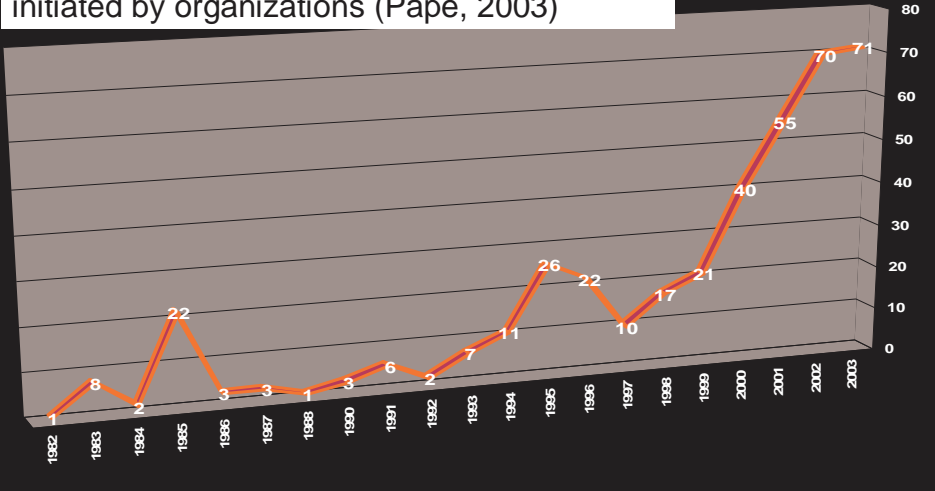
Dissecting the Who, What, Where, When, & Why of Suicide Bombing Tactics

What is Suicide Bombing?

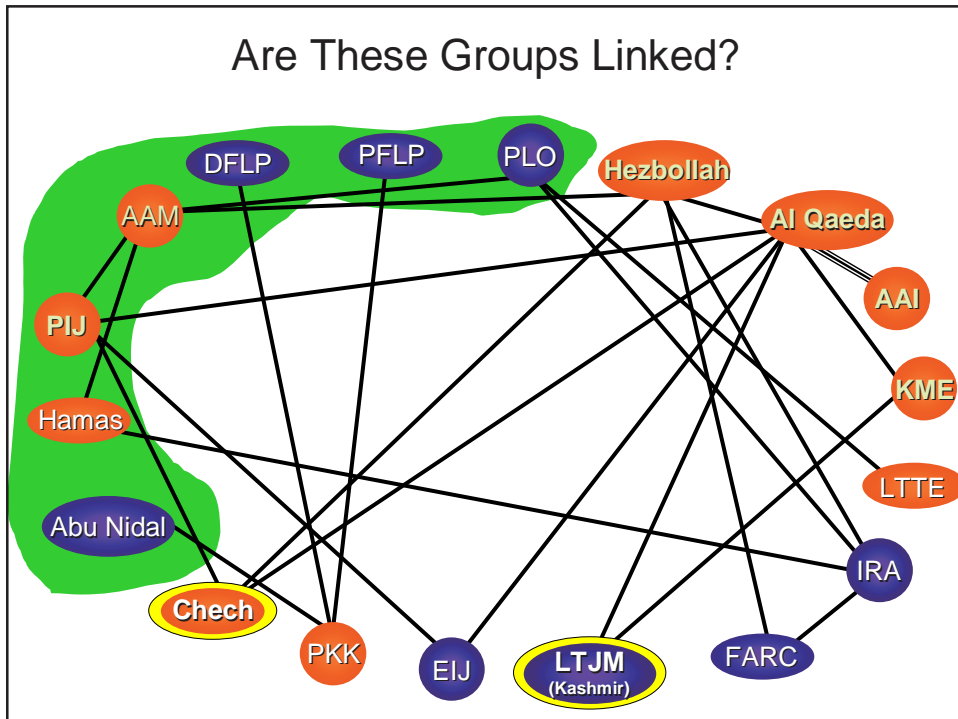
- Similar to other manifestations of terrorism, suicide bombing aims at destroying a specific target.
- However, in most cases, the real intention is to create an atmosphere of terror which should be translated into political gains.
- The principal difference between suicide bombing and other types of terrorism is embedded in a tactical perspective.
- The terrorist's death, by means of the detonation of an explosive charge, is an integral part of the execution of the operation and constitutes an essential condition of its success.

Suicide Bombing as a Growing Phenomenon

95% of suicide attacks worldwide were initiated by organizations (Pape, 2003)

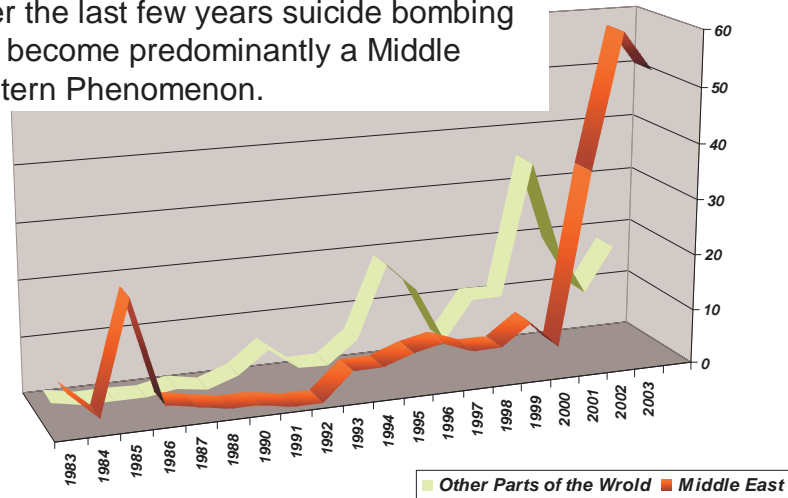


Are These Groups Linked?



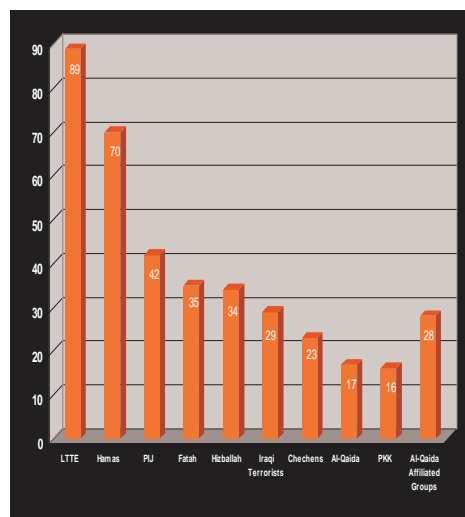
Suicide Bombing in the Middle East and other Parts of the World

Over the last few years suicide bombing has become predominantly a Middle Eastern Phenomenon.



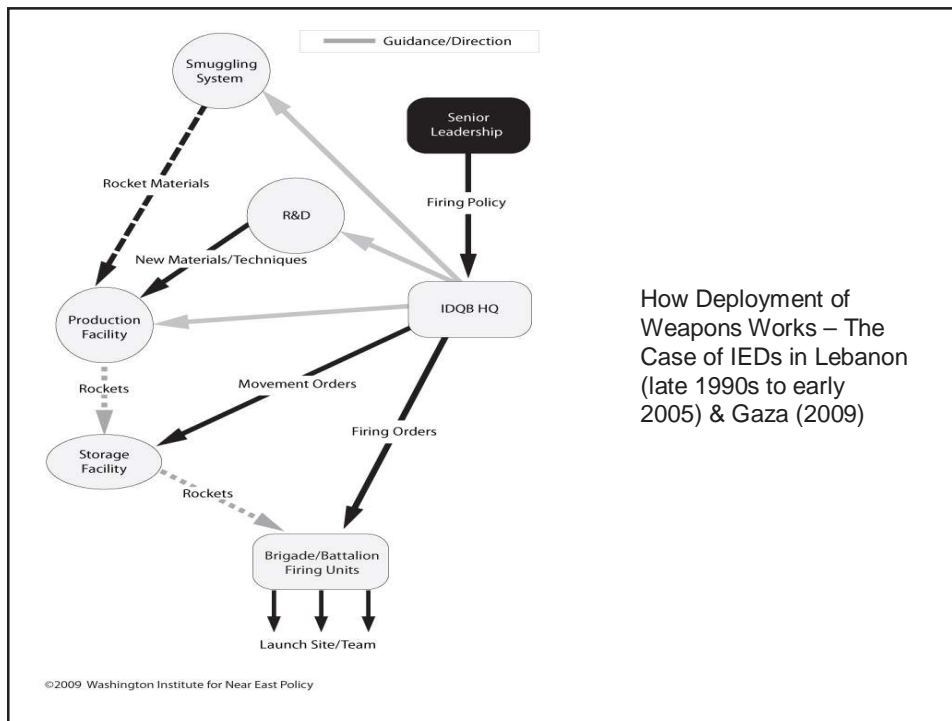
Is Suicide Bombing Motivated by Religion?

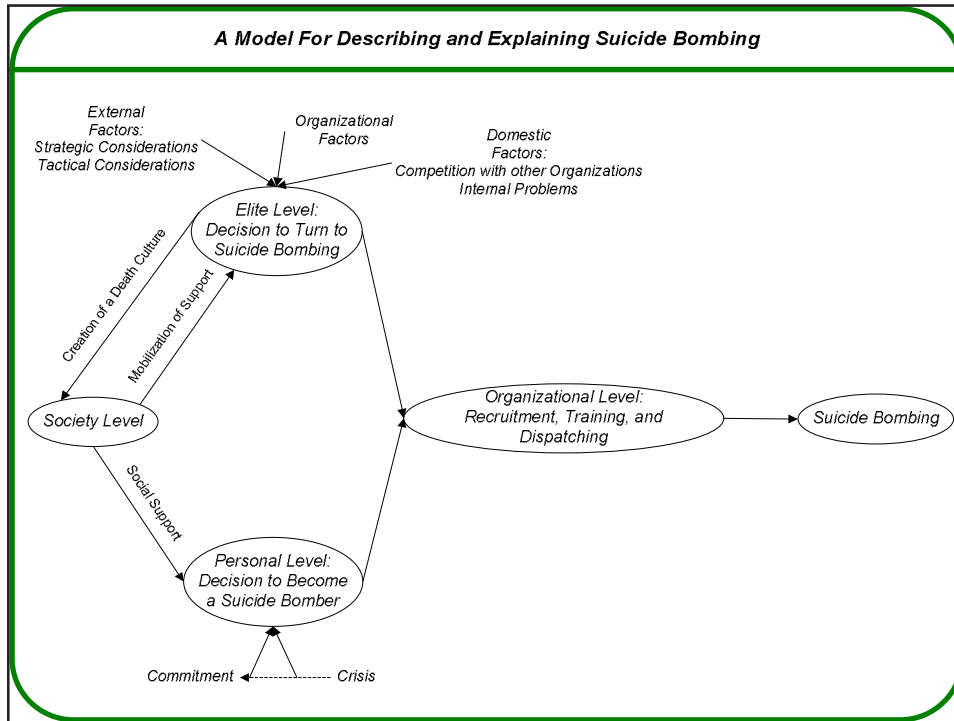
- Suicide Bombing is not solely an Islamic phenomenon.
- The LTTE is/was a radical Tamil organization.
- The Fatah is predominantly a nationalist organization.
- The ideology of the Kurdish PKK as Marxist Leninist.



Is Suicide Bombing a Rational Organizational Phenomenon?

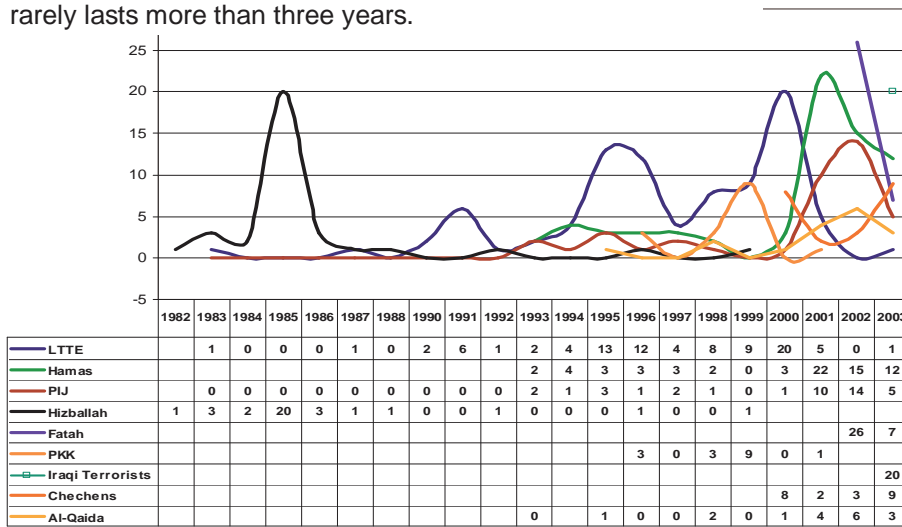
- Recent studies relate to leaders of terrorist organizations as rational actors.
- The organization will use this strategy only as long as it serves its strategic, domestic and organizational purposes.
- In order to carry out a successful suicide campaign there is a need for individuals to perpetrate the acts and a community which will support them.
- Hence, the organizations make efforts to glorify suicide missions and to instill a 'culture of hatred and death' within the community.





Campaigns of Suicide Bombings (per year)

Suicide bombings usually appear in campaigns. A campaign rarely lasts more than three years.



Suicide Terrorism: Who?

Perception:

- Generalized profile of suicide terrorists, including:
 - Young
 - Single
 - Male
 - Uneducated
 - Religious fanatics

Reality

- The “profile” is wrong
- Terrorists are:
 - Preteen - mid-sixties
 - Both single and married with families
 - Both male and female
 - Both educated and uneducated
 - Not motivated by religious fanaticism
 - World's leader in suicide terror are Hindu; Tamil Tigers who are conducting insurgency against Sri Lanka

Suicide Terrorism: Why?

Perception:

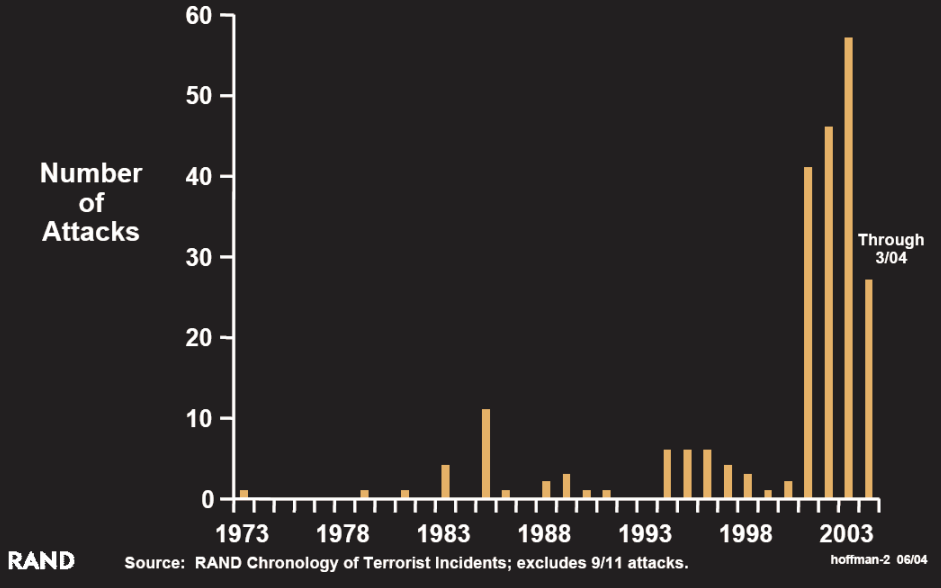
- Seemingly irrational act

- **Suicide attacks have increased over the past two decades**
- **Why?**

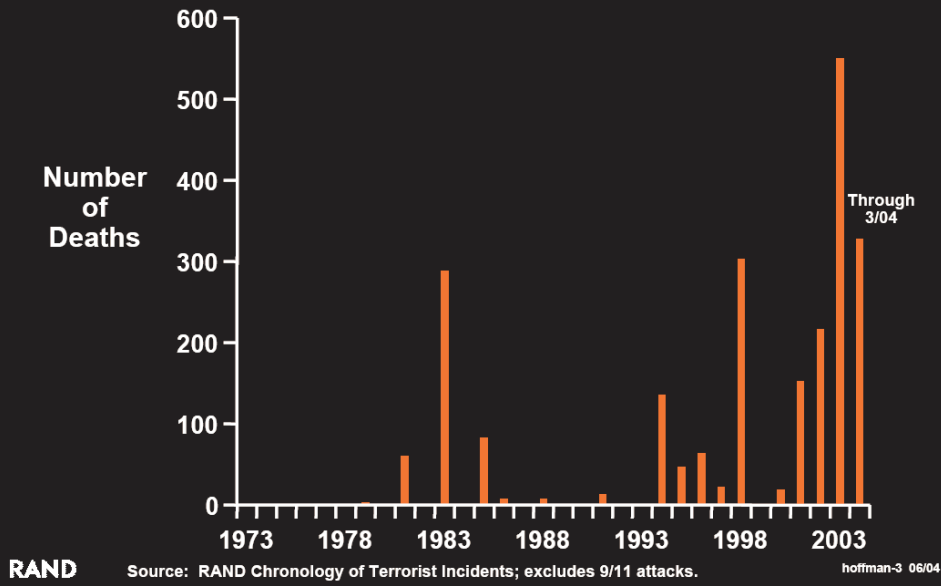
Reality

- Part of a strategy that is:
 - Well planned
 - Logical
 - Designed to achieve specific political objectives
- Does two things:
 - Inflicts immediate punishment against target society
 - Threatens more punishment in the future

Over Past Few Years, Suicide Attacks Have Grown in Frequency



Over Past Few Years, Suicide Attacks Have Grown in Frequency and Lethality



Suicide Terror Attacks are . . .

- inexpensive and effective; extremely favorable per-casualty cost benefits for the terrorists
- less complicated and compromising – no escape plan needed, and success means no assailant to capture and interrogate
- perhaps the ultimate “smart bomb” – this “weapon” can cleverly disguise itself, use various modes of deception, and effect last minute changes in timing, access, and target
- a strategic communication device – successful attacks are virtually assured media coverage
- effective because the *weaker opponent acts as coercer* and the stronger actor is the target
- **Key difference from other attacks: The target of suicide campaign cannot easily adjust to minimize future damage**

Suicide Terrorism: Where?

Three types of attacks are most likely to occur:

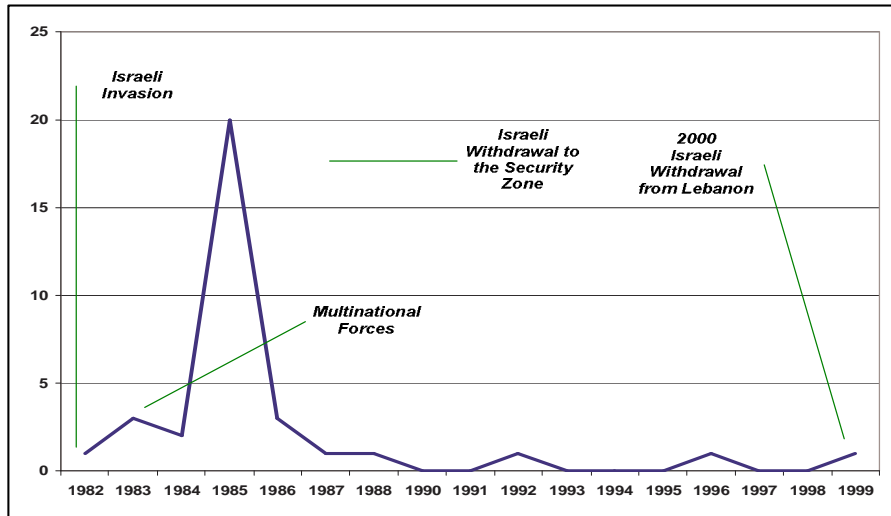
- High value, symbolic targets involving mass casualties
 - Important government buildings, installations, or landmarks
 - Major means of personal or commercial transportation
- High value, symbolic targets against specific persons
 - Political assassinations (e.g., head of state, regional governor, etc.)
- Deliberately lethal attacks targeting the public
 - Bus, train, subway bombings; attacks on shopping malls, cinemas, sports stadiums, public gathering spaces

The Study of Personal Motivations

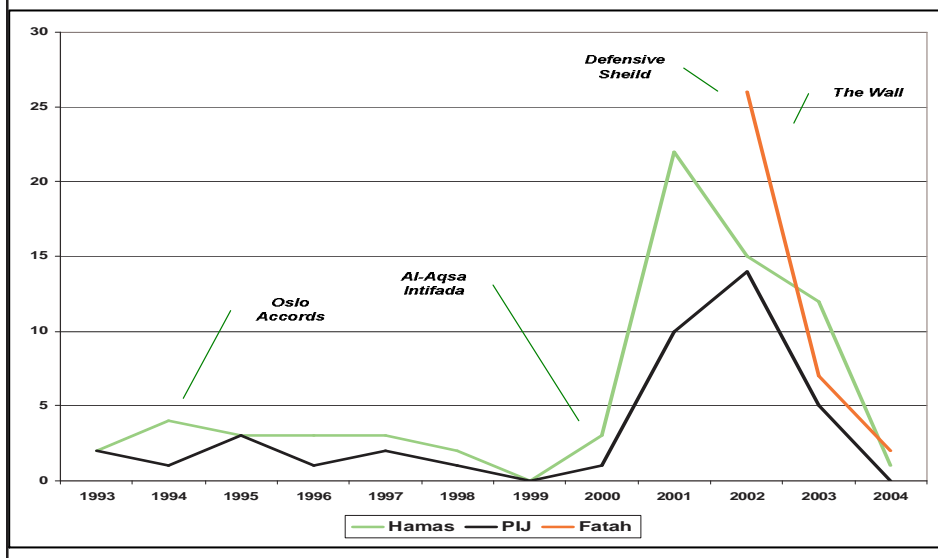
- The first generation of scholars in the field focused on the socio-demographic characteristics and the personality traits of the suicide bombers.
- Most of these studies came to the conclusion that suicide bombers exhibit no distinct features.
- The second generation of studies emphasized the role of social networks and the surrounding community in motivating individuals to perpetrate such attacks.



Why do Suicide Campaigns Begin and End? Hezbollah in Lebanon 1982-1999

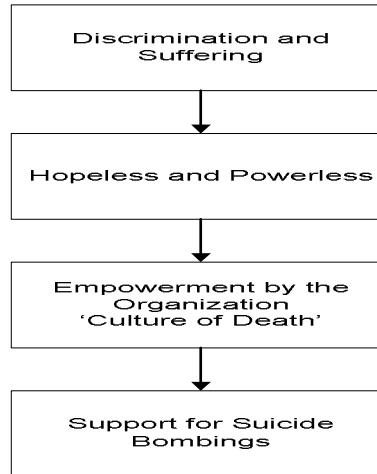


Why do Suicide Campaigns Begin and End? Palestinian Organizations 1993-2004

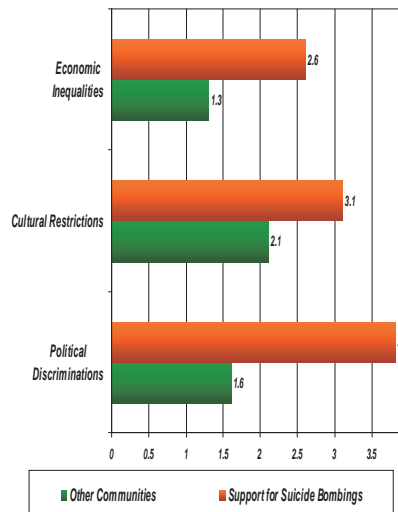
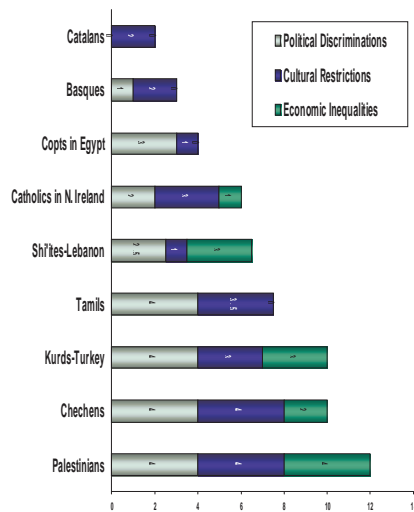


Communities Which Exhibit Higher Levels of Support-Suicide Bombing

- In most of the cases communities which express support for suicide bombing suffer from continuous repression.
- However, the level of embracement of the 'culture of hatred and death' varies form one community to the other.

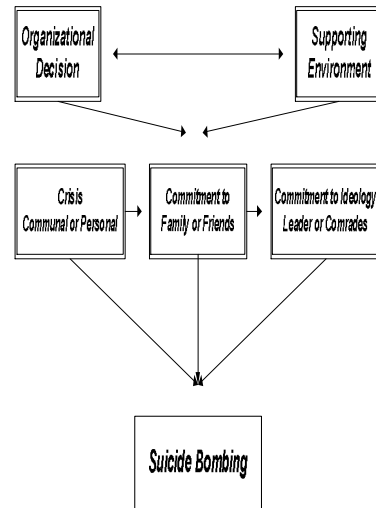


Community Repression – A Comparison

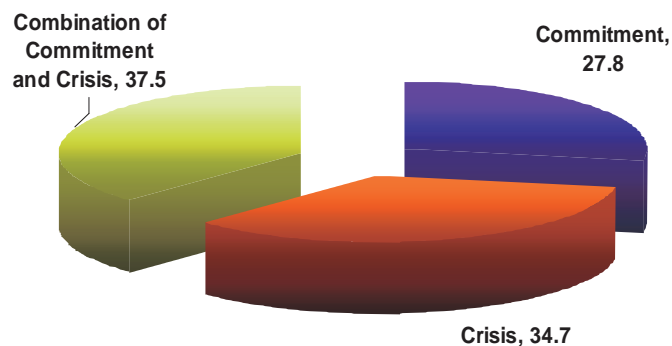


Crisis and Commitment as Individual Motivations

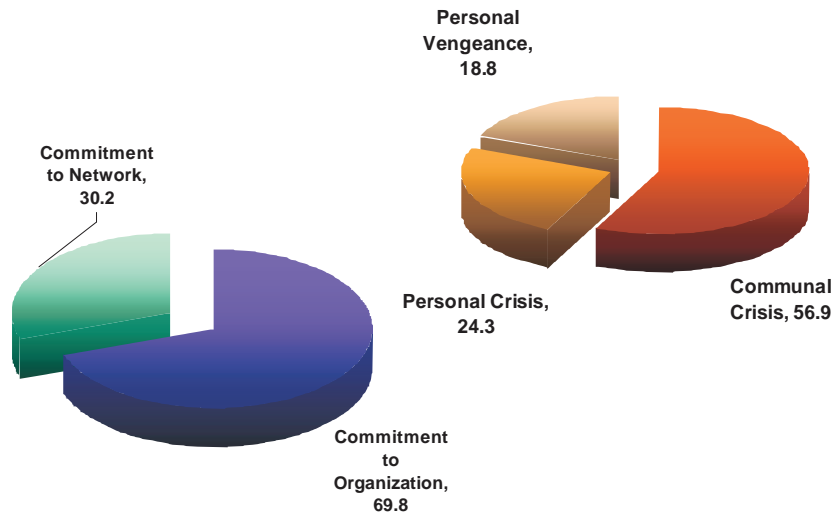
- Communal Crisis
- Personal Crisis
- Commitment to social network
- Commitment to organizational framework
- These motivations are not mutually exclusive.
- Contrary to early assumptions commitment is a better predictor than crisis.



Primary Individual Motivations (Percentage)

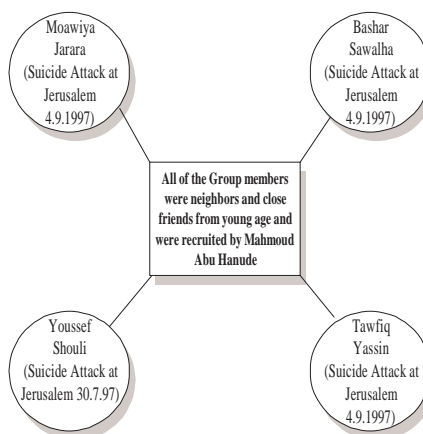


Individual Motivations within the Primary Category (percentage)



Networks of Suicide Bombers Childhood Friends

- These suicide bombers were neighbors from the village of A-Sira A Shimalia and close friends.
- Before they joined the Hamas, they were active members of the Fatah.



Networks of Suicide Bombers Al-Jihad Mosque Soccer Team – Kinship and Friendship

- This was the local soccer team of Abu Katila neighborhood operated by the Hamas.
- Seven of the players perpetrated suicide attacks in 2003.
- Four of them belonged to the Kawasmeh family.

