

Suicide Attacks  
in  
Afghanistan and Pakistan

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## **Abstract**

The campaigns of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan are some of the largest on record, surpassing, for instance, those in Palestine and Sri Lanka. Despite this, they have received relatively little scholarly attention. This thesis redresses this omission through a systematic analysis of suicide attacks in both countries. It utilises the evidence from Afghanistan and Pakistan to critically question many widely accepted arguments and propositions in the existing literature on suicide attacks. The study employs a multi-disciplinary approach to consider a number of inter-linked aspects of the phenomena, both from the point of view of the individual “martyrs,” and the organisations who employ them as weapons.

One of the thesis’ most notable contributions is that it draws attention to the atypical nature of the suicide bombers in these countries and the similarly unusual nature of their recruitment and training. The thesis provides a theoretical explanation for these facts by analysing the recruitment of suicide bombers as a type of labour market. Drawing upon a variety of behavioural science findings, the thesis also explains the means by which individuals’ normal motivational and cognitive mechanisms are exploited in their indoctrination as martyrs. Finally, it also demonstrates how the typical characteristics of suicide bombers in these countries make them particularly vulnerable to such indoctrination.

In addition to these contributions to the understanding of individual participation, the thesis also presents a number of novel findings regarding organisations’ decision to adopt the tactic and the ways in which they use it. In particular, through the use of quantitative data, the thesis demonstrates that a number of influential theories about the adoption of the tactic are implausible in these countries; alternative mechanisms which are consistent with the evidence from these cases are then presented in their stead. With regards to the use of suicide attacks, the thesis critiques existing theory and subjects it to extensive quantitative testing. By drawing upon theoretical literature from the study of irregular warfare, the thesis also provides a novel explanation for the victimisation of civilians by suicide attacks. The thesis concludes by suggesting that in order to progress, the study of suicide attacks should be integrated with the broader study of political violence.

## **Declaration of Originality**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Why Afghanistan and Pakistan?

In the years following the 9/11 attacks on the United States, considerable scholarly attention has focused on the phenomenon of suicide attacks. Many books and articles have been written addressing the topic from a variety of perspectives. Despite the large amount of scholarly activity on the topic, there has been relatively little attention to the campaigns of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The major exception to this is Robert Pape's recent book co-authored with James K. Feldman, which addresses a chapter to each country.<sup>1</sup> They argue that the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan are consistent with the theory advanced in Pape's previous work; that suicide attacks are the product of foreign occupation. The few other works to focus on suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan tend to be either derivative or largely descriptive.<sup>2</sup>

This lack of analytical attention is surprising, since Afghanistan and Pakistan have been for a number of years one of the central concerns of US foreign policy. More important, from a

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<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Zaidi's article, for instance, draws on Pape's earlier research (Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 3 (August 2003): 343-361; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005)), as well as that of Mia Bloom (Mia Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 61-88; Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). : Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, "Organizational Profiling of Suicide Terrorism: A Pakistani Case Study," *Defence Studies* 9, No. 3 (2009): 409-453. In a similar vein Jermie Lanche also relied upon Pape and Bloom: Jermie Lanche, "Suicide Terrorism in Pakistan: An Assessment," *Special Report 84*, (New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, September 2009), accessed January 22, 2014, [http://www.ipcs.org/pdf\\_file/issue/SR84-Jermie-Suicideterrorism.pdf](http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/SR84-Jermie-Suicideterrorism.pdf). Matthew Dearing has published several papers on suicide attacks in Afghanistan. The first was mainly notable for the fact that it drew attention to the atypical profile of suicide bombers in Afghanistan: Matthew P. Dearing, "Examining the Suicide Terror Movement in Afghanistan," *The Culture & Conflict Review* 2, No. 3 (Summer 2008): 1-16, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Journal/Summer08/Dearing.pdf>. Dearing's second article deals with the *absence* of female suicide bombers in Afghanistan. First, this does not seem a particularly promising topic to address. Second, his main argument relies upon a premise, that the use of female suicide bombers is linked to difficult operating environments for rebels that seems unproven. Matthew P. Dearing, "Like Red Tulips at Springtime: Understanding the Absence of Female Martyrs in Afghanistan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 No. 12, (2010): 1079-1103. A report on suicide attacks in Afghanistan was published in 2007 by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan which contains important primary research, but it is not primarily analytical and does not account for the puzzles raised by the campaigns in Afghanistan and Pakistan which I address in my thesis. UNAMA, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007," (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>. Brian Williams has also published several papers on suicide attacks in Afghanistan, but again, they are primarily descriptive: Brian Glynn Williams, "Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan," *Islamic Affairs Analyst*, (September 2007), accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.brianglynwilliams.com/IAA%20suicide.pdf>; Brian Glynn Williams, "Mullah Omar's Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan" *Middle East Policy* 15, No. 4. (Winter 2008): 26-46.

scholarly perspective, is the fact that these countries have witnessed some of the largest suicide attack campaigns in history. Suicide attacks in these countries therefore seem ripe for a more thorough scholarly analysis. The goal of this thesis is to provide this analysis, focusing on two core issues. First, what are the characteristics and motivations of suicide bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how can their participation be understood. Second, why have militant organisations in these countries adopted the tactic and how have they used it.

The relative scholarly neglect of Afghanistan and Pakistan stems in part from the fact that both countries have been ravaged by insurgencies, which makes access to systematic data difficult. In addition, there may also be a belief that existing theories are sufficient to account for the campaigns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As this thesis will demonstrate however, considerable progress can be made with data which is already available. Moreover, analysis of this data reveals that existing theories are either incorrect or incomplete when applied to these cases. This thesis advances novel explanations, which draw on a wide range of behavioural and social scientific literature, in order to account for the specificities of the Afghan and Pakistani campaigns. Many of the arguments presented in this thesis are not simply relevant to the countries in question, but can also clarify aspects of suicide attack campaigns elsewhere.

## **Terminology**

Regarding the terminology used in this thesis, it is important to begin by noting that suicide attacks must be clearly distinguished from what we might term ‘conventional suicide.’ The former is a violent tactic used in the context of political conflict, the latter most typically the result of mental illness or other pathology. However, *apriori*, we cannot rule out some overlap of the phenomena. That is, some individuals may participate in suicide attacks partly or wholly due to psychological distress that might lead to a ‘conventional’ suicide. Nonetheless, even were this to be the case, the individual bomber’s suicidal behaviour is still enmeshed in a broader organisational and political context which is absent in the case of ‘conventional’ suicide.

In this thesis, I use the terms ‘suicide attacks’, ‘suicide missions’ and ‘suicide bombings’ interchangeably. With regards to the meaning of these terms, I rely upon the definition of Diego Gambetta: for an act of political violence to be considered a suicide attack, *the death of*

*the operative has to be strictly necessary in order for it to succeed.*<sup>3</sup> I use this definition because it is the analytically most precise rendering of the phenomenon, but it does have significant theoretical and empirical consequences for my study. This is because at least one organisation that is sometimes discussed as being involved in suicide attacks, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), is not actually engaged in suicide attacks, but rather the similar, but analytically distinct, category of ‘no-escape’ missions.<sup>4</sup> Lashkar-e-Taiba’s activities are therefore not considered part of the phenomenon I am trying to explain. There is some ambiguity here, since a number of so called ‘complex attacks’ in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in recent years, have featured both bombers with suicide vests as well as more conventional attackers. Although these attacks are relatively few in numbers, I have considered them part of the phenomenon to be explained, since at least some of the members of such attacks are expected to die in the course of the attack.

The second important terminological issue which needs to be broached is the use of the term ‘terrorism’. In the past, some scholarship has framed discussion in terms of ‘suicide terrorism’ rather than the generic terms I will use.<sup>5</sup> As is well known, these terms have been the subject of moral, legal and scholarly debates which have resulted in a lack of consensus and clarity regarding their usage.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, Bruce Hoffman provides a clear general definition of terrorism, arguing that it is “...the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.”<sup>7</sup> So defined, it is quite clear that actors in Afghanistan and Pakistan have been engaged in terrorism and that suicide attacks have used in the production of terror.

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<sup>3</sup> Diego Gambetta, “Foreword” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), vi.

<sup>4</sup> According to Mujahid Hussain, suicide attacks are forbidden by the beliefs of LeT’s leadership: Mujahid Hussain, *Punjabi Taliban: Driving Extremism in Pakistan*, (New Delhi, Pentagon Security International, 2012), 110. ‘No escape’ or *fidayeen* missions involve teams of militants carrying out attacks with conventional arms until they are themselves killed. This type of attack has been quite common among militants fighting in Kashmir, and LeT in particular has specialised in them.

<sup>5</sup> The main study on suicide attacks in Afghanistan authored by the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) also argues against the use of the term suicide terrorism, but on the grounds that most suicide attacks were targeted at combatants, even if most victims were civilians. UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), 9, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 13-44. Hoffman provides a useful overview of the historical background of the concept of terrorism and the legal and scholarly debate which has surrounded it. See also: Charles Tilly, “Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists,” *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 22 No. 1 (March 2004), 5-13.

<sup>7</sup> Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 43.

Nonetheless, I think in the context of this thesis it is far more productive to avoid the use of ‘terrorism’ and its cognates and instead use less conceptually freighted terminology. This is simply because in the context of this work these terms do little to advance the understanding of the topic I am addressing and therefore it is clearer to simply avoid them.

In addition to this conceptual issue there is also a more substantive reason for avoiding discussion of ‘terrorism’, namely that the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan are primarily *insurgencies*, not terrorist campaigns. By ‘insurgency’ I mean: “...a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas.”<sup>8</sup> As noted, the organisations whose behaviour I am analysing are arguably engaged in acts of ‘terror.’ However overall, their organisational features, tactics and strategy make much more considered as examples of insurgency.<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, I refer interchangeably to the actors whose behaviour I am analysing via the terms ‘insurgents’, ‘militants’ or ‘rebels’.

Throughout the thesis I refer to the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan by its previous name the North West Frontier Province, as readers may be unfamiliar with the new name. Another possible source of confusion is that for many of the foreign words used in this thesis, there is no standard transliteration. As a consequence, although I have attempted to choose the most common spellings for words, quotations occasionally contain spellings which differ from those generally used in the text. Finally, I also make use of the policy community neologism ‘AfPak’ to refer to Afghanistan and Pakistan collectively. Although this is an ugly term, its use is at times preferable to having to spell out both countries’ names in full. No disrespect is intended to the inhabitants of either country.

## **Methodology**

This study combines several methodological approaches to analyse suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It does so because different questions and different types of data require different approaches.

Chapter two, which provides context for the analytical chapters that follow, presents background information on the characteristics of insurgent groups using suicide attacks in

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<sup>8</sup> James Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 1 (February 2003): 75.

<sup>9</sup> For a useful discussion of relationship between irregular conflict more broadly (labelled as ‘civil war’) and terrorism, see: Nicholas Sambanis, “Terrorism and Civil War,” in *Terrorism, Economic Development, and Political Openness*, ed. Phillip Keefer and Norma Loayza, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 174-206.

Afghanistan and Pakistan. The material for this chapter is drawn primarily from secondary sources on Afghanistan and Pakistan, including both scholarly and journalistic accounts.

Other chapters draw upon quantitative, economic and psychological methods and findings to advance my argument. Where possible, I have tested explanations with quantitative evidence drawn from a variety of sources, principally the now sadly discontinued Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) formerly maintained by the US State Department.<sup>10</sup> Although this was intended as a ‘terrorism database’, its broad coverage of violent political events makes it suitable for studying suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### **Plan of the Thesis**

The substantive material of the thesis begins with chapter two, which describes the complex array of militant organisations that are involved in carrying out suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Having a reasonable grasp of the backgrounds and nature of the various organisations carrying out suicide attacks is important in order to contextualise the findings of later chapters.

Chapter three begins the discussion of the individuals who actually participate in suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It presents a largely unaddressed puzzle about martyrs in AfPak; that is, that their typical demographic characteristics and means of recruitment are completely at variance with those assumed in most of the existing literature. The chapter then develops a theory to explain these unusual characteristics by analysing suicide attacks in terms of an economic market for human bombs and quantitative evidence is presented which corroborates the theory. This theory is not only applicable to these cases, but also deepens our understanding of suicide attacks in general.

Chapter four continues the analysis of the role of individuals in suicide attacks by considering it from a psychological point of view. In particular, this chapter focuses on the question of how the trainers of suicide bombers are able to make self-destruction attractive to recruits. In order to answer this question, I draw on a wide variety of behavioural and cognitive science findings. I also address the specific characteristics of suicide bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan and argue, in contrast to most of the existing literature, that individual differences have a role to play in explaining participation in suicide attacks.

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<sup>10</sup> WITS was formerly located at <http://www.nctc.gov/site/index.html>, but was discontinued in April 2012. For information on the database see: John Wagle, “Introducing the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, No. 1 (March 2010), accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/88/html>.

Chapter five changes focus to the organisations that deploy the suicide bombers in these countries. It considers the organisational decision to adopt suicide attack ‘technology’, which is perhaps the key question in understanding the spread of the tactic. In order to properly explain this decision, I argue, analysis needs to consider both preferences and constraints. Tactical, ideological and organisational features which explain the adoption are identified. The chapter also considers several alternative arguments and rejects them. In the process, a number of novel empirical findings are presented.

Chapter six concludes the substantive analysis by examining the way in which suicide attacks have been used in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The chapter provides detailed descriptive statistics regarding the targeting, victims, and geographic spread of suicide attacks in each country. In addition, I present data on suicide attacks in comparison to non-suicide attacks, which has rarely been considered in the previous literature. The chapter then turns to theoretical approaches to explaining the use of suicide attacks, particularly the argument that suicide attacks are a form of ‘costly signalling’. I subject the literature associated with this claim to a theoretical critique and then test a number of hypotheses drawn from it with empirical evidence. In addition, I draw on literature from the study of civil wars and demonstrate its usefulness in explaining civilian victimisation from suicide attacks.

Chapter seven concludes by clarifying my arguments and findings by using the existing literature as a foil. It does this by employing the three-tiered mode of analysis consisting of the individual level, the societal level and the organisational level, which has been popular in other works. The chapter ends by considering future research directions suggested by the findings of the thesis, and with a call to make better use of existing data sources.

Chapter eight is a brief appendix on data sources, coding methodology and software used in the quantitative analyses contained in the thesis. Where possible, I have given information regarding these matters in the main body of text, but in some cases it has been preferable to discuss these issues separately.

As will be apparent from the preceding plan, the thesis does not feature an initial literature review chapter as is customary. Due to the wide range of topics addressed by the thesis, the literatures dealing with them are surveyed in juxtaposition with the discussion of the topics themselves. In addition, a number of other theoretical positions not broached in the body of the thesis are reviewed in the conclusion. In the context of this thesis, a traditional literature review would be unfeasibly large and complex and would not usefully clarify the discussion.



## Chapter 2: South Asian Militancy

### Introduction

Suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as in other countries, appear to be carried out entirely under the imprimatur of organisations. This chapter will provide context for the later analytical chapters by providing information on the origin, motives, operational characteristics and relationships between groups carrying out suicide attacks. The amount of information publicly available about different categories of militants varies widely and as a consequence, the level and type of detail presented about them will vary.

### Afghanistan

The forces opposing the Government of Afghanistan and the US led coalition in Afghanistan are highly complex and do not fit easily with conventional conceptions of ‘organisations’. However we can usefully divide the groups employing suicide attacks in the country into two large allied factions. The first of these is the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST).<sup>11</sup> This is the reformed ‘original’ Taliban, led by Mullah Omar and his circle from Quetta, in the Pakistani province of Balochistan. They are the largest and most widespread threat faced by the Government of Afghanistan and its allies. The second is the Haqqani Network, led by long time Jihadi Jallaludin Haqqani, but now operationally commanded by his son Siraj. It is closely allied with the QST, although there have been localised conflicts; it is based in the North Waziristan tribal agency in Pakistan. The Haqqani Network, while numerically smaller than the QST, has a key role as a hub between various factions in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. The two groups present a unified front in current statements, but they were not always allies in the past and it seems reasonable to treat them as separate entities.

In addition to the Taliban and Haqqani Network, the Hezb-i-Islami party, led by the Taliban’s former foe Gulbuddin Hekamatyar, has for much of the conflict been important, particularly since the organisation has a ‘political wing’ which is active and influential in Afghan Parliamentary politics.<sup>12</sup> Hekamatyar also initially supported the Taliban insurgency, but after 2007 the two groups have begun to come apart and have often been involved in serious conflict.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, aside from a handful of incidents, Hekamatyar’s organisation

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<sup>11</sup> I will refer to the Quetta Shura Taliban interchangeably as the ‘QST’ and the ‘Afghan Taliban’.

<sup>12</sup> James Fergusson, *Taliban: The Unknown Enemy*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo, 2010), 294-308.

<sup>13</sup> International Crisis Group, “The Insurgency in Afghanistan’s Heartland,” *Asia Report No 207*, (Kabul: International Crisis Group, June 2011), 15, accessed January 22, 2014.



does not appear to have been involved in suicide attacks and will therefore not be further discussed.

### **The Quetta Shura Taliban**

The Taliban as an organisation may seem relatively easy to understand. Typically they are seen as Islamist religious fundamentalists whose goal is to impose their extreme religious practices upon the rest of the Afghan populace. Additionally, they are often seen as a political vehicle of the Pashtun tribes within Afghanistan, who are locked in perpetual conflict with Afghanistan's other ethnicities. Their ideology is typically described as a mix of elements of ultra-conservative Deobandi Sunni Islam imported from Pakistan and the tribal honour code of the Pashtuns, known as *Pashtunwali*.<sup>14</sup> While there are elements of truth to both of these themes, the reality is that the Taliban is a highly complex and at times contradictory organisation that defies easy explanation.

### **Background**

In the early 1990s, after the withdrawal of the Soviets and the downfall of the Russian proxy regime led by Najibullah, Afghanistan slipped into civil war.<sup>15</sup> Kabul, which had been largely spared during the fight against the Soviets, was half destroyed in the contest between rival

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<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/2007%20The%20Insurgency%20in%20Afghanistans%20Heartland.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Ruttig, "The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors and Approaches to 'Talks'," *AAN Thematic Report 01/2009*, (Afghan Analysts Network, July 2009), 18-19, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/200907-AAN-Report-Ruttig-The-Other-Side.pdf>; Note Ruttig's view of the Taliban is not, by any measure simplistic, but he does articulate the hybrid nature of Taliban beliefs. For an extensive discussion of the nature of *Pashtunwali*, see: Lutz Rzehak, "Doing Pashto: Pashtunwali as the ideal of honourable behaviour and tribal life among the Pashtuns," *AAN Thematic Report*, (Afghanistan Analysts Network, March 2011), accessed January 22, 2014 <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110321LR-Pashtunwali-FINAL.pdf>. Deobandi Islam is a sect of Sunni Islam originated in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and shares some of the same roots as the Wahhabi or Salafi creed of the Saudis, although it is in essence a South Asian strand of Islam. It forms the religious background of both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban and almost all other Pakistani Jihadi groups. Approximately 15 percent of Pakistanis consider themselves Deobandi. On the nature of Deobandi Islam, see: Dietrich Reetz, "The Deoband Universe: What Makes a Transcultural and Transnational Educational Movement of Islam?," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 7, No. 1 (2007): 139-159. See also: Barbara D. Metcalf, "'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs," *ISIM Papers No. 4*, (Leiden: ISIM, 2002): 1-24, accessed January 22, 2014, [https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/10068/paper\\_metcalf.pdf?sequence=1](https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/10068/paper_metcalf.pdf?sequence=1). As Metcalf notes, 'Wahhabi' is somewhat of a loaded term, since historically it has been a term of abuse both within Islam and also from without, particularly from the British Colonial leadership. Moreover, those who are typically labelled Wahhabis, such as Al-Qaeda, typically call themselves 'Salafis'. This is because the term 'Wahhabi' refers to the teachings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century cleric Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab. Since one of the central ideas of the theology which Al-Wahhab promoted was 'the oneness of God' this tends to imply that using terms like 'Wahhabi' to describe oneself would be idolatry. For more on this and the origins of Salafi beliefs, see: Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*, (London: Abacus, 2006), 42-68.

<sup>15</sup> Larry P. Goodson, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics and the Rise of the Taliban*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 67-76.

Mujahedeen parties trying to wrest control of the country, but no clear victor emerged. Although the country appeared to shatter along ethno-regional lines, alliances between leaders of different parties were made, broken and remade.<sup>16</sup> Although the country as a whole was chaotic and dangerous, oases of relative calm existed in the regional capitals, so it is therefore wrong to picture the country as a Hobbesian war of ‘all against all’ as it has sometimes been seen.<sup>17</sup> In the Pashtun south of the country however, conditions were truly chaotic, with looting, banditry, extortion and rape being commonplace. It is unsurprising therefore that the Taliban, who were initially seen as a force for moral regeneration and law and order, came from the troubled south.

The original impetus for the formation of what came to be called ‘the Taliban’ came from a request by villagers to a local cleric called Mullah Mohammed Omar to help free several teenage girls who had been kidnapped and used as sex slaves by a local ‘commander’.<sup>18</sup> Following success in this initial endeavour, Omar and his steadily growing band of followers began to disarm all of the local bandits and gunmen who preyed upon the population. The core of the initial Taliban movement was largely low status clerics like Omar, along with thousands of young Afghan refugees who had been schooled in Deobandi madrassas across the border in Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> Despite its seemingly unpromising nature, this new fighting force quickly swept across the Pashtun south. Then, over the next four years, it conquered almost the entire country, save for a small territory in the northeast held by the Tajik commander Ahmed Shah Massoud.<sup>20</sup>

Effective control of the country was not achieved without serious setbacks; nonetheless, given the country’s recent history, it was a remarkable achievement. Pakistan, which saw the Taliban as a useful means of turning the chaos of Afghanistan in their favour, helped the

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press), 253; To an extent, the division of the country into a more peaceful and better governed North and a chaotic and relatively ungoverned South remains relevant: Neil A. Englehart, “A Tale of Two Afghanistans: Comparative Governance and Insurgency in the North and South,” *Asian Survey* 50, No. 4 (July/August 2010): 735-758.

<sup>18</sup> Rashid, *Taliban*, 25. ‘Taliban’ is the plural of a Pashto word for ‘religious student’, ‘Talib’, derived from Arabic: Daniel P. Sullivan, “Tinder, Spark, Oxygen, and Fuel: The Mysterious Rise of the Taliban,” *Journal of Peace Research* 44, No. 1 (January 2007), 98.

<sup>19</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, and Abubakar Siddique, “Resolving the Pakistan-Afghanistan Stalemate,” *Special Report No. 176*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 9, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR0ct06.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Shahid Afsar, Chris Samples and Thomas Wood, “The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis,” *Military Review*, (May-June 2008): 60, accessed January 22, 2014, [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/AIWFC/COIN/repository/Understanding\\_Taliban\\_Organization\\_Mil\\_Review\(May-Jun08\).pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/AIWFC/COIN/repository/Understanding_Taliban_Organization_Mil_Review(May-Jun08).pdf).

nascent movement.<sup>21</sup> Pakistan's long running policy concern in Afghanistan has been to ensure that it is ruled by a friendly regime, in order to give them what they term 'strategic depth', thus preventing their encirclement by India.<sup>22</sup> But as Giustozzi and Ibrahimimi have pointed out, this is not a sufficient explanation of the Taliban's success. Pakistani support had not been enough for their previous proxy Hekamatyr to gain control over the country.<sup>23</sup> The Taliban were also aided in the latter part of the conflict by international Jihadists (discussed below) still resident in the country, and by the behaviour of the other Afghan political actors, who spectacularly failed to coordinate against them.<sup>24</sup>

While the Taliban's rule was initially welcomed in their homeland in the South, their increasingly draconian social edicts were deeply resented in urban areas and non-Pashtun parts of the country. Even in their heartland, the Taliban's eradication of traditional Pashtun pastimes like wrestling, dog fighting and music, along with their complete inability to provide economic development, eventually led to serious discontent with their rule.<sup>25</sup> The Taliban, while continuously seeking international recognition for their regime, did almost everything possible to prevent themselves from receiving it. Their treatment of women was regarded as particularly problematic, but in the latter part of their rule, it was their refusal to relinquish their troublesome 'guest', Osama bin Laden, which dominated the Taliban's relationship with the broader world and the US in particular.<sup>26</sup>

After the 9/11 attacks, the US demanded that Pakistan sever all ties with the Taliban and join them in the 'war on terror'. The US campaign to oust the Taliban regime, although it faltered initially, was able to dismantle the incumbent government with startling rapidity.<sup>27</sup> However, many of the Taliban were not 'defeated' at all, but simply melted back into their communities. The leadership stratum fled across the border to Pakistan and considered its

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<sup>21</sup> Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, ed. William Maley, (London: Hurst & Co., 1998), 84-89.

<sup>22</sup> Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, "When \$10 Billion is Not Enough: Rethinking U.S. Strategy toward Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, No. 2 (Spring 2007): 16.

<sup>23</sup> Antonio Giustozzi and Niamatullah Ibrahimimi, "Thirty Years of Conflict: Drivers of Anti-Government Mobilisation in Afghanistan, 1978-2011," *Issues Paper*, (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, January 2012), 22, accessed February 18, 2014, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1203E-Divers%20of%20Conflict%20IP%202012.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> On the role of the 'Arab Afghans', see: Brian Glynn Williams, "On the Trail of the 'Lions of Islam': Foreign Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan 1980-2010," *Orbis* 55, No. 2 (2011): 223-224.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History," in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insight from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi, (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 124; Barfield, *Afghanistan*, 261.

<sup>26</sup> Riaz Mohammed Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism and Resistance to Modernity*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 81.

<sup>27</sup> Shaun M. Maloney, "Conceptualizing the War in Afghanistan: Perceptions from the Front, 2001-2006," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18, No. 1 (2007): 29-30.

options. Although many, perhaps most, were content to resign themselves to the new situation, it appears that a hard core including Omar himself decided to resist the newly installed regime with force.<sup>28</sup>

In the first few years following the defeat of the Taliban (2002-2004), average Afghans and the international community alike remained optimistic about the country's future, despite the fact that the promised development of the country was dismally slow.<sup>29</sup> However, by 2005 it was apparent that the Taliban, who had generally been regarded as a 'spent force,' were regenerating into a serious threat.<sup>30</sup> In 2006 and 2007 the conflict exploded into a full-blown insurgency and by 2008 the US was increasingly forced to turn its attention, which had been focused on Iraq, to the 'other war' in Afghanistan.<sup>31</sup> A series of reviews of the conflict were commissioned by the White House and a decision was taken by the newly installed Obama administration to carry out a 'surge' of an additional 30,000 troops. At the same time, Obama signalled that this commitment was not open ended and eventually a date of 2014 was given for the withdrawal of US forces.<sup>32</sup> Despite the renewed commitment to the fight, the conflict continued to look bleak for the US and its allies, as the Taliban, despite suffering heavy losses, remained capable of inflicting casualties and holding territory. Perhaps even more problematic was the complete corruption and ineffectiveness of the Afghan government, which for many Afghans was just as oppressive and repugnant as the Taliban themselves.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Aims and Motives***

Although the majority of the Taliban, including both the leadership stratum and the rank and file, are Pashtuns, the organisation attempts to avoid being considered a Pashtun chauvinist organisation, since it aims to recruit from amongst all ethnicities.<sup>34</sup> Although this may seem

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), 11.

<sup>29</sup> Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 77-79; Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, (London: Penguin, 2009), 177-182.

<sup>30</sup> According to Nasreen Ghufuran, 2005 was the bloodiest year since 2001: Nasreen Ghufuran, "Afghanistan in 2005: The Challenges of Reconstruction," *Asian Survey* 46, No. 1, (January/February 2006): 88.

<sup>31</sup> "George W. Bush Rethinks his Afghan War Tactics," *Australian*, October 10, 2008, accessed January 28, 2013, <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/bush-rethinks-his-afghan-war-tactics/story-e6frg6t6-1111117709705>.

<sup>32</sup> Brian Glynn Williams, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 236-238.

<sup>33</sup> John Braithwaite and Ali Wardak, "Crime and War in Afghanistan Part I: The Hobbesian Solution," *British Journal of Criminology* 53, No. 2 (2013): 11; International Crisis Group, "The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland," 23.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Ruttig, "How Tribal Are the Taleban: Afghanistan's largest insurgent movement between its tribal roots and Islamist ideology," *AAN Thematic Report 04/2010*, (AAN, June 2010), 5-16, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/how-tribal-are-the-taleban-afghanistans-largest-insurgent-movement-between-its-tribal-roots-and-islamist-ideology-2>.

an unlikely strategy, given their past atrocities against non-Pashtuns, the Taliban have made some progress in the non-Pashtun North.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, although at the micro level recruitment is often conducted through tribal relationships, the Taliban as an organisation is essentially a supra-tribal organisation which avoids being identified with particular tribal configurations. Instead, the Taliban presents itself as a nationalist Islamic organisation fighting for justice on behalf of all Afghans against both foreign invasion and the corrupt puppet regime of Hamid Karzai.<sup>36</sup>

It is often assumed that the ultimate goal of the Quetta Shura is a return to the pre 9/11 status quo; that is, a reinstatement of the organisation as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> This is at least congruent with the group's strategy of presenting itself as having a national character. However the Taliban's actual statements about its aims and goals, other than the removal of foreign forces, have been exceedingly vague and according to some experts, part of the leadership of the organisation may not feel the need for reinstatement as the ruling regime.<sup>38</sup>

Another key question is the role of religion in the motivation of the Taliban. In one sense at least, the organisation is religious, in that most of its leadership structure is made up of individuals bearing the title 'mullah'. Also, Mosques and madrassas still form the backbone of Taliban organisation, support and recruitment.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the conflict is often described in religious language and framed as a Jihad against non-Muslim domination. Nonetheless seeing the Taliban purely or even primarily as religious fanatics is unhelpful and misleading in a number of ways.

Firstly, the motivations of the leadership need to be distinguished from those of the rank and file. Insofar as purely religious sentiments are motivating the desire to fight, such views seem to feature mostly among the leadership, not among the foot soldiers. The strongest evidence for this comes from a report published by the UK Department of International Development,

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<sup>35</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, and Christoph Reuter, "The Northern Front: The Afghan insurgency spreading beyond the Pashtuns," *AAN Briefing Paper 03/2010*, (Afghanistan Analysts Network, June, 2010), 4-5, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20100629AGCR-TheNorthernFront1.pdf>.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy we Created: The Myth of the Taliban /Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*, (London: Hurst & Co., 2012), 304.

<sup>37</sup> Jeffery Dressler and Carl Forsberg, "The Quetta Shura Taliban in Southern Afghanistan: Organization, Operations and Shadow Governance", (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, December 2009), 1, accessed February 2, 2014, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/QuettaShuraTaliban\\_1.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/QuettaShuraTaliban_1.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy we Created*, 328-329.

<sup>39</sup> Giustozzi and Ibrahimi, "Thirty Years of Conflict," 51-55.

which featured interviews with 192 individuals involved in insurgency. One of the key findings of the report was that while religious rhetoric was used by the majority of individuals, this was primarily a frame for more concrete grievances, such as government corruption and the perceived occupation of the country; moreover, most ‘radicalization’ occurred *after* the individual was already involved in the insurgency.<sup>40</sup>

Secondly, for many in the leadership cadre, the decision to re-join the insurgency was essentially a pragmatic one in the interest of self-protection, because even those who attempted to reconcile with the new regime found they faced constant harassment and sanctions from the country’s new Government.<sup>41</sup> In fact for the leadership, as much as for the rank and file, religious language and justifications became pronounced well *after* the insurgency had begun.<sup>42</sup>

Thirdly, few Afghan Taliban seem to be interested in the broader international Jihad of Al-Qaeda and its ilk, despite the involvement, albeit limited, of Al-Qaeda operatives in the Afghan conflict. The latter are typically described as ‘force multipliers’ who lend their superior resources and expertise to the Taliban, but they appear to be largely insignificant to the overall war, as they were in the Anti-Soviet Jihad.<sup>43</sup> The Quetta Shura’s goals are purely local, not to recreate a Caliphate.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, there is a very simple self-interest explanation for the involvement of many mullahs in the Taliban. Traditionally, the Afghan village mullah has been an individual of low status; starting with the anti-Soviet Jihad, but particularly with the rise of the Taliban, this class was able to raise its social status significantly. It is therefore unsurprising that mullahs are willing

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<sup>40</sup> Sarah Ladbury, “Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-I Islami? How much do local communities support them?” *Independent Report for the Department of international Development*, (Kabul: DIFID/CPAU, August 2009), 17, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://d.yimg.com/kq/groups/23852819/1968355965/name/Drivers%20of%20Radicalisation%20in%20Afghanistan%20Sep%202009.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> Anand Gopal, “The Taliban in Kandahar,” in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2012), 10-15; Abdul Awwal Zabolwal, “Taliban in Zabul: A Witness’ Account,” in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi, (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 183.

<sup>42</sup> Gopal, “The Taliban in Kandahar,” 3.

<sup>43</sup> The description of Al-Qaeda as a force multiplier comes from: Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 290-295.

<sup>44</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Taliban’s apparent current thinking regarding its goals and its relationship to Al-Qaeda, see: Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy we Created*, 327-335.

to sermonize and organize on behalf of the Taliban, who have been the vehicle of their social advancement.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Organisational Structure***

Organisationally, the Taliban can be best described as a ‘network of networks’.<sup>46</sup> There is ‘on paper’ an extensive military style hierarchy of Taliban commanders. But there is considerable debate about just how much of this is real and the extent to which there is genuine command and control in the organisation.<sup>47</sup> Nonetheless, in practice the organisation seems to combine both relative flexibility and autonomy at the local level, with a general adherence to precepts set by the central leadership.<sup>48</sup> Clearly there are limits on the ability of the Quetta based leadership to control the behaviour of commanders on the ground in the short term, but excessive deviation from the leadership’s precepts leads to disciplinary action. It is alleged for instance that Mullah Dadulla, who until his death in 2007 was a highly important and aggressive Taliban commander, was betrayed and consequently killed when he threatened to become an independent warlord via his narcotics derived funding in Helmand. Dadulla’s brother Mansour was also dismissed from the Taliban the same year, after apparently trying to follow in his brother’s footsteps.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Operational Characteristics***

Operationally, Taliban actions have a number of characteristic features. From a military perspective, their activities have largely been typical guerrilla ‘hit and run’ tactics; their few attempts at pitched battles, while displaying considerable determination, led to heavy losses and were therefore abandoned.<sup>50</sup> In addition to attacks employing light arms and RPGs, the characteristic weapons of the insurgency have been improvised explosive devices (IEDs or ‘roadside bombs’) and suicide attacks. All of the Taliban’s tactics seem unlikely to be aimed at direct battlefield success in the sense of being able to militarily defeat the coalition forces;

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<sup>45</sup> Giustozzi and brahimi, “Thirty Years of Conflict,” 51-53.

<sup>46</sup> Ruttig, “How Tribal Are the Taleban,” 1.

<sup>47</sup> Kilcullen for instance describes the Taliban as a “...fragmented series of shifting tactical alliance of convenience...”: David Kilcullen, “Taliban and Counter-Insurgency in Kunder,” in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi, (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 231.

<sup>48</sup> Giles Dorronsoro, “The Taliban’s Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,” (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 9-10, accessed January 22, 2014, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban\\_winning\\_strategy.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Anne Sterensen, “Al-Qaeda’s Allies: Explaining the Relationship Between Al-Qaeda and Various Factions of the Taliban After 2001,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper* (Washington, D.C.: New America Foundation, April 2010) 3, accessed January 22, 2014, <http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/stenersen2.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Anand Gopal, “The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington, D.C.: New America Foundation, April 2010), 36, accessed February 19, 2014, [http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/111010gopal\\_kandahar.pdf](http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/111010gopal_kandahar.pdf).

rather they judge, likely correctly, that by imposing continued attrition, they can push Western losses to politically unsustainable levels. In concert with their characteristic military activities, the Taliban have been engaged in a reasonably sophisticated propaganda campaign in order to shape both local and foreign perceptions of the conflict.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Suicide Attacks***

The Afghan Taliban, prior to their defeat in 2001, regarded suicide attacks as alien and never used the tactic. There has been considerable debate within the movement over the legitimacy of the tactic, particularly due to the number of civilian casualties it tends to cause.<sup>52</sup> One of the main advocates of suicide attacks within the organization was the late Mullah Dadullah, who was inspired by the terrorist tactics of Al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.<sup>53</sup> In any case, despite their initial misgivings, by 2006 the Quetta Shura were conducting one of the largest suicide attack campaigns in the world. They clearly found the tactic a useful adjunct to their guerrilla warfare capabilities as the death of Dadullah in 2007 did nothing to slow the enormous volume of suicide missions in the long run.

### ***Shadow Government & Justice***

As part of their campaign to control territory, the Taliban have been assiduous in targeting local government officials and police because they are the most visible and vulnerable elements of Government presence in rural Afghanistan.<sup>54</sup> In their place, Taliban administrative structures have been developed, which have been more or less complex depending upon the level of control the insurgents enjoy in an area. In some cases, there is simply no formal government presence to replace. Taliban governance is typically limited, but Taliban agents do collect taxes and are engaged in the provision of one *key* public service, namely provision of a quick, if brutal, form of justice and dispute resolution.<sup>55</sup> This has been

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<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group, "Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?," *Asia Report No. 158*, (Kabul: International Crisis Group, July 2008), 1-2, accessed January 22, 2014,

[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/158\\_taliban\\_propaganda\\_winning\\_the\\_war\\_of\\_words.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/158_taliban_propaganda_winning_the_war_of_words.ashx)

<sup>52</sup> Gopal, "The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Kandahar," 36.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 138.

<sup>54</sup> Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 102-103.

<sup>55</sup> Braithwaite and Wardak, "Crime and War in Afghanistan Part I," 8-9; Carl Forsberg, "The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar," *Afghanistan Report No. 3*. (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, December 2009), 21, accessed February 2, 2014,

[http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The\\_Talibans\\_Campaign\\_For\\_Kandahar.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The_Talibans_Campaign_For_Kandahar.pdf); Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 362-363; Ladbury, "Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan," 23; Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 140; David Loyn, *In Afghanistan: Two Hundred Years of British, Russian and American Occupation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 207.



identified again and again by analysts as a central part of their ability to gain some level of acquiescence among Afghan communities.

The current Afghan Government's justice system and associated police force are almost uniquely corrupt and predatory.<sup>56</sup> It is therefore not surprising that an organisation able to provide a useful alternative may be able to command some adherence from the community. Here, as elsewhere, the Taliban have also used targeted violence to intimidate government judiciary officials who have attempted to carry out their duties, so that in areas with any significant Taliban presence there may in fact be little alternative to Taliban justice. Moreover, in much of rural Afghanistan, justice has typically been dispensed through local, traditional means. But these systems have been greatly weakened by the undermining of the authority of elders by thirty years of war and the rise of alternative power structures.<sup>57</sup>

Therefore, the Taliban system, though far from perfect, has often been preferred to the available alternatives by much of the populace.<sup>58</sup> Where they have control of an area, the Taliban have installed their own judges on a permanent basis. Where their control is more precarious, they dispense justice through 'mobile courts'. These courts can be counted on to render a swift judgement, and the Taliban hierarchy has attempted to put in place mechanisms which ensure that judges act relatively impartially in comparison to their corrupt government colleagues.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Exploitation of Local Politics***

One of the chief advantages that the Taliban have enjoyed in comparison to their enemies is their superior understanding of their environment. In the abstract, the conflict in Afghanistan can be thought of as occurring between actors such as the coalition forces, the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. But on the ground, it is comprised of overlapping layers of conflicts. Moreover, with the intervention of the US forces in Afghanistan, they not only

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<sup>56</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland," 23. Rani D. Mullen, "Afghanistan in 2008: State Building at the Precipice," *Asian Survey* 49, No. 1 (January/February 2009), 35; Braithwaite and Wardak, "Crime and War in Afghanistan Part I," 11.

<sup>57</sup> Ladbury, "Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan," 23; Mirwais Harooni, "Billions Spent on Afghan Police but Brutality, Corruption Prevalent," *Reuters*, August 24, 2011, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/24/us-afghanistan-police-crime-idUSTRE77N10U20110824>; Kim Sengupta, Jonathon Owen and Brian Brady, "Afghan Police Corruption 'hits Nato Pullout'," *Independent*, September 21, 2010, accessed January 20, 2013, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/afghan-police-corruption-hits-nato-pullout-2139883.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* 83, No.1 (January/February 2007): 60; Braithwaite and Wardak, "Crime and War in Afghanistan Part I," 9.

<sup>59</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, "Hearts, Minds, and the Barrel of a Gun: The Taliban's Shadow Government," *PRISM* 3 No.2 (March 2012): 74-75, accessed January 23, 2014, <http://cco.dodlive.mil/files/2013/08/prism3-2.pdf>; Braithwaite and Wardak, "Crime and War in Afghanistan Part I," 9.

‘picked sides’ between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, but also picked sides *within* communities or even families.<sup>60</sup> As a consequence, coalitions, tribes or individuals who had previously been in power were sidelined and their rivals elevated. The Taliban have made full use of this issue, as Anand Gopal notes: “... rivalries among communities and competition for influence among local notables may have played an important role in paving the way for Taliban infiltration. The Taliban seem to be well informed about village politics and manoeuvre accordingly to manipulate local conflicts and to drive a wedge into existing fissures.”<sup>61</sup>

### ***Pakistan: Sanctuary and Support***

Another important aspect of the Taliban’s recovery after 2001 has been the role of Pakistan as a sanctuary. The Taliban leadership’s ability to flee to safe havens in the wake of the US invasion was vital to their ability to regroup, as was their access to support networks in Pakistan principally through Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), the Pakistani Deobandi political party with which they are associated.<sup>62</sup> It has also been alleged that the Taliban’s success has been supported by the continuing role of the Pakistani Interservices Intelligence (ISI), the powerful military intelligence organisation that was instrumental in the Taliban’s initial rise. The role of the ISI in supporting the Quetta Shura has been a highly controversial topic among both scholars and policy makers. Some have argued that the Quetta Shura’s activities are coordinated at the highest levels with the ISI.<sup>63</sup> However this seems implausible due to the relatively unsophisticated technologies and tactics employed by the Quetta Shura’s troops and because of their desire to maintain their independence.<sup>64</sup> In any case, at a minimum, the Quetta Shura’s activities appear to remain unimpeded by the ISI as their freedom of movement within Quetta demonstrates.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 307-308.

<sup>61</sup> Giustozzi, and Reuter, “The Northern Front,” 6.

<sup>62</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 249-250.

<sup>63</sup> Matt Waldman, “The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan’s ISI and Afghan Insurgents”, *Discussion Paper 18*, (London: Crisis States Research Centre, June, 2010): 4-8, accessed January 23, 2014, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp\\_uploaded\\_documents/100613\\_20106138531279734lse-isi-taliban.pdf](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/files/fp_uploaded_documents/100613_20106138531279734lse-isi-taliban.pdf).

<sup>64</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 412-413.

<sup>65</sup> There was briefly a hope amongst Western policy makers that the Pakistani military’s attitude had changed after a series of high profile arrests of high ranking Talibs in 2010. This has been subsequently interpreted by analysts however as a disciplinary move against certain sections of the organisation which appeared to be in danger of ‘reaching out’ to the Karzai regime in a manner which did not fit with the Pakistani military’s foreign policy.

### ***Intimidation and Coercion***

Although the Taliban have been effective in garnering some level of support or acquiescence through their exploitation of grievances and the provision of a rudimentary but effective justice system, their ability to control populations and territory has rested just as firmly on their ability to employ intimidation and violence.<sup>66</sup> These tactics, which we can broadly label ‘coercion’, come in a number of forms. Typically the first signs of Taliban infiltration into a district have been the distribution of so called ‘night letters’ (*Shabnama*), written warnings and threats which promise retribution for cooperation with the Afghani Government and its allies.<sup>67</sup> As Taliban control becomes better developed, they have made good on these threats, with systematic campaigns of violent intimidation and assassination against civilians, local government officials, clerics and elders who oppose them or appear to oppose them.<sup>68</sup>

The Taliban also have a particular advantage in their application of coercion. Due to their network of spies and informants and their generally superior knowledge of the ‘human terrain’, the Taliban are able to be discriminating in their use of violence. Those accused of collaborating can be singled out and executed, making clear the connection between behaviour and outcome. This is the reverse of the situation for foreign forces, which often have great trouble telling friend from foe. As Stathis Kalyvas has pointed out, coercive violence need not even be wholly discriminating, it just has to have the appearance of discrimination.<sup>69</sup> When coalition forces drop ordinance on civilians’ houses, no such pretence is possible. Moreover, the Taliban have been highly effective at using the coalition’s mistakes by heavily propagandizing the civilian casualties caused by their enemies.<sup>70</sup>

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Rubin, “Saving Afghanistan,” 60.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas H. Johnson “The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters),” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 18, No. 3, (September 2007): 320-321,

<sup>68</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 102-103; Dorronsoro, “The Taliban’s Winning Strategy in Afghanistan,” 26.

; Anne Stenersen, “The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: Organization, Leadership and Worldview,” *FFI-rapport 2010/00359*, (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, February, 2010) 30, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/10-00359.pdf>; Ron Moreau, “Tired of the Taliban,” *Newsweek Magazine*, June 6, 2012, accessed February 5, 2013, [www.thedailybeat.com/newsweek/2012/06/24/how-the-taliban-drove-afghan-villagers-to-rise-up-against-them.html](http://www.thedailybeat.com/newsweek/2012/06/24/how-the-taliban-drove-afghan-villagers-to-rise-up-against-them.html); Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 308; Jeffery Dressler and Carl Forsberg, “The Quetta Shura Taliban in Southern Afghanistan,” 5-7.

<sup>69</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 190-191.

<sup>70</sup> Erica Gaston, “More airstrikes won’t help in Afghanistan,” *Foreign Policy: The AfPak Channel*, October 26, 2010, accessed February 19, 2013, [http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/26/more\\_airstrikes\\_wont\\_help\\_in\\_afghanistan](http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/10/26/more_airstrikes_wont_help_in_afghanistan).

## **The Haqqani Network**

The other major group involved in suicide attacks in Afghanistan is what has come to be known as the Haqqani Network, a semi-autonomous group of militants led by the aging Jihadi Jalaluddin Haqqani. Although focused upon the conflict in Afghanistan, the Haqqani network, like the Quetta Shura, is based in Pakistan, specifically the North Waziristan agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), although Haqqani himself hails from the Khost province of Afghanistan. Haqqani has a long history in Afghan politics and militancy stretching back to the 1970s and was a major recipient of foreign funding during the anti-Soviet Jihad; during this period Haqqani was regarded as a valuable asset by the CIA.<sup>71</sup> Although Haqqani initially opposed the Taliban's advance on Kabul, he joined their cause in 1995, "...allegedly prompted by the ISI."<sup>72</sup> Siraj, Jalaluddin's son who has increasingly taken effective control of the organisation since the fall of the Taliban regime has, in an interview, denied that the Haqqani Network is autonomous from the Taliban and both he and his father have repeatedly pledged fealty to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup> Evidently, this stance is meant to promote the perception of a completely unified front amongst the insurgency.

### **Organisational Links**

One of the key features of the Haqqani Network is that it acts as the central hub between actors in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>74</sup> The organisation has connections with both the native Pakistani Taliban movement and other domestic Pakistani militant groups. The Haqqani Network is also regarded as being far closer to Al-Qaeda than the Quetta Shura and has extensive contacts in the Gulf, which is a strong source of funding for the

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<sup>71</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, (London: Penguin, 2004), 202.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Ruttig, "Loya Paktia's Insurgency (I): The Haqqani Network as an Autonomous Entity," in *Decoding the New Taliban: Insights from the Afghan Field*, ed. Antonio Giustozzi, (London: Hurst & Co., 2009), 65.

<sup>73</sup> Jeffrey Dressler, "The Haqqani Network: From Pakistan to Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Report No. 6*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, October 2010), accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani\\_Network\\_0.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Haqqani_Network_0.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Don Ressler, and Vahid Brown, "The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of Al-Qaeda," *Harmony Program*, (West Point, New York: Combatting Terrorism Centre, July 2011), 47-48, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CTC-Haqqani-Report\\_Ressler-Brown-Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/CTC-Haqqani-Report_Ressler-Brown-Final_Web.pdf); Note however that Ressler and Brown's overall thesis that the Haqqani Network is an integral part of the 'Global Jihad' seems to overstate the case. It is quite true that Haqqani has been a vital facilitator at key points in the incubation of Al-Qaeda, but there seems little evidence that Haqqani is actually interested in engaging in such a Jihad himself, for the simple reason that he simply has not done anything on this score, as the authors themselves note.

organisation.<sup>75</sup> In fact, the majority of the Arab and other volunteers who fought during the Anti-Soviet Jihad did so in the area of Haqqani's influence.

Like the Quetta Shura, the Haqqani Network maintains an important relationship with the ISI. The precise nature of the relationship is similarly unclear, but the Haqqani Network is often regarded as having stronger links, perhaps even to the extent of being an ISI proxy.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the exact nature of the relationship, there is a convergence of interests since the Haqqani Network's efforts are focused on Afghanistan, and the ISI wants to avoid any more domestic enemies as well as pursue its long term goal of 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan. Moreover the Haqqani Network has proven itself useful to the ISI by brokering peace deals in the tribal regions and attempting to refocus Pakistani militants away from attacking the state and instead targeting Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup>

### **Motivations**

Due to its links with the Pakistani Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the Haqqani Network is typically considered in some sense more ideologically 'extreme' than the Quetta Shura, or at least more attuned to the ideas of the international Jihad.<sup>78</sup> However Haqqani, while no doubt a conservative Islamist, seems ultimately to be a pragmatic deal maker who has survived by making himself indispensable to a variety of key actors in the region. The clearest evidence of this pragmatism is his ability simultaneously to court the Pakistani state and its enemies in the Pakistani Taliban. Moreover, according to Thomas Ruttig, those who have met Haqqani over the long course of his career doubt religion is his primary motivator. Ruttig suggests instead that like many in the insurgency, the recent empowerment of his enemies and feelings of victimisation and a consequent desire for revenge are motivating factors more powerful

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<sup>75</sup> Catherine Collins and Ashraf Ali, "Financing the Taliban: Tracing the Dollars behind the Insurgencies in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington D.C.: New America Foundation, April 2010), 10, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/collinsali.pdf>.

<sup>76</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Scott Shane and Alissa J. Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, September 24, 2011, accessed February 15, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/asia/brutal-haqqani-clan-bedevils-united-states-in-afghanistan.html?\\_r=0&ref=haqqanietwork&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/world/asia/brutal-haqqani-clan-bedevils-united-states-in-afghanistan.html?_r=0&ref=haqqanietwork&pagewanted=all).

<sup>77</sup> Brian Fishman, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict Across the FATA and NWFP," *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington D.C.: New America Foundation, April 2010), 17, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/fishman.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Anand Gopal, Mansur Khan Mahsud, and Brian Fishman, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in North Waziristan", *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington D.C.: New America Foundation, April 2010), 18, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/northwaziristan.pdf>.

than religion.<sup>79</sup> Finally, it seems plausible that the Haqqani Network's activities are part of an attempt to make sure that whatever the post US Afghan political configuration, the Haqqani family will have to be given due consideration.<sup>80</sup>

### ***Operational Characteristics***

The Haqqani Networks' main area of operations is South Eastern Afghanistan, in the area known as Loya Paktia ('Greater Paktia'; made up of Paktia, Paktika and Kohst, which abut North Waziristan across the border). Operationally, the Haqqani Network is regarded as an extremely potent military force and many of the suicide attacks carried out in the capital and its surrounds are thought to be organized by the Haqqanis.<sup>81</sup> As a consequence, since 2009, the US has focused substantial special force efforts on Haqqani's forces within Afghanistan and targeted the leadership with numerous drone strikes in North Waziristan.<sup>82</sup>

The Haqqani Network is also thought to have orchestrated many of the attacks against high profile targets and so called 'complex attacks' featuring squads of militants and multiple suicide bombers which have become more common since 2008.<sup>83</sup> These include the January 2008 assault on the luxury Serena hotel in Kabul, apparently targeting the Norwegian foreign minister; an assassination attempt on president Karzai's life the same year; and the 2008 and 2009 suicide bombings of the Indian Embassy in Kabul.<sup>84</sup> The 2008 attack on the Indian Embassy was particularly controversial since US intelligence concluded that the ISI was involved in the planning of the attack. This evidence began to crystalize the perception that Pakistan may have been involved in a 'double game' with the United States.<sup>85</sup> The Haqqanis have also been involved in targeted killings on both sides of the border and apparently have formed what amount to 'deaths squads' which carry out assassinations and public executions,

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<sup>79</sup> Ruttig, "Loya Paktia's Insurgency 67, 73-74.

<sup>80</sup> Mazzetti, Shane and Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan."

<sup>81</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Insurgency in Afghanistan's Heartland," 16.

<sup>82</sup> Eric Schmitt, and Alissa J. Rubin, "Afghan Assault Signals Evolution of a Militant Foe," *New York Times*, April 16, 2012, accessed February 19, 2013, [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/world/asia/afghan-assaults-signal-evolution-of-haqqani-network.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/17/world/asia/afghan-assaults-signal-evolution-of-haqqani-network.html?_r=0); Dressler, "The Haqqani Network," 34-36.

<sup>83</sup> Jack Healy and Alissa J. Rubin, "U.S. Blames Pakistan-Based Group for Attack on Embassy in Kabul," *New York Times*, September 14, 2011, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/15/world/asia/us-blames-kabul-assault-on-pakistan-based-group.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>84</sup> Declan Walsh, "Seven killed as Taliban militants storm luxury hotel in Kabul," *Guardian*, January 15, 2008, accessed February 15, 2013, [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/15/Afghanistan.pressandpublishing](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/15/Afghanistan.pressandpublishing); Anand Gopal, "The most deadly US foe in Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 2009, accessed February 19, 2013, [www.csmonitor.com/world/Asia-South-Central/2009/0601/p10s01-wosc.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/world/Asia-South-Central/2009/0601/p10s01-wosc.html).

<sup>85</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Eric and Schmitt, "Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, August 1, 2008, accessed February 15, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/asia/01pstan.html?em](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/asia/01pstan.html?em).

including in one case the decapitation of ten individuals.<sup>86</sup> Although the organisation remains relatively separate from the Quetta Shura, all of those attacks thought to be carried out by the Haqqani Network are claimed in the name of the Taliban.<sup>87</sup>

### **Organisational Structure**

In contrast to the Quetta Shura, the Haqqani network has generally not attempted to hold territory or create a 'shadow government' in Afghanistan; once having carried out their missions, fighting teams largely return to FATA. On the other hand, within North Waziristan the organisation has constructed a virtual state, where, to quote journalist David Rhodes, who spent seven months in captivity with the Haqqanis, "...Taliban policemen patrolled the streets, and Taliban road crews carried out construction projects. The Haqqani network's commanders and foreign militants freely strolled the bazaars of Miram Shah and other Towns."<sup>88</sup> In several ways, the organisation has a more 'mafia like' quality than the Quetta Shura; its leadership is largely familial or at least from within Haqqanis own Zadran tribe. Moreover, because there is little opium production in the Haqqanis area of influence, funding often relies on kidnapping, extortion and protection rackets.<sup>89</sup> The organisation has also been found running front companies in Pakistan selling cars and real estate and even appear to be involved in the production of ammonium nitrate, one of the key ingredients in explosives.<sup>90</sup>

### **Pakistan**

While the insurgency in Afghanistan is complex, the set of organisations carrying out suicide attacks in Pakistan is truly byzantine.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, for convenience, we can divide the organisations in question into three camps. First, there is the Pakistani Taliban movement which began to coalesce after the US's invasion of Afghanistan and the consequent deployment of the Pakistani Army into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Second is

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<sup>86</sup> Ray Rivera, Sharifullah, Sahak and Eric Schmitt, "Militants Turn to Death Squads in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, November 28, 2011, accessed February 15, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/asia/Haqqani-militants-use-death-squads-in-afghanistan.html?ref=haqqaninetwork](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/29/world/asia/Haqqani-militants-use-death-squads-in-afghanistan.html?ref=haqqaninetwork).

<sup>87</sup> Rassler and Brown, "The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of Al-Qaeda," 13.

<sup>88</sup> David Rhode, "You have Atomic Bombs, but We Have Suicide Bombers," *New York Times*, October 19, 2009, accessed February 15, 2013, [www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/world/asia/20hostage.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/world/asia/20hostage.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>89</sup> Gretchen Peters, "Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Harmony Project*, (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Centre, October, 2010), 35-38, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Crime-and-Insurgency\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Crime-and-Insurgency_Final.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> Mazzetti, Shane and Rubin, "Brutal Haqqani Crime Clan Bedevils U.S. in Afghanistan."

<sup>91</sup> In addition to the three main groups I deal with, there are also small numbers of 'foreign fighters', other than Al-Qaeda, operating in concert with other militants in Pakistan. These include Uzbeks, Chechens, and Uighurs and others. For clarity, I omit discussion of these groups, since they are not centrally involved in the issues arising in this thesis. For details, see: Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen, "Al-Qaeda in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan and Beyond", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (2008): 784.

what has come to be termed the ‘Punjabi Taliban’ made up of breakaway factions of long standing Sunni militant groups which had previously either been involved in the state sponsored Jihad in Kashmir, or were engaged in sectarian conflict against the Shia. Although many of these groups had previously been tools of Pakistani state policy, after 9/11 some of the Jihadis began to feel that the government had betrayed them and, as a consequence, they joined the Taliban’s insurrection. Finally, after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Pakistan became the new home of many Al-Qaeda operatives, including of course, Osama bin Laden himself and his deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Qaeda sought to rebuild itself and developed (or reactivated) links with the ‘native’ Jihadis, and also became involved, albeit to a lesser degree, in the conflict with the Pakistani government and military.

### **Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan**

The main organisation carrying out suicide attacks in Pakistan is the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan; although calling it an ‘organisation’ is, even more so than its Afghan cousin, misleading.<sup>92</sup> Instead, it is better thought of as a franchise or ‘umbrella’ organisation under which many smaller groups operate in a semi-coherent way.<sup>93</sup> Like the Afghan insurgent groups, the TTP is composed largely of ethnic Pashtuns who reside in Pakistan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

FATA, although legally part of Pakistan since 1947, has never truly been incorporated into the country.<sup>94</sup> When regular Pakistani army troops were deployed there in 2002 and began to conduct operations against foreign militants which had fled from Afghanistan it was, as Anatol Lieven argued, not so much a case of the state re-asserting its authority as it was asserting it for the first time.<sup>95</sup> Tribal elements began to organize almost immediately to resist this incursion and to protect their foreign ‘guests’.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Syed Zaidi claimed as of 2008 that 80 percent of such attacks were carried out by the TTP: Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, “The New Taliban Warlords and Organization,” *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 1, No. 2 (2008): 73, accessed 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 2014, [http://www.coedat.nato.int/publications/datr2/04\\_Manzar%20Zaidi.pdf](http://www.coedat.nato.int/publications/datr2/04_Manzar%20Zaidi.pdf).

<sup>93</sup> Joshua T. White, *Pakistan’s Islamist Frontier: Islamic Politics and U.S. Policy in Pakistan’s North-West Frontier*, (Arlington, VA: Centre on Faith & International Affairs, November 2008), accessed January 26, 2014, <http://web.mit.edu/afarrell/Public/1742papers/Pakistan-Islamist-Frontier.pdf>.

<sup>94</sup> Shuja Nawaz, “FATA – A Most Dangerous Place,” (Washington: D.C., Centre for Strategic and International Studies, January 2009), 7-9, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/081218\\_nawaz\\_fata\\_web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/081218_nawaz_fata_web.pdf); Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 362-366.

<sup>95</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 414.

<sup>96</sup> Brian Cloughley dates the conflict in FATA to February 2003: Brian Cloughley, “Insurrection in Pakistan’s Tribal Areas”, *Brief Number 29*, (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit, January 2008), 3, accessed January 26, 2014, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/psru/briefings/archive/Brief29finalised.pdf>. Much has been made of the importance in the Pashtun code of honour (*Pashtunwali*) and hospitality (*Melmastia*). The centrality of this



The first forays by the army in FATA were, as Hassan Abbas explains, meant to be ‘surgical strikes’ to root out Al-Qaeda. In practice, they were a debacle, with the Army quite unprepared for the vicious counter attack by local fighters.<sup>97</sup> The army responded with indiscriminate airstrikes whose main result appeared to be civilian casualties; beaten on the ground, it signed a peace deal with the militants in early 2004.<sup>98</sup> This deal was quickly broken and during 2005 and 2006 surging tribal fighters began to ‘Talibanize’ large swathes of FATA.<sup>99</sup> The army in turn repeatedly attempted to pacify the growing insurgency, but the militants continued to get the better of the army in these conflicts. Further peace treaties were struck, but their main effect was to legitimize the militants’ de facto control of the territory they had seized and give the Taliban time to regroup.<sup>100</sup>

The growing conflict between the Pakistani state and the Pakistani Taliban militants reached its first peak in mid-2007. During 2006 and the first half of 2007, Islamist vigilantes based in the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in Islamabad increasingly acted as a law unto themselves in the capital, attacking video stores, massage parlours and other sources of ‘immorality’.<sup>101</sup> The leadership of the mosque were widely seen as linked to both the tribal militants and a number of other Islamist militant groups and called for both the imposition of sharia law and the end of cooperation with the US.<sup>102</sup> After a number of small-scale clashes between the authorities

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concept, it has been argued, required tribal Pashtuns to protect their foreign ‘guests’. For instance, Thomas H. Johnson, and M. Chris Mason, “No Sign Until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier,” *International Security* 32, No. 4 (Spring 2008): 58-64. However it is important to note that there were also large pecuniary and political benefits for many involved in providing shelter to Arab fighters fleeing Afghanistan. To quote one expert “...*melmastia*... which is one of the stronger Pashtun traditions, has lost its meaning: it is no more a free hospitality but is used by some tribesmen as a way of acquiring wealth and influence” from: Nawaz, “FATA – A Most Dangerous Place,” 25; see also Stenersen, “Al-Qaeda’s Allies,” 13.  
<sup>97</sup> Hassan Abbas, “Militancy in Pakistan’s Borderlands: Implications for the Nation and for Afghan Policy,” (New York: Century Foundation, 2010), 14-15, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Militancy.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> This deal, the so called ‘Shakai agreement’ was signed on the militants’ behalf by Nek Muhammed, a Taliban commander who was, it appears, the first victim of the drone campaign waged by the US in Pakistan: C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, “Pakistan’s War Within,” *Survival* 51 No. 6, (2009): 171; Sameer Lawlani, “Pakistan’s COIN Flip,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Paper*, (Washington, D.C., New America Foundation, April 2010): 2-3, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/lalwani.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> Seth G. Jones and C. Chris Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 25-28.

<sup>100</sup> John R. Schmidt, “The Unravelling of Pakistan,” *Survival* 51, No. 3, (2009): 41; Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, “Negotiations and the Anti-Taliban Counterinsurgency in Pakistan,” *Asian Politics & Policy* 2, No. 2, (April/June, 2010): 264-267.

<sup>101</sup> Pervez Hoodbhoy, “Pakistan – The Threat From Within,” *Brief Number 13*, (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit, May 2007), 4-9, accessed January 26, 2014, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/psru/briefings/archive/Brief13finalised.pdf>.

<sup>102</sup> For a good overview of the Red Mosque siege (‘Operation Silence’) and its relationship to the subsequent spike in militant violence, see: Qandeel Siddique, “The Red Mosque Operation and its Impact on the Growth of the Pakistani Taliban,” FFI-rapport 2008/01915, (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, October 2008).

and the mosque's activists, the conflict developed into a full-scale siege in July 2007. The combatants included militants entrenched in the mosque's compound and the siege ended with heavy casualties among both militants and civilians.

The siege seemed to be taken as a signal not only by the Pakistani Taliban, but also a variety of other Pakistani militants; the 'gloves had come off' and the militants responded in turn. Prior to this, suicide attacks had featured as a constant but relatively minor part of the conflict; after the siege the country was wracked with a wave of vicious suicide attacks, particularly in the North West. According to data I obtained from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, the second half of 2007 saw 33 attacks, a 200 percent increase on the total from the two and half years previous.<sup>103</sup> The year's carnage was capped by the shooting and suicide bombing assassination of Benazir Bhutto who had recently returned from exile.

The end of 2007 also saw the formal announcement of the formation of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, a militant warlord from South Waziristan.<sup>104</sup> Although relatively small groups of Taliban-style militants had been operating across FATA since approximately 2002, it was at this point that they began to take on a coherent identity as a national movement within Pakistan distinct from Quetta Shura and its allies in Afghanistan.

The rising tide of violence and the 'Talibanization' of Pakistan's North-West finally seemed to have reached its zenith in 2009 when the TTP linked Tehrik-i-Nifaz-i-Shariat-Mohammadi (TNSM) over ran the Swat district in the NWFP.<sup>105</sup> The incursion by the TNSM into Pakistan's so called 'settled areas' seriously alarmed the Pakistani public and the Army, whose prior counter-insurgency operations had been inconclusive at best, was finally

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<sup>103</sup> International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge," *Asia Report 164*, (Kabul: International Crisis Group, March 2009), 11, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/164\\_pakistan\\_\\_\\_the\\_militant\\_jihadi\\_challenge.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/164_pakistan___the_militant_jihadi_challenge.pdf); Ben Brandt, "The Punjabi Taliban: Causes and Consequences of Turning Against the State," *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 7 (July 2010): 8, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss7-art3.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan", *CTC Sentinel* 1, No. 2 (January 2008): 2, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/CTC%20Sentinel%20-%20Profile%20of%20Tehrik-i-Taliban%20Pakistan.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> Daud Khan Khattack, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in the Swat Valley," *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Paper*, (Washington D.C., New America Foundation, April, 2010), 4-6, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/swat.pdf>.

galvanized into concerted action against the militants.<sup>106</sup> The TNSM was driven from Swat and the army subsequently launched a number of operations in FATA which seemed to suggest the state was finally going to conduct a concerted effort to tackle the problem.

Despite this and the concurrent drone campaign by the US, the Taliban did not appear to have their capacity to strike seriously weakened, with suicide attacks continuing to inflict heavy casualties. On the other hand, the fears of some that the Taliban coalition was an existential threat to the state and that South Asia could be facing a nuclear armed Taliban-Al-Qaeda nexus seem largely unfounded. Instead, Pakistan has continued to muddle forward, neither about to collapse, nor to comprehensively deal with home-grown militancy.

### **Goals**

In terms of their stated aims, the Pakistani Taliban share many goals with their Afghan counterparts. They desire the removal of NATO forces from Afghanistan and want to see Sharia established in both countries.<sup>107</sup> They have also demanded that the Pakistan Army withdraw from FATA. As Nasreen Ghufuran has noted, their demand for the imposition of Sharia (as they perceive it) implies the overthrow of the regimes in both Kabul and Islamabad.<sup>108</sup>

Despite the many commonalities between the QST and the TTP, there is a fundamental and important difference between the two. The TTP opposes the regime in Islamabad and, in practice, the great majority of its activities have been carried out in Pakistan, most often against branches of the state. The Quetta Shura, on the other hand, remains wedded to the Pakistani regime, or at least parts of the military. As noted above, it is not clear to what extent this is from choice rather than necessity, but in either case, it creates a clear divide between the goals and activities of the two main branches of the Taliban movement.

### ***The TTP as a contemporary Phenomenon***

Because of the fact that ‘government interference’ appears to be one of the proximate causes of the rise of the TTP, it is perhaps natural to see the contemporary insurgency as simply another manifestation of the apparently age-old tendency to resist ‘foreign’ influence in the

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<sup>106</sup> Ayesha Siddiqa, “Pakistan’s Counterterrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies,” *The Washington Quarterly* 34, No. 1, (Winter 2011), 152; Matthew J. Nelson, “Pakistan in 2009: Tackling the Taliban?” *Asian Survey* 50, No. 1, (January/February, 2010): 113-114.

<sup>107</sup> Abbas, “A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan,” 2.

<sup>108</sup> Nasreen Ghufuran, “Pashtun Ethnonationalism and the Taliban Insurgency in the North West Frontier Province,” *Asian Survey* 49, No. 6, (November/December, 2009): 1094.

activities of the tribal peoples, particularly the Mehsud and Wazir tribes of the Waziristans, who are notorious for their intransigence.<sup>109</sup>

However, the TTP is in several respects fundamentally different from prior insurgencies on the Afghan-Pakistan frontier. One important difference is the relative coherence and stamina of the insurrection.<sup>110</sup> In the past, insurgences in the border region have spread like wildfire, but just as quickly burnt out. The current Taliban movement, in contrast, has continued fighting for over a decade and has managed to absorb both continued forays against it by the Pakistani Army as well the US's sustained drone campaign.

At a more general level, the nature of the insurgency is arguably a reflection of changes in this part of Pakistan. Rather than simply being a continuation of prior cultural traditions, the current Taliban movement, as Jason Burke argues, reflects the breakdown and disintegration of traditional social structures.<sup>111</sup> The weakening of longstanding political and social mechanisms for regulating tribal society gave new actors space to mobilize; the militarization and 'Jihadization' of the region brought about by its use as a staging area for the anti-Soviet Jihad gave them both beliefs and weapons with which to fight. The Pakistani Taliban themselves have been enthusiastic contributors to this process, particularly through their numerous assassinations of traditional tribal leaders who were seen to oppose them; suicide attacks have been a particularly useful tool in this enterprise.<sup>112</sup>

The destruction of traditional sources of authority within FATA has an important relationship with the nature of the Pakistani Taliban's leadership. From the point of view of the traditional system, the more recent militant leaders have tended to be 'nobodies' from marginal families.<sup>113</sup> In the past, rebellions were largely led by the tribal aristocracy. In addition, as in Afghanistan, the militants have often been able to call on the support of the formerly lowly mullah whose social importance was transformed by the anti-Soviet conflict in which they were useful tools for mobilizing the mujahidin. Even more obviously, class based issues lay behind the rapid rise of the TNSM, a Taliban-linked group which were responsible for the

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<sup>109</sup> Johnson, and Mason, "No Sign Until the Burst of Fire," 53-55. The use of scare quotes here indicates the fact that for some in FATA, the Pakistani government was seen as essentially a foreign power, although it is of course the sovereign ruler of the region.

<sup>110</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 431.

<sup>111</sup> Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 373-375.

<sup>112</sup> Habib Khan and Riaz Khan, "62 Killed as Suicide Bombers Target Tribal Elders in Pakistan," Washington Times, July 9, 2010, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/9/suicide-bombers-kill-more-50-pakistan/?page=all>.

<sup>113</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 431-432.

capture of Swat. They made use of local resentment against big landowners by employing socialistic slogans about the reappropriation and distribution of land.<sup>114</sup>

### ***Justice, Governance and Coercion***

Although there are many factors that explain the rapid rise of the TTP, the most important seem identical to the key factor behind the return of the Afghan Taliban. That is, their ability to provide a rough and ready, but swift, form of justice. It is this carrot, along with the stick of terrible violence against those who oppose them, which has been most effective in producing their surprising ability to quickly expand their territorial hold.

Pakistanis in general have no love for their legal system. It is hopelessly corrupt, inefficient and also alien to their values, being descended from the legal structure of British India.<sup>115</sup> But justice is even more compromised in FATA, because it is not regulated by the Pakistani legal system but by the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) system, which is an even more archaic holdover from British Colonial times.<sup>116</sup> The FCR is administered by “Political Agents” (PA) who are the local representatives of the Federal Government, typically a civil servant, who act as “...prosecutor, investigator and judge”.<sup>117</sup> Pakistani journalist Imtiaz Gul goes so far as to argue that it is the perceived injustice of the FCR system and its administration by the PA that has been the main source of support for the successive Islamist movements which have sprung up within the FATA; moreover he suggests that the popular desire to see Sharia implemented is largely driven by the belief that this will establish real justice as opposed to the sham provided by the current system.<sup>118</sup>

This is not to suggest that this is necessarily the primary motivation of the militants *themselves*, but the lack of a functioning justice system and the perception of denied justice seems to have been the primary mechanism which has allowed the Taliban to gain sway in FATA, just as in Afghanistan. The appeal of the Taliban and its relationship to justice is nicely captured by a quote by a local Pakistani in Mohmand province:

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<sup>114</sup> Khattak, “The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in the Swat Valley,” 12.

<sup>115</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 84-85.

<sup>116</sup> International Crisis Group, “Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA,” *Asia Report* No. 178, (Islamabad: International Crisis Group, October, 2009), 2-4, accessed January 26, 2014  
[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/178\\_pakistan\\_\\_\\_countering\\_militancy\\_in\\_fata.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/178_pakistan___countering_militancy_in_fata.pdf).

<sup>117</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, (London: Penguin, 2010), 45-48.

Albeit with non-binding input from a council of local elders and in general there is no recourse when a decision is made by the PA.

<sup>118</sup> Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, 45-48, 53.

The Taleban's work in our area has been good. If you have a problem you can go to them and they will decide your case justly in three days. If you go to the police station, they will take all your money and decide the case in twenty years. In Pakistan, only the rich get justice. So people are coming here from Charsadda and even further to get justice from the Taleban.<sup>119</sup>

The spread of the Pakistani Taliban's influence has, as in Afghanistan, featured coercion, more specifically, the threat and widespread use of violence, as well as the promise of law and order.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, it has been part of a package that has included the imposition of their extremist interpretation of Islam. The overall process is well captured by anthropologist Joshua White who has done fieldwork in the region:

Their expansion has often followed a predictable pattern: well-armed groups of young men enter an area with Kalashnikovs and white pickup trucks, calling themselves Taliban; they win the favour of the community by taking on local criminal elements and prohibiting certain un-Islamic behaviours; they establish *qazi* courts for the quick adjudication of disputes; and, having garnered some measure of local support, they set about solidifying their control by marginalizing or killing local notables and government officials, enacting even stricter Islamist measures, and establishing environments conducive to their own criminal networks.<sup>121</sup>

As White's quote makes clear, the Pakistani Taliban start by cleaning up criminality and providing services but quickly crush alternative sources of authority and imposing their own values which are not, it should be noted, necessarily popular.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, one of the services they provide is solemnizing love marriages, which has given them some popularity amongst the young who may not like arranged marriage. This is indicative of the revolutionary, rather than conservative, nature of the Taliban in Pakistan.<sup>123</sup>

### ***Criminal Connections***

While the TTP attacked criminal activity, as White suggests, they have actually been involved in criminal activities of their own. In fact, it appears that organized crime is their

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<sup>119</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 84.

<sup>120</sup> Shehzad H. Qazi, "Rebels of the frontier: Origins, Organization, and Recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22, No. 4 (2011): 593-594.

<sup>121</sup> White, *Pakistan's Islamist Frontier*, 87.

<sup>122</sup> This will be discussed extensively in chapter three.

<sup>123</sup> Jones and Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, 27.

primary source of funding.<sup>124</sup> Certain existing criminal organisations have all but merged with the TTP, exchanging funding for the protection the Taliban are able to provide. These criminal networks have enabled the TTP to carry out many robberies, including a considerable number in Karachi. Other sources of revenue include extortion and taxation of local populations, the sale of drugs, protection for timber and trucking mafias and cash received from resident Al-Qaeda members.<sup>125</sup> The most lucrative of all these activities is apparently kidnapping for ransom. The TTP even have a *fatwa* indicating that such ransom activities are justified to support their jihad.

### ***Operational Characteristics and Suicide Attacks***

The TTP have, like their Afghan compatriots, carried out an effective insurgent campaign from their bases in FATA, which due to the forbidding terrain, are difficult to attack. Moreover, when faced with overwhelming force, they have been able to slip from one area to another due to their influence across the region. In comparison to the situation in Afghanistan, the TTP also have the distinct advantage that their enemy had little experience with or knowledge of counter-insurgency warfare, the Pakistani army being largely trained to fight a conventional war against India.<sup>126</sup> The Pakistani army also lacked the technology and equipment that US forces brought to bear against the Afghan Taliban; whereas the TTP were facing the often woefully equipped police or other paramilitaries such as the frontier constabulary.<sup>127</sup> The result is that the well-financed and well-armed TTP has simply outgunned the forces supposed to oppose it. In addition, although less commented upon than in Afghanistan, the militants have also made extensive use of IEDs.<sup>128</sup>

Although perhaps not as sophisticated as their Afghan counterparts, the Pakistani Taliban have also been involved in a propaganda offensive to go along with their military tactics. Particularly important in this respect have been the so called ‘FM Mullahs’ who have set up

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<sup>124</sup> Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*, (London: Reaktion, 2011), 51-55.

<sup>125</sup> Arabinda Acharyaa et al., “Making Money in the Mayhem: Funding Taliban Insurrection in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32 No. 2 (2009): 95-108.

<sup>126</sup> Kashif Taher, “Counterinsurgency in Pakistan,” *Small Wars Journal*, (October 2010), 2, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/564-taher.pdf>; Lawlani, “Pakistan’s COIN Flip,” 2-4. In fact, one could argue that most of the Pakistani militaries’ unconventional military capacity has been provided by Islamist militants. In particular the Kashmir focused and sectarian Jihadists discussed below under the heading of the ‘Punjabi Taliban’.

<sup>127</sup> There are a variety of non-Army forces which have historically been used to secure FATA. See: S Jones and Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, 36-40.

<sup>128</sup> As the data analysis in chapter six will demonstrate, proportionately, Pakistani militants have used more IEDs than Afghan militants.

small scale pirate radio stations from which to broadcast pro-Taliban, anti-US and anti-Pakistan sermons and threats against their enemies.<sup>129</sup>

Finally, the TTP, as noted earlier, has been the largest exponent in Pakistan of suicide attacks. During the period covered by the data analysed in this thesis, 2004-2010, Pakistani militants have conducted fewer than half the number of suicide attacks conducted in Afghanistan. The number of people killed and injured in Pakistan however, was greater than in Afghanistan by a considerable margin. While I will delay detailed consideration of the attack data until chapter six, this simple comparison makes obvious the relative lethality of suicide attacks in Pakistan. Partly, as we will see, this springs from the Pakistani militants' propensity to attack civilians. However, it also seems likely that the relative lack of military resources compared to their NATO counterparts has made Pakistani security forces far more vulnerable to this tactic. Particularly notable in the TTP's use of suicide attacks has been its propensity for daring group suicide attacks against military and intelligence service installations, including some of the most tightly guarded facilities in Pakistan.<sup>130</sup>

### **The Punjabi Taliban**

The Pakistani Taliban is perhaps the best known of the 'native' militant outfits operating in Pakistan.<sup>131</sup> However they are far from the only ones engaged in the anti-Pakistan jihad. There is a whole 'alphabet soup' of lesser known (in the West) jihadi groups who operate in the country. Although they seem to be responsible for a much smaller proportion of suicide attacks than the TTP, their longstanding presence in Punjab and Sindh provinces, along with their links to both the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, have given the insurgency a far greater reach into Pakistan's political and economic heartland. These lesser known groups all share with the Taliban a broad similarity in their background in the Deobandi sect. However, the social origins of their members are on the whole rather different to that of the Taliban. The mainland Jihadists tend to be better educated and of a higher social stratum than the rural

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<sup>129</sup> Mukhtar A. Khan "The FM Mullahs and the Taliban's Propaganda War in Pakistan," *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 7 No. 14, (May 2009): 7-10, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM\\_007\\_25.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_007_25.pdf).

<sup>130</sup> See for instance: Robin McDowell, "Suicide Bombers Kill 67 at Pakistani Arms Factory," *Associated Press*, August 21, 2008, accessed January 26, 2014, [Hindustan Times, December 9, 2009, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/bomb-near-isi-office-kills-12-in-multan/article1-484494.aspx>; Saeed Shah, "Lahore Bombing is Pakistan's Bloodiest this Year," \*Guardian\*, March 13, 2010, accessed January 26, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/12/lahore-suicide-bombing-pakistan-taliban>.](http://web.archive.org/web/20080830034715/http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jIE0IUn4WliaMBpjG8SI_6H5RXzgD92N4IA00; Khalid Tanveer, )

<sup>131</sup> As opposed to the 'foreign' Al-Qaeda.



bred members of the Taliban.<sup>132</sup> For ease of understanding, these mainland Jihadis can be lumped into two main categories: those who originally organised to fight in Kashmir and those who have formed around a sectarian, primarily anti-Shia, agenda.<sup>133</sup>

### ***Kashmir and Extremism***

Since Pakistan and India's separation, the two states have been involved in a dispute over the former princely territory of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>134</sup> Several pitched conflicts over sovereignty of the state have been fought over the decades; however the militant groups with which we are concerned here grew out of a more specific conflict that began in 1987. An insurgency broke out in the region due to vote rigging by Indian politicians and heightened political expectations among younger Kashmiris.<sup>135</sup> This insurgency coalesced into the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a nationalist guerrilla organisation.

For the ISI however, after what it perceived as its triumph over the Soviets in Afghanistan, the development of the insurgency in Kashmir seemed an ideal opportunity to try to press for advantage against its old foe India. As a consequence, in the early 1990s, the ISI sought to push aside the JKLF and to replace it with their own Islamist proxy forces. This process began with the Hizbul Mujaheddin, but when this group faltered, the ISI turned to a number of more extreme Islamist groups, such as Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba.<sup>136</sup> These groups were both ideologically radical and willing to engage in acts of incredible brutality against both the Indian military and civilians.

Support for Islamic extremist insurgents did not stem, primarily, from ideological affinity. Rather, as Steve Coll memorably described it:

Every Pakistani general, liberal or religious, believed in the jihadists by 1999, not from personal Islamic conviction, in most cases, but because the

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<sup>132</sup> C. Christine Fair, "Who are Pakistan's Militants and their Families?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, No.1 (2008): 62-62.

<sup>133</sup> It is worth noting that there are also Shia sectarian organizations which have been formed to fight their Sunni counterparts, most notably Sipah-e-Muhammed Pakistan. The Shia organizations have not carried out suicide attacks however, or been involved in major conflict against the state. See: Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 189-192.

<sup>134</sup> Background to the conflict can be found in: International Crisis Group, "Kashmir: Learning from the Past," *Asia Report No. 70*, (Islamabad: International Crisis Group, December 2003), 1-17 accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/kashmir/070\\_kashmir\\_learning\\_from\\_the\\_past.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/kashmir/070_kashmir_learning_from_the_past.pdf).

<sup>135</sup> Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 90-91.

<sup>136</sup> As noted in the introduction, Lashkar-e-Taiba, although part of this milieu and having a quite similar ideology to many of the other Kashmiri Jihadis, has neither sought to attack the state nor taken to using suicide attacks. {Although it should be noted they come from the Ahl-e-Hadith sect, which is closer to Arabic Salafism than the other Jihadis, who as noted earlier, are all Deobandi}

jihadists had proved themselves over many years as the one force able to frighten, flummox and bog down the Hindu-dominated Indian army. About a dozen Indian divisions had been tied up in Kashmir during the late 1990s to suppress a few thousand well-trained paradise-seeking Islamist guerrillas. What more could Pakistan ask? The Jihadist guerrillas were a more practical day-to-day strategic defence against Indian hegemony than even a nuclear bomb.<sup>137</sup>

### ***Jaish-e-Muhammed***

While a multitude of Jihadi groups were ultimately involved in the Kashmir conflict, it appears that the main group which has contributed to the development of the Punjabi Taliban phenomenon is a faction of Jaish-e-Muhammed (JeM).<sup>138</sup> JeM was itself a breakaway from Harakat ul Mujahideen founded by Maulana Masood Azhar in 2000 with the intention of being the crème de la crème of Pakistani Jihadi outfits, and it quickly established a reputation for spectacular and deadly assaults.<sup>139</sup> JeM is staunchly anti-India, anti-US and anti-Israel and its leadership argues that Muslims are living in a state of submission in their own lands. Azhar has in fact compared contemporary Pakistan as similar to the British Raj due to the alleged encroachments of secular culture.<sup>140</sup>

Its ambitions have involved JeM in a number of high profile attacks, including one against the Kashmir legislative assembly in October 2001 and the audacious attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, carried out in conjunction with Lashkar-e-Taiba.<sup>141</sup> The latter attack was particularly dangerous since it almost led to war between the two nations. Omar

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<sup>137</sup> Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 478.

<sup>138</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network," *CTC Sentinel* Vol. 2 No. 4, (2009): 2. Pakistani Jihadi groups, like Pakistani political parties, have an inveterate tendency to fragmentation. This typically occurs because charismatic individuals within the groups clash over differences of opinion and this leads to formal splits. For an overview of both the Kashmiri Jihadi groups and their convoluted internal developments, see: Nicholas Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan: An Introduction to the Sunni Jihadi Groups in Pakistan and Kashmir," *Research Report 1*, (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit, February 2008): 22-32, accessed January 16, 2014, [http://polisci.indiana.edu/graduate/students/howenstein\\_res\\_report.pdf](http://polisci.indiana.edu/graduate/students/howenstein_res_report.pdf).

<sup>139</sup> Zahid Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan: The Struggle with Militant Islam*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 62-67. Azhar had been arrested in Srinagar by Indian authorities in 1994; after a previous failed attempt to free him, in 1999, militants hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814 and eventually landed it in then Taliban controlled Kandahar. He was freed by the Indian Government in exchange for the plane's passengers.

<sup>140</sup> Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan," 29.

<sup>141</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 303

Saeed Sheikh, the militant who murdered US journalist Daniel Pearl, was associated with the group and JeM members were also linked to the confrontation at the Red Mosque.<sup>142</sup>

### ***Sectarianism: Sipah-i-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi***

Although the Kashmiri Jihadis are not well known to non-specialists, the Kashmir conflict is widely appreciated by area specialists as one of the primary sources of regional conflict and instability. What is probably less widely appreciated is the scale of sectarian violence within Pakistan. In 2005 the International Crisis Group reported that “Religious sectarianism is, in fact, the principal source of terrorist activity in Pakistan.”<sup>143</sup> Given the scale of violence subsequently inflicted by the Taliban, this is likely no longer true. Nonetheless, sectarian conflict continues to be a very serious problem in Pakistan. A number of the most deadly suicide attacks in recent years have been those committed against Shia civilians.<sup>144</sup>

The origin of sectarian conflict in Pakistan in part reflects a fundamental clash in the broader Muslim world. In the wake of the Iranian revolution, many Sunni nations with Shia minorities began to perceive the latter as potential threats. Consequently some individuals began to form ‘defensive’ organisations to guard against the possibly traitorous activities of the Shia.<sup>145</sup> In Pakistan, the most important of these organisations, Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), was formed in 1985 by Maulana Haq Nawaz Jhangvi, a Deobandi cleric. According to Muhammad Zaman, the goals of the Sipah-i-Sahaba are straightforward: “...to combat the shi’a at all levels, to strive to have them declared a non Muslim minority in Pakistan, to proscribe Muharram-processions... and to make Sunni Islam the official religion of the state.”<sup>146</sup> In order to realise this vision, Jhangvi convinced Saudi backers that he could be a useful proxy against Iranian influence in Pakistan.

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<sup>142</sup> Hussain, *Frontline Pakistan*, 68.

<sup>143</sup> International Crisis Group, “The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan,” *Asia Report No. 95*, (Islamabad: International Crisis Group, April 2005), 1, accessed February 4, 2014, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_sectarianism\\_in\\_pakistan.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095_the_state_of_sectarianism_in_pakistan.pdf).

<sup>144</sup> Alex Rodriguez, “Pakistan Suicide Bombing Kills 58,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 2010, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/sep/04/world/la-fg-pakistan-blast-20100904>; Faisal Aziz, “Twin Blasts Kill 25 in Karachi,” *Reuters*, February 5, 2010, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2010/02/05/uk-pakistan-violence-idUKTRE6141JT20100205>, “Cruel Beyond Belief: No Honeymoon for Nawaz Sharif for Pakistan’s Terrorists,” *Economist*, June 22, 2013, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21579886-no-honeymoon-nawaz-sharif-pakistans-terrorists-cruel-beyond-belief>.

<sup>145</sup> Hussain Haqqani, “Weeding Out the Heretics: Sectarianism in Pakistan,” in *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 4 ed. Hillel Fradkin, Hussain Haqqani, and Eric Brown, (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2006), 74, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://currenttrends.org/docLib/200702021\\_current\\_trends\\_v4.pdf](http://currenttrends.org/docLib/200702021_current_trends_v4.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Muhammad Qasim Zaman, “Sectarianism in Pakistan: the Radicalization of Shi’i and Sunni Identities”, *Modern Asian Studies* 32, No. 3 (1998): 701-702.

In addition to these international trends, highly parochial issues aided the rise of sectarianism in Pakistan; specifically, the interrelationship of political economy and sectarian identity in Jhangvi's home district in the south of Punjab province. The region is home to many lower middle class migrants from India who have felt politically alienated and economically frustrated by the predominance of so called 'feudal' Shia political and economic elites.<sup>147</sup> The former group has, as a consequence, been the largest source of support for the SSP within Pakistan itself.

Using these twin sources of support, Jhangvi was able to build up training and organisational infrastructure such that by 1990 the SSP became operational by carrying out assassinations of Shia. One of its early 'victories', the killing of several Iranian diplomats, created intense controversy in the country and led to considerable official pressure on the organisation.<sup>148</sup> Despite its violent activities, the SSP began to involve itself in party politics. For this strategy to be successful, however, it could not afford to be seen as a terrorist organisation, particularly one with profoundly destabilizing effects upon Pakistan's international relations.

Therefore, as with other similar organisations, a split occurred, with a clandestine offshoot, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi ('The Army of Jhang'; LeJ) being formed in 1996 to carry on the violent anti-Shia program while the SSP sought more 'mainstream' political success.<sup>149</sup> LeJ, according to Gunaratna and Iqbal, is one of the most secretive and lethal Jihadi organisations in Pakistan.<sup>150</sup> My own research strongly supports the view that LeJ is particularly deadly. Although it often does not claim its attacks, as we will see in chapter six, suicide attacks against sectarian targets have tended to result in large numbers of casualties.

The extent to which SSP and LeJ are separate entities is debatable; according to some experts, LeJ is simply the "death squad" of SSP.<sup>151</sup> In any case, the relationship of SSP and LeJ to the Pakistani military and political elite has been much more contentious than that of the sectarian warriors. On the one hand, due to SSP's activity in electoral politics it has at

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<sup>147</sup> Tahir Kamran, "Contextualizing Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, No. 1, (2009): 65; Anatol Lieven describes the contemporary role of said 'Feudals' particularly vividly: Lieven, *Pakistan*, 17-19, and Chapters 7 & 8 *inter alia*

<sup>148</sup> Arif Jamal, "A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi," *CTC Sentinel* 2, No. 9 (2009): 11-12, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CTCSentinel-Vol2Iss9-3-Art4.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Jamal argues that SSP formed LeJ to carry out its violent agenda, while Gunaratna and Iqbal argue that the schism occurred because some within SSP thought that attempts at moderation to achieve political success amounted to 'selling out': Arif Jamal, "A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi," 12; See also: Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 162. To further complicate matters, Howenstein argues it is not even clear that the SSP has really renounced violence itself: Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan," 34.

<sup>150</sup> Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 161-168.

<sup>151</sup> Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 172.

times been used as a coalition partner by military backed regimes. In addition, LeJ has also sought military patronage through participation in the Kashmir conflict itself, enabling it to improve its operational abilities via training and the transfer of expertise from other Jihadi groups involved in the conflict.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, brutal sectarian killings have in no way served the goals of the state in the way the Kashmiri fighters' activities did, and indeed a number of high ranking Pakistani politicians are themselves Shia.<sup>153</sup> Consequently there have been periodic attempts to crack down on the SSP and LeJ, although these have not been particularly successful, in large part due to the institutional weakness of the Pakistani police forces.<sup>154</sup>

### ***Post 9/11***

After 9/11, then President Musharraf publicly renounced support for the previously state sanctioned militants and banned many of them, as waving the banner of Jihad was no longer politically palatable in light of the US's mood and goals.<sup>155</sup> Subsequently, it appears that many of these groups simply renamed themselves and moderated their activities, possibly under direction from the Pakistani intelligence agencies.<sup>156</sup> The reason for this was that despite this public denunciation, the Kashmiri jihadis continued to be a key part of Pakistan's long term foreign policy. Thus, as with the ISI's ongoing support of the Quetta Shura and the Haqqanis, it appears that after 9/11, the military did not, immediately at least, wish to stamp out completely what they perceived to have been some of their most valuable military assets, which would likely be needed again in the future.<sup>157</sup> Therefore the regime's handling of its former proxies was no better than its handling of the tribal insurgency, albeit for different reasons.

Nonetheless, not all of the militants were able to accommodate themselves to this new regime, which at a minimum required them to keep their heads down. Some believed that the government and army were 'stabbing them in the back' by acquiescing to US demands for cooperation in the Global War on Terror. Consequently, some made the decision to express

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<sup>152</sup> Jamal, "A Profile of Pakistan's Lashkar-i-Jhangvi," 13.

<sup>153</sup> Lieven, *Pakistan*, 294.

<sup>154</sup> Hassan Abbas, "Reforming Pakistan's Police and Law Enforcement Infrastructure: Is it Too Flawed to Fix?," *Special Report 266*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, February 2011), 6-12, accessed January 31, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/sr266.pdf>.

<sup>155</sup> Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan*, 222. This included the SSP/LeJ whose relationship with the state had obviously always been turbulent.

<sup>156</sup> Sumit Ganguly and Paul Kapur, "The Sorcerer's Apprentice: Islamist Militancy in South Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, No.1 (January 2010): 51.

<sup>157</sup> C. Christine Fair, "The Militant Challenge in Pakistan," *Asia Policy*, No. 11 (January 2011): 131-132

their disagreement violently. The first clear sign of the mainland militants' break with the state was when individuals from these groups were found to have been involved in several attempted suicide attack plots against Musharraf's life which occurred in the early years after 9/11. For many within these groups however, the siege of the Lal Masjid appears to have been the real turning point, as it was for the tribal militants.<sup>158</sup>

From around 2008, the Pakistani media and other analysts began to speak of the 'Punjabi Taliban'. Increasingly it became apparent that the 'rebellious' elements of JeM, LeJ and others had coalesced into a semi-coherent new terrorist network which was working in cooperation with the TTP and Al-Qaeda.<sup>159</sup> Many of the breakaway jihadis relocated from their urban home territories to the tribal areas controlled by their TTP allies and consequently strengthened their links with the tribal militants.

Operationally, the Punjabi Taliban have been involved in some of the most spectacular suicide attacks which have occurred in Pakistan. In particular, suicide attacks which have occurred on the 'mainland' (that is Punjab, Sindh, Islamabad etc), are thought to have been carried out by this network, or involved them in a logistical capacity.<sup>160</sup> The catastrophic bombing of the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad in 2008 involved Punjabi militants.<sup>161</sup> The Punjabi Taliban also appear to have been behind many of the devastating attacks conducted against military and intelligence services installations. It is likely that their ethnicity, local knowledge, higher level of training and links to the military have made this feasible.<sup>162</sup> The most spectacular of these attacks was the 2009 attack on the Army General Headquarters which involved several teams of gunmen and suicide bombers.<sup>163</sup> Sectarian attacks have continued to be part of the broader conflict and suicide attacks against Shia shrines have been some of the bloodiest in the nation's history.

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<sup>158</sup> Brandt, "The Punjabi Taliban," 8; Syed Manzar Abbas Zaidi, "Organizational Profiling of Suicide Terrorism: A Pakistani Case Study," *Defence Studies* 9, No. 3 (2009): 423.

<sup>159</sup> Abbas, "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network," 1.

<sup>160</sup> Abbas, "Defining the Punjabi Taliban Network", 1; Unfortunately, the database of suicide attack incidents which I am relying upon has relatively few claims made specifically by these groups.

<sup>161</sup> Raheel Khan, "Untangling the Punjabi Taliban Network," *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 3 (March 2010): 7, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss3-art3.pdf>.

<sup>162</sup> International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge," 7.

<sup>163</sup> Ziad Hussain, *The Scorpion's Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan – and How it Threatens America*, (New York: Free Press, 2010), 163-167.

## Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda ('the base') was born in Afghanistan, and was, like many other insurgent organisations in the region, a product of the Anti-Soviet Jihad.<sup>164</sup> The several accounts of the foundation of Al-Qaeda differ in a number of details.<sup>165</sup> The broad picture is that around 1989, Bin Laden, the young Saudi Arabian son of a building magnate, began to lay the foundations for a system which would better organise the volunteers (the "Arab Afghans") who had travelled from across the Arab world to fight the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. Previously, small groups of Arab fighters had been integrated into the existing Afghan Mujahideen fighting groups; Bin Laden however, started to create an independent Arab fighting force with its own camps.<sup>166</sup>

The battlefield experiences of Bin Laden and his colleagues had a transformative effect, giving rise to the a belief that that they had turned back the Atheist Empire.<sup>167</sup> In the view of Camille Tawil, their efforts were marginal; it was Afghan blood and tenacity, along with US and Saudi money and materiel, which defeated the Soviets.<sup>168</sup> Nonetheless, the Afghan Jihad gave the Arab Afghans experience and, perhaps more importantly, created a web of personal connections which would be vital for the longer term development of both Al-Qaeda and transnational Jihadism more broadly.<sup>169</sup>

After the withdrawal of Soviet forces and the gradual slide of the Afghan Mujahideen into civil war, Bin Laden and the other Arab Jihadists had to re-evaluate their future. After being rebuked in his offer to the Saudi Kingdom to repel Saddam's advance on Kuwait, Bin Laden and his followers found shelter in Sudan.<sup>170</sup> Bin Laden's relationship with his home country became increasingly acrimonious after the stationing of US troops there and, in 1996, Osama

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<sup>164</sup> As Jason Burke explains, the name 'Al-Qaeda' is strikingly apt, since it is semantically rich and the meanings associated with it manage to capture multiple aspects of the organization and indeed its evolution. For Al Qaeda can mean "...a base, as in a camp or a home, a foundation, such is what is beneath a house or a pedestal that supports a column. It can mean the lowest, broadest layer of a large cumulonimbus-type cloud. And, crucially, it can also mean a precept, rule, principle, maxim, formula, method, model or pattern." Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 1.

<sup>165</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Road to 9/11*, (London: Penguin, 2011), 131-137; Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 29-50; Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, (New York: Berkeley Publishing, 2003), 21-29; Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 72-86.

<sup>166</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda*, 30.

<sup>167</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 114-120.

<sup>168</sup> Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa'ida and the Arab Jihadists*, (London: Saqi, 2010), 17.

<sup>169</sup> According to Scott Atran, the individuals involved in the 2002 Bali Bombing, for instance, actually had little to do with the formal heirarchy of Jemaah Islamiya. Instead, the plot was the product of social networks formed in Afghan training camps: Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists*, (New York: Ecco, 2010), 162-167.

<sup>170</sup> Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 156-164.

bin Laden was forced to flee Sudan, as US and Saudi pressure on the Sudanese regime made his stay untenable. From Sudan he returned to Afghanistan where the country was being transformed by the expanding Taliban movement.<sup>171</sup>

While Bin Laden's relationship with the Taliban was not particularly close, their rule did provide a safe haven to plot and prepare.<sup>172</sup> Under the protection of the Taliban regime, Bin Laden built his organisation into a hierarchical, effective and relatively conventional structure able to execute a series of spectacular mass casualty attacks culminating in 9/11.<sup>173</sup>

However, after the US invasion of Afghanistan, the initial organisational structure of Al-Qaeda was destroyed; many operatives were killed or captured and those who survived were forced to flee. Only Bin Laden and a small group of other individuals knew of the 9/11 attacks and some within Al-Qaeda and the broader jihadi movement viewed them as a disastrous mistake. Those who continued to support Bin Laden in the aftermath of the attacks mostly fled to Pakistan, while others fled west to Iran or returned to their home countries, if they could.<sup>174</sup>

Most Al-Qaeda militants still in South Asia seem to have headquartered in various parts of FATA, where they increasingly linked up with the Haqqani Network (which, as noted above, has long standing ties to Bin Laden and others), the Pakistani Taliban and also the other Jihadi groups who increasingly congregated in this region.<sup>175</sup> Initially, as Al-Qaeda began to reconstitute itself, its attention within South Asia was focused on fighting the US in Afghanistan, but after the siege of the Lal Masjid, rhetorically at least, it began to be more deeply involved in the conflict with the Pakistani state.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Gunaratna, *Inside Al-Qaeda*, 52-54.

<sup>172</sup> Burke, *Al-Qaeda*, 166-172.

<sup>173</sup> It should be noted that Al-Qaeda was far from the only foreign militant organization which had found shelter under the Taliban's wing. Individuals and groups from across the Muslim world sought shelter in Afghanistan, since during the 1990s, many of the autocratic regimes against which they were fighting were very effectively crushing their Islamist opponents. One of the aspects of this phenomenon which is less widely appreciated is that many of the broader constellation of militants in Afghanistan did not subscribe to Bin Laden's vision of a Global apocalyptic conflict against the US and its allies. Tawil, *Brothers in Arms*, 173-188 and *inter alia*.

<sup>174</sup> Tawil, *Brothers in Arms*, 173-188.

<sup>175</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 268-282; Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 55-57; however, for reasons I discuss below I am sceptical of the Gunaratna and Iqbal's claim that the TTP is an extension of Al-Qaeda.

<sup>176</sup> Don Ressler, "Al-Qa'ida's Pakistan Strategy," *CTC Sentinel* 2, No. 6, (June 2009), 1, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol2Iss6-Art1.pdf>.



The reconstituted Al-Qaeda was quite different to the one which had existed prior to 9/11; there has been widespread discussion of how best to characterise its altered form.<sup>177</sup> Whatever its exact nature, in the years following Al-Qaeda seemed to spread and multiply rapidly, with ‘franchises’ appearing across the globe. However while the geographical reach of Al-Qaeda appeared to have greatly expanded, many of those who claimed to act in its name were only loosely connected, if at all, to what came to be termed ‘Al-Qaeda central’.<sup>178</sup> It is this latter group which is of concern to this thesis; that is Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and other key individuals who attempted to continue from their new home in Pakistan the conflict they had begun against the US and its allies.<sup>179</sup> It is important to distinguish the relatively small number of individuals from the broader phenomenon of Al-Qaeda, since during the time period under consideration in this thesis, Al-Qaeda in the broad sense has been a very important actor in many parts of the world, particularly Iraq.<sup>180</sup> In South Asia, however, it has been surprisingly peripheral.<sup>181</sup>

Over time, it seems quite clear that whatever the fate of its broader globalized project, within Pakistan the organisation was being decimated, largely due to the drone campaign waged against it by the CIA.<sup>182</sup> This program has both killed large numbers of Al-Qaeda agents and made operational conditions for those still alive extremely difficult. While the broader strategic impact of this campaign continues to be debated, given the goals of disrupting and

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<sup>177</sup> Thomas F. Lynch III provides a balanced discussion of the various facets of Al-Qaeda’s contemporary incarnation with the one caveat that his argument that Al-Qaeda is ‘fixated’ on Afghanistan seems implausible to me: Thomas F. Lynch III, “The 80 Percent solution: The Strategic Defeat of bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda and the Implications for South Asian Security,” in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2012), 390-404.

<sup>178</sup> Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*, 104.

<sup>179</sup> Barbara Sude, “Al-Qaeda Central: An Assessment of the Threat Posed by the Terrorist Group Headquartered on the Afghanistan Pakistan Border,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington D.C.: New America Foundation February 2010), 2-4, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/sude.pdf>.

<sup>180</sup> As Fawaz Gerges argues, the invasion of Iraq by the US in 2003 greatly revitalized Al-Qaeda during a time of profound weakness, even if the Iraq campaign was in the long run a liability for the organizations’ image: Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 105-113.

<sup>181</sup> In fact, in its role as both an executor and instigator of *international* Jihad, the evidence shows that since 9/11 Al-Qaeda has largely been a paper tiger, see: Marc Sageman, “Confronting Al-Qaeda: Understanding the Threat in Afghanistan”, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, No. 4 (2009): 4-25, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/79/162>. Alongside Sageman’s quantitative analysis, it is instructive to note that the strongest claim a proponent of the view that Al-Qaeda Central still poses a significant threat to the US homeland is that “...we cannot definitively say al-Qaeda now lacks the capacity to mount an operation of some sort in the United States”: Sude, “Al-Qaeda Central,” 1.

<sup>182</sup> Peter Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict between America and Al-Qaeda*, (New York: Free Press, 2011), 345-347.

destroying Al-Qaeda, it has been a success.<sup>183</sup> The effectiveness of the drone campaign also helps to explain the relative lack of importance of Al-Qaeda within the South Asia.

### ***Relationship to other Insurgents***

The relationship between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (The Quetta Shura) has been the source of much debate. For many authors, attempting to understand this relationship has been seen as important because of its strategic implications, particularly with regard to Afghanistan. Some scholars have argued that if the Quetta Shura could be cleaved away from Al-Qaeda's global jihad, then they would no longer represent a threat to the West and could be more easily included within a political solution to the Afghan conflict.<sup>184</sup> From the point of view of this discussion however, the relationship between Al-Qaeda and other actors is relevant in terms of understanding the nature and role of the organisation within South Asia.

Although journalists and commentators have tended to conflate the two groups and despite Al-Qaeda's initial enthusiastic embrace of the new Afghan conflict, the Quetta Shura and Al-Qaeda can probably best be considered allies of convenience.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, during the period of time covered by this thesis, they have, if anything, grown further apart. The Quetta Shura have stated their desire for friendly relations with foreign countries and have sought to portray themselves as a responsible actor with only national (albeit vague) ambitions.<sup>186</sup> 'Global Jihad' is not part of their game plan. Evidence from the field also suggests that local commanders see Al-Qaeda as more of a hindrance than a help, because its military power has weakened and the presence of Al-Qaeda figures tends to attract the attention of the US military.<sup>187</sup>

Given these factors, one question that arises is why the Quetta Shura simply doesn't publicly dissociate itself from Al-Qaeda? According to Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuen, the political incentives have simply militated against it. To do so would both appear

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<sup>183</sup> Lynch, "The 80 Percent solution," 398-401.

<sup>184</sup> Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, "Separating the Taliban from Al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan," (New York: New York University Centre on International Cooperation, February 2011), 10-11, accessed January 27, [http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/gregg\\_sep\\_tal\\_alqaeda.pdf](http://cic.es.its.nyu.edu/sites/default/files/gregg_sep_tal_alqaeda.pdf).

<sup>185</sup> Although Bin Laden and Mullah Omar apparently enjoyed a reasonably close relationship during the mid-1990s, The Talibs and Al-Qaeda were ultimately groups of people with very different goals, values and backgrounds. For the definitive account of the relationship between the two groups, see, Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*, (London: Hurst & Co, 2012); also Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, 184-185.

<sup>186</sup> Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, "Separating the Taliban from Al-Qaeda," 8.

<sup>187</sup> Anne Stenersen, "The Relationship Between al-Qaeda and the Taliban," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders between Terror, Politics, and Religion*, ed. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2012), 85.

inconsistent with past actions (Omar's steadfast refusal to be rid of his troublesome guest) and could possibly undermine support from key backers both within Pakistan and further abroad.<sup>188</sup> Therefore, for the time being, public denunciation is unlikely.

Conversely, over time, Al-Qaeda seems to have grown closer to their Pakistani hosts, the TTP and the Punjabi Taliban.<sup>189</sup> After the siege of the Lal Masjid in particular, Al-Qaeda finally seemed to turn its attention to the country of its residence and began issuing regular denunciations of the Pakistani regime. Although Al-Qaeda operatives are thought to have been involved in prior assassination attempts against the President and other public figures, it was at this point that the organisation seemed to embrace the anti-Pakistan Jihad of the native militant groups.<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, the Pakistani militants themselves appear to have become more deeply influenced by Al-Qaeda's global Jihad. Hakimullah Mehsud, the recently deceased TTP emir issued threats against the US and tended to frame the fight against the Pakistani regime as being a fight against US 'lapdogs'. In fact Ayesha Siddiqa has gone so far as to argue that the TTP "...is a franchise of Al-Qaeda".<sup>191</sup> The most compelling evidence of this was the failed Times Square bombing of 2010 in New York City. Qari Hussain Mehsud, a TTP commander and famed trainer of suicide bombers claimed the attempted bombing was in revenge for the killing of Baitullah, the original emir of the TTP by drone strike.<sup>192</sup>

Actually, it seems equally plausible to suggest that Al-Qaeda Central is being enveloped by the powerful local militant groups, rather than the latter being 'Al-Qaedaized'.<sup>193</sup> According to one recent account, the targeted killing of so many Al-Qaeda figures has led to many high level positions within Al-Qaeda central being filled with local individuals, rather than Arabs, particularly from the mainland sectarian groups.<sup>194</sup> In addition, aside from the Times Square bombing little action has been taken by local militants against the US or the West. Instead the

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<sup>188</sup> Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn, *An Enemy we Created*, 331-333.

<sup>189</sup> Sude, "Al-Qaeda Central," 6.

<sup>190</sup> Ressler, "Al-Qa'ida's Pakistan Strategy," 1; on the assassination link: Tawil, *Brothers in Arms*, 177.

<sup>191</sup> Siddiqa, "Pakistan's Counterterrorism Strategy," 153.

<sup>192</sup> Bill Roggio, "Pakistani Taliban claim credit for failed NYC Times Square Car Bombing," *The Long War Journal*, May 2, 2010, accessed February 22, 2012, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/05/pakistani\\_taliban\\_cl.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/05/pakistani_taliban_cl.php).

<sup>193</sup> It is interesting in this context to note that former Pakistani interior minister Rehman Malik, while first describing the TTP as an extension of Al-Qaeda was subsequently forced to admit that suicide bombers in Pakistan were locals whose, as were their handlers and the financing behind the attacks: International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge," 5.

<sup>194</sup> Zahid Hussain, "Out of the Closet," *Dawn*, November 19, 2013, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1057088/out-of-the-closet>; Sude, "Al-Qaeda Central," 4.

war against the Pakistani state and sectarian conflict has continued to be the main preoccupation of Pakistani militants.

### ***Al-Qaeda's Operational Role***

Initially, following the partial reconstitution of the organisation within the tribal areas, the main focus of Al-Qaeda was on contributing to the Jihad in Afghanistan. Typically, the role of Al-Qaeda in both Afghanistan and Pakistan has been described as that of a 'force multiplier'.<sup>195</sup> That is, it has provided money, knowledge, and ideological ballast to the local forces, increasing their capacity to wage their own wars. The increasingly sophisticated productions of their media arm al-Sahab have been regarded as particularly important, given the Taliban's historical lack of technological savvy.<sup>196</sup> However, Anne Stenersen has argued, with reference to Al-Qaeda's media output and martyr bibliographies, that Al-Qaeda has been more actively involved. In particular Al-Qaeda cells seem to have been operating within the East and South East; apparently conducting or assisting cross border raids staged from their refuges in FATA.<sup>197</sup>

As noted above, Al-Qaeda has increasingly focused on Pakistan, rhetorically at least. However, accounts of their activities in Pakistan suggest a largely 'behind the scenes role' consistent with serving as a 'force multiplier'. In particular Don Rassler argues that Al-Qaeda in Pakistan provides religious justifications, expertise and acts as a mediator between other militant groups within the country.<sup>198</sup> He also notes that this low profile role is not simply the product of choice, but is a consequence of the effectiveness of the campaign waged against them.

With regard to suicide attacks more specifically, Al-Qaeda have been implicated in a handful of spectacular attacks in both countries. Al-Qaeda operatives have been implicated in organizing suicide attacks within the country and it is believed that many of the initial martyrs in Afghanistan were in fact Arabs.<sup>199</sup> Subsequently, suicide attacks appear to have become largely a 'native' affair. One important exception to this was the killing, by a Jordanian Al-Qaeda double agent, of seven CIA agents at Forward Operating Base Chapman

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<sup>195</sup> Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 291-295.

<sup>196</sup> Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 232.

<sup>197</sup> Stenersen, "The Relationship Between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban," 70-74.

<sup>198</sup> Don Rassler, "Al-Qa`ida's Pakistan Strategy," *CTC Sentinel* 2, No.6 (June 2009): 2, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Vol2Iss6-Art1.pdf>.

<sup>199</sup> UNAMA, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007," (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), 16, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>.

in Afghanistan's Khost Province.<sup>200</sup> For the CIA, this was a devastating blow, with one analysis comparing it to having an aircraft carrier sunk during a naval battle.<sup>201</sup> Al-Qaeda has also been linked to a number of high profile operations in Pakistan, such as attacks on former President Musharraf's life and the extremely high profile attack on the Marriot Hotel.<sup>202</sup> Nonetheless, the majority of suicide attacks appear to have been carried out by local groups in both countries.<sup>203</sup>

There is a more general way in which Al-Qaeda *may* have been crucial in the context of this thesis. A number of analysts argue that suicide attacks in South Asia were imported into the region by Al-Qaeda against the initial reluctance of the Taliban.<sup>204</sup> Suicide attacks, according to some scholars, are intimately linked to the organisation, being intertwined with Al-Qaeda's Salafi-Jihadi ideology in which the role of martyrdom had become central. Due to the increased contact between Al-Qaeda operatives and local militants, this ideology may have spread and, along with it, the suicide attacks. There are also accounts which suggest that Al-Qaeda operatives travelling to Afghanistan from Iraq brought with them techniques and tactics learnt from their experience in the Iraqi conflict. The role of Al-Qaeda in South Asian militants' decision to carry out suicide attacks will be discussed in detail in chapter five.

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<sup>200</sup> Richard A. Oppel Jr., Mark Mazzetti and Souad Mekhennet, "Attacker in Afghanistan was a Double Agent," *New York Times*, December 30, 2009, accessed 27 January, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/05/world/asia/05cia.html>.

<sup>201</sup> George Friedman Scott Stewart, "The Khost Attack and the Intelligence War Challenge," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, January 11, 2010, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100111\\_khost\\_attack\\_and\\_intelligence\\_war\\_challenge](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20100111_khost_attack_and_intelligence_war_challenge).

<sup>202</sup> Tawil, *Brothers in Arms*, 177. The Marriot attack was claimed by an unknown group 'Fidayeen-i-Islam', but some analysts see it as having Al-Qaeda's fingerprints; Ressler, "Al-Qa'ida's Pakistan Strategy," 2.

<sup>203</sup> Gunaratna and Iqbal, who attribute the spread of the tactic to Pakistan to Al-Qaeda nonetheless acknowledge that it quickly became largely an 'indigenous problem': Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 231-232.

<sup>204</sup> Brian G. Williams "Return of the Arabs," *CTC Sentinel* 1 No. 3 (February 2008): 23, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a493795.pdf>; Gul, 129-133.

## Chapter 3. Martyrdom as an Unconventional Labour Market

### Introduction

This chapter is the first of two that will analyse the participation of individual ‘martyrs’ in suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The goal of this chapter is to explain two important facts about suicide bombers in AfPak. First, in comparison with suicide bombers in other countries, they tend to be young, ignorant and vulnerable. Second, whereas the recruitment and training of suicide bombers in other countries is largely voluntary, in AfPak both often feature heavy coercion.

I argue that both of these unusual features of AfPak suicide bombers can be explained by regarding their production as being akin to a conventional labour market. In particular, I argue that unfavourable market conditions for martyrs in AfPak are responsible for the nature of martyrs and their recruitment. The combination of the militants’ relative unpopularity and their high consumption of suicide bombers mean that there is a deficit in supply relative to demand. Since militants appear unable or unwilling to raise ‘wages’ in order to attract more labour, they have substituted coerced labour for voluntary labour. Although I am not the first to depict the production of martyrs as operating akin to a labour market, previous applications of this theory are either incompatible with the particular characteristics of martyrs in AfPak and their recruitment or suffer from more general flaws.

The chapter begins by explaining why the coercive practices of the AfPak groups are so important from a theoretical and comparative point of view. Secondly, I present my market explanation for why coercion occurs. Thirdly, I outline the evidence that supports my argument. Fourthly, I discuss the only alternative theory, and present evidence that undermines that theory and supports my own.

### The Puzzle

After the horror of the 9/11 attacks, public debate often turned to the question of what motivated the individuals involved. Politicians and other public figures tended to argue that poverty, ignorance and hopelessness were the ‘root causes’ of terror.<sup>205</sup> Yet with the accumulation of further information these commonly cited factors soon proved to be disconnected from the phenomenon that they are supposed to explain. The 9/11 attacks were

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<sup>205</sup> James. A. Piazza, “Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, No.1 (2006): 159-160.

carried out by individuals who possessed secular technical educations from Western universities, and were financed by a Western educated son of a billionaire, with connections to the Saudi royal family.<sup>206</sup>

In the study of suicide attacks more broadly, a similar pattern of argument is present. Scholars commonly observe that there is a popular stereotype of suicide bombers, and argue that this stereotype is wrong. According to much of the literature, suicide bombers are not poor, stupid, religious fanatics, crazy, sex starved or 'brainwashed'. These ideas are taken to be popular explanations which are due to a superficial acquaintance with the topic, and perhaps the ubiquitous 'fundamental attribution error',<sup>207</sup> that is, the automatic tendency to attribute behaviours to dispositions, rather than situational factors. This conclusion regarding suicide bombers is consistent with research on terrorists, which has found that far from being 'losers' or 'fools', terrorists disproportionately seem to possess good education and have positive overall life prospects.<sup>208</sup> They are drawn, it is argued, from the same stratum of society that is typically involved in peaceful political campaigning in other countries.<sup>209</sup>

With particular regard to suicide bombers, two propositions in particular have been common in research on the participation of individuals. Firstly, it is argued that whatever the specific motivations for the act, participation is voluntary. Mia Bloom, for instance, states that: "Although some have argued that suicide bombers are coerced, this is not borne out by the evidence."<sup>210</sup> Mohammed Hafez similarly argues that "Simple notions of brainwashing and manipulated individuals must be abandoned in this case. Militant organisations have succeeded in framing self-immolation as a meaningful act of redemption".<sup>211</sup>

Secondly, suicide bombers are not the least capable members of society, but are either quite normal or perhaps even above average on a range of characteristics. Ami Pedahzur, in a key

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<sup>206</sup> Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, No. 2 (2006): 117-118.

<sup>207</sup> Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," *Science* 299, No. 5612 (March 2003): 1535-1536.

<sup>208</sup> Alan Kruger, *What Makes a Terrorist: Economics and the Roots of Terrorism*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 23-52.

<sup>209</sup> Kruger, *What Makes a Terrorist*, 46-47, 146-147.

<sup>210</sup> Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 85. It is interesting to note that Bloom, in the next sentence, acknowledges that bombers may face intense social pressure to participate. Bloom also apparently later changed her stance on coercion, since there is a brief mention of it in an article she wrote criticizing the work of Kruglanski et. al. which is discussed below: Mia Bloom, "Chasing Butterflies and Rainbows: A Critique of Kruglanski et al.'s 'Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance'," *Political Psychology* 30, No. 3 (June 2009): 392.

<sup>211</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 33.

study, argues at length that suicide bombers come from a range of normal backgrounds: “Studies have shown that they exhibited no suicidal tendencies prior to the act and lived normal lives.... Most of them were not leading figures in their communities or organisations but they also did not come from the fringes of society. Suicide attackers were generally not highly educated, but also not illiterate. They were not very successful, but, at the same time no complete failures...some were very religious while others were completely secular. Some were politically active for many years and others became active only in the preparation of their suicide missions”.<sup>212</sup> Robert Pape, on the other hand, argues that suicide bombers are actually generally highly capable individuals: “The bottom line, then, is that suicide attackers are not mainly poor, uneducated, immature religious zealots or social losers. Instead, suicide attackers are normally well-educated workers from both religious and secular backgrounds.”<sup>213</sup>

In contrast to these accounts of suicide bombers as either average or above average and participating completely of their own volition, evidence from Afghanistan and Pakistan presents a very different picture. Suicide bombers in AfPak often come from vulnerable groups in society, and they often appear to be participating due to subtle or sometimes blatant forms of coercion. Militants have purposely recruited ill-educated, timid youngsters who are easily manipulated into performing acts which they often do not appear to comprehend. It is clearly not the case that all suicide bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan are vulnerable or coerced. It would be difficult to explain the so called ‘complex attacks’ which have been carried out quite regularly in both countries in recent years solely with the participation of ignorant children. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that a large proportion of martyrs do not conform to the image of the self-possessed bombers described in other countries.<sup>214</sup>

### **Who are AfPak’s martyrs?**

As in most other suicide attacks campaigns, there is no systematic data on the suicide bombers in AfPak. Nonetheless, reports from both countries have generated a reasonably clear picture of the identities, recruitment and training of suicide bombers. In general, suicide bombers are young, sometimes extremely so, ill-educated, poor and sometimes drawn from

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<sup>212</sup> Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 122.

<sup>213</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 216.

<sup>214</sup> While this difference has mostly been ignored by the scholarly literature, it is briefly discussed by Martha Crenshaw, who describes the production of suicide bombers as akin to a ‘production line’, Martha Crenshaw, “Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines? The Puzzle of ‘Suicide Terrorism’,” *Political Psychology* 30, No. 3 (June 2009): 359-365.



vulnerable populations such as the physically or mentally disabled. In fact the targeting of the young is part of a broader strategy of the militants, which employs children for a variety of tasks.<sup>215</sup> Recruitment, which often occurs through madrassas connected to the militant organisations, frequently seems to be deceptive or even outright coercive. Training is at least manipulative, but often seems to involve threats and deception which again warrant the description coercion. These are generalizations; in AfPak as elsewhere, there is a wide variation in the characteristics of the individuals involved and in the means of recruitment and training. But the factors that stand out in the evidence are vulnerability and coercion.

In contrast to Iraq, the other major site of suicide bombings in the post 9/11 period, most suicide bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan appear to have local origins. An important early report by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan suggested that a proportion of suicide bombers were foreigners, mainly from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and various Arab countries, but later reports indicated that local individuals were mostly involved.<sup>216</sup> Gunaratna and Iqbal argue that this preference for local bombers stems from the fact that foreigners are unable to blend in as easily as natives.<sup>217</sup> Would be martyrs are largely drawn from the rural Pashtun populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are of course the home territories of the Taliban themselves.<sup>218</sup> There are also reports that some bombers come from urban locales in Pakistan due to recruitment efforts by the Punjabi Taliban in their home territories, particularly the south of Punjab Province.<sup>219</sup> It is unclear whether bombers mostly originate from Afghanistan or Pakistan but, it seems that in the great majority of cases, training and preparation for the attack occurs in Pakistan.<sup>220</sup>

Irrespective of their nationality, what is clear about AfPak bombers is that they are often young, often alarmingly so.<sup>221</sup> Many bombers appear to be in their early teens, and it has been

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<sup>215</sup> Gregg Zoroya, "U.S. military report: Taliban uses youths in Afghan fight," *USA Today*, September 13, 2010, accessed November 1, 2012, [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/2010-09-12-child-soldiers-afghanistan\\_N.htm?csp=34news](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/afghanistan/2010-09-12-child-soldiers-afghanistan_N.htm?csp=34news).

<sup>216</sup> UNAMA, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007," (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), 67, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>.

<sup>217</sup> Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*, (London: Reaktion, 2011), 232.

<sup>218</sup> S. H. Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 3 (March 2010): 11, accessed 27 January, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/insight-into-a-suicide-bomber-training-camp-in-waziristan>.

<sup>219</sup> Alex Rodriguez, "Pakistani Extremists in Punjab seen as Rising Threat", *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 2009, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/22/world/fg-punjab-militants>.

<sup>220</sup> Ben Doherty, "Terrorists Raise Price in Trade for Killers," *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 6, 2011, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://www.smh.com.au/world/terrorists-raise-price-in-trade-for-killers-20110705-1h0uf.html>.

<sup>221</sup> Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," 10.

claimed that some are even as young as seven.<sup>222</sup> Journalist Zahid Hussain states that based upon an interview with a Pakistani counter terrorism official, 90 percent of Pakistani suicide bombers are between the ages of 12-18.<sup>223</sup> Similarly, a Pakistani General referred to a compound discovered in South Waziristan as a ‘factory’ where 10-12 year olds were turned into human bombs.<sup>224</sup> A fourteen year old Pakistani captured by NATO forces in Khost, Afghanistan, claimed that he was one of about 50 young men aged between 13-22 who were being trained in a Taliban ‘school’ in South Waziristan.<sup>225</sup> In the wake of the Pakistani Army’s retaking of the Swat Valley in 2009, videos were found of boys thought to be around the ages of 14 -15 recording farewell messages before climbing into bomb laden vehicles.<sup>226</sup> In August 2011, the Human Rights Watch organisation issued a statement calling on the Taliban to desist using children as suicide bombers, and detailed the use of suicide bombers as young as 7.<sup>227</sup> In one infamous case, an Afghan girl of eight was tricked into carrying a bomb near to a police vehicle, whereupon a Taliban fighter remotely detonated the explosive, failing to kill any police officers, but killing the girl.<sup>228</sup> More recently, in a case which garnered widespread media attention, a ten year old Afghan girl named Spozhmai was apprehended wearing a suicide vest. She had been beaten by her father and brother, who is a member of the Taliban, and was forced to carry out the attack, being told she “would not die”.<sup>229</sup>

There are some accounts which suggest that AfPak bombers are not as young as the preceding evidence implies. For instance, in a series of interviews conducted by UN officials at an Afghan prison, individuals involved with suicide attacks were found, on average to be

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<sup>222</sup> “Taliban Buying Children for Suicide Bombers,” *Washington Post*, July 2, 2009, accessed October 29, 2010, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/2/taliban-buying-children-to-serve-as-suicide-bomber/print/>

<sup>223</sup> Zahid Hussain, *The Scorpion’s Tail: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan – And How it Threatens America*, (New York: The Free Press, 2010), 132.

<sup>224</sup> Bill Roggio, “Taliban Rebuild Children’s Suicide Camp in South Waziristan,” *Long War Journal*, October 6, 2008, accessed December 5, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/10/taliban\\_rebuild\\_chil.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2008/10/taliban_rebuild_chil.php).

<sup>225</sup> Kim Sengupta, “The 14Year Old Afghan Suicide Bomber,” *Independent*, June 10, 2008, accessed December 3, 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/the-14yearold--afghan-suicide-bomber-843535.html>.

<sup>226</sup> “Taliban grooming teens as suicide bombers: Report,” *Times of India*, May 31, 2009, accessed October 29, 2010, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/Taliban-grooming-teens-as-suicide-bombers-Report/articleshow/4600664.cms>.

<sup>227</sup> Human Rights Watch, “Afghanistan: Taliban Should Stop Using Children as Suicide Bombers,” August 31, 2011, accessed October 8, 2011, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/08/31/afghanistan-taliban-should-stop-using-children-suicide-bombers>.

<sup>228</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, “Afghan Girl Tricked into Carrying Bomb, Officials Say,” *New York Times*, June 26, 2011, accessed January 17, 2014. [www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/world/asia/27afghanistan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/world/asia/27afghanistan.html).

<sup>229</sup> “Suicide Vest Nine-Year-Old Tells her Story,” *BBC*, January 13, 2014, accessed January 31, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25711953>.

twenty six years of age.<sup>230</sup> However, the report argues that in general suicide bombers tend to be in the age range of 14-25, which is much closer to the account I am suggesting.<sup>231</sup> In addition, those interviewed in the prison were not just failed suicide bombers, but those involved in any capacity; likely those organising attacks will tend to be considerably older than those participating as bombers.<sup>232</sup>

More problematic for my case are the data presented by Riaz Hassan regarding the age of suicide bombers in Pakistan. Hassan cites biographical details on twenty Pakistani suicide bombers; the evidence he presents suggest an average age of twenty four.<sup>233</sup> At this stage it is difficult to know whether this evidence presents a challenge to the account I am suggesting. First, it is worth remembering that I am not arguing that *all* suicide bombers in AfPak are young, just that the *average* age in these countries is considerably lower than elsewhere. Second, it may be that these individuals were captured because they were part of attacks against high profile targets which had superior security protection. This would explain the relatively large amount of information available about them; Hassan is able to provide information about education levels and ‘financial status’ for a number of these individuals. This would also be consistent with the theory I discuss below which implies that older and consequently more able bombers should be employed against more important targets. The modal bomber used in an attack against a target in rural FATA is likely much younger. Therefore, given the broader pattern of the Taliban employing children as weapons of war, and given our ignorance about the representativeness of competing pieces of evidence, it seems reasonable to conclude that many bombers in Pakistan are indeed extremely young.

In addition to their extreme youth, the insurgents appear to often choose individuals who are particularly vulnerable in one way or another. In general, militants often chose those individuals who seem the *least* capable overall to carry out suicide attacks; more capable youngsters are used as spies or for other military support duties.<sup>234</sup> As the UNAMA report states, suicide bombers apprehended in Afghanistan tend to be “...poor, introverted and

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<sup>230</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 69.

<sup>231</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 67.

<sup>232</sup> This seems to be borne out by the ages of those individuals discussed by name in the report; the organisers are uniformly older than the bombers.

<sup>233</sup> Riaz Hassan, *Life as a Weapon: The Global Rise of Suicide Bombings*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 112. In order to calculate this number, I took the higher number in the recorded age range in order to strengthen Hassan’s claim.

<sup>234</sup> “Suicide Bomber Recruitment, a Meal a Day will Keep the Terrorists Away,” *Express Tribune*, November 2, 2011, accessed October, 11, 2012, [www.tribune.com.pk/story/286387/povertys-peril-suicide-bomber-recruitment-a-meal-a-day-will-keep-the-terrorists-away/](http://www.tribune.com.pk/story/286387/povertys-peril-suicide-bomber-recruitment-a-meal-a-day-will-keep-the-terrorists-away/)

impressionable.”<sup>235</sup> Another account from Afghanistan asserted, on the basis of an interview with a doctor who performed autopsies on suicide bombers, that roughly 60 percent of them had some kind of physical disability.<sup>236</sup> Although this figure seems suspect, it is consistent with the militants’ overall practices of preying upon the vulnerable. Moreover, as the article also noted, in Afghanistan, life is particularly difficult for the disabled, so being offered an ‘honourable’ way to end their suffering may be attractive for some. According to journalist Imtiaz Gul, Pakistani intelligence officials reported that suicide bombers identified between January 2007 and July 2008 were a mix of Pakistanis and Afghans, “...many of them orphans or mentally unstable teenagers.”<sup>237</sup>

## Recruitment

Suicide bombers in AfPak appear to be recruited in a number of ways, but one of the most common is through madrassas linked to the militant groups.<sup>238</sup> The importance of madrassas in the generation of militants has since 9/11 been a controversial one.<sup>239</sup> Most terrorism scholars have argued that the role of madrassas has been overblown in explaining militancy, including in Pakistan.<sup>240</sup> However, it is clear that the role of madrassas in the recruitment of AfPak suicide bombers is quite different. Numerous reports suggest that Pakistani madrassas are a common recruiting ground for the Taliban and other militant groups.<sup>241</sup> This is not surprising, given that the Taliban have often been products of Pakistani madrassas, and that

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<sup>235</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 66.

<sup>236</sup> Sonya Fatah, “Why the disabled do the Taliban’s deadly work,” *Globe and Mail*, May 7, 2007, accessed January 26, 2011, <http://v1.theGlobeandMail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20070507.wsuicide07/BNStory/SONYA+FATAH>.

<sup>237</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan’s Lawless Frontier*, (London: Penguin, 2010), 133.

<sup>238</sup> Nadeem Sarwar, “‘Suicide Nurseries’ of Pakistan turn Children into Bombers,” *Thaindian*, April 26, 2009, accessed October 18, 2012, [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/suicide/nurseries-of-pakistan-turn-children-into-bombers\\_100184785.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/suicide/nurseries-of-pakistan-turn-children-into-bombers_100184785.html).

<sup>239</sup> James Fergusson, *Taliban: The Unknown Enemy*, (Philadelphia: Da Capo, 2011), 68-71.

<sup>240</sup> Bergen and Pandey, “The Madrassa Scapegoat,” 115-125; C. Christine Fair, “The Enduring Madrassah Myth,” *Current History* 111, No. 744 (April 2012): 135-140. Although Bergen, Pandey and Fair make important points my own views are closest to the views of Nikhil Raymond Puri, “The Pakistani Madrassah and Terrorism: Made and Unmade Conclusions from the Literature,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, No. 4 (2010), 51-72, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/116/236>.

<sup>241</sup> Kalsoom Lakhani, “Indoctrinating Children: The Making of Pakistan’s Suicide Bombers,” *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 6, (June 2010): 11-12, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss6-art4.pdf>; Owais Tohid, “Pakistani teen tells of his recruitment, Training as Suicide Bomber,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 2011, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2011/0616/Pakistani-teen-tells-of-his-recruitment-training-as-suicide-bomber>; “Teenage Bombers are Rescued from Taliban Suicide Training Camps: Report,” *Nation*, July 27, 2009, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.nation.com.pk/politics/27-Jul-2009/Teenage-bombers-are-rescued-from-Taliban-suicide-training-camps-report>; “Child Suicide Bombers ‘Victims of the Most Brutal Exploitation’”, *IRIN*, February 12, 2008, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/76701/PAKISTAN-Child-suicide-bombers-victims-of-the-most-brutal-exploitation>.

the latter have periodically provided massive supplements of recruits to replenish the Taliban's ranks.<sup>242</sup>

This link between madrassas and martyrdom does not mean that parents want their children to be involved in militancy or to become suicide bombers. In fact, parents in Afghanistan have recently been withdrawing their children from madrassas in Pakistan, after media reports about children being recruited as suicide bombers.<sup>243</sup> Rather, parents often send their children to religious schools because many find it extremely difficult to afford sufficient food and clothing for their children, let alone providing them with an education. Madrassas that provide free food and board are therefore an attractive option for destitute parents.<sup>244</sup> These poor rural children, separated from their parents, are highly vulnerable to recruitment. Moreover, the education provided by schools linked to militants, with an emphasis upon rote learning, strict hierarchy and the division of the world into those of pure Islamic faith and vicious Infidels, is well suited to preparing children for later indoctrination.<sup>245</sup> According to a Pakistani documentary film maker, Taliban members travel between Islamic schools which provide free education to the poor, showing films to the youngsters about their exploits on the front lines and promising them "...lakes of milk and honey and virgins in the afterlife".<sup>246</sup> In addition to madrassas, other schools, refugee camps and orphanages have also been recruitment targets.<sup>247</sup>

Some individuals are recruited through kinship or friendship.<sup>248</sup> This is a common path to involvement in militancy or terrorism in general; persuasion is much easier through pre-existing social links.<sup>249</sup> Individuals recruited in this way are likely to make up a substantial proportion of those recruited without the manipulation which is apparent in many cases. As

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<sup>242</sup> Riaz Mohammed Khan, *Afghanistan and Pakistan: Conflict, Extremism and Resistance to Modernity*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 65.

<sup>243</sup> Arash Kabuli, "Afghans Recall Sons from Extremist Madrassas," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, July 27, 2011, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/afghans-recall-sons-extremist-madrassas>.

<sup>244</sup> "Suicide Bomber Recruitment, a Meal a Day will Keep the Terrorists Away"; Ben Farmer, "Afghans halt convoy of boys 'headed for suicide training camps'," *Telegraph*, February 24, 2012, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9101670/Afghans-halt-convoy-of-boys-headed-for-suicide-training-camps.html>.

<sup>245</sup> Lakhani, "Indoctrinating Children," 11-12.

<sup>246</sup> Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, "Children taught to be Suicide bombers," *CNN Opinion*, June 15, 2010, accessed January 26, 2010, [http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-15/opinion/obaid.suicide.children\\_1\\_suicide-bombers-pakistan-northwest-frontier-province?\\_s=PM:OPINION](http://articles.cnn.com/2010-06-15/opinion/obaid.suicide.children_1_suicide-bombers-pakistan-northwest-frontier-province?_s=PM:OPINION)

<sup>247</sup> Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, 133.

<sup>248</sup> Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," 11.

<sup>249</sup> Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 85, No. 6 (1980): 1376-1395; Justin Magouirk, Scott Atran and Marc Sageman, "Connecting Terrorist Networks," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, No. 1 (2008): 1-16.

noted above not all suicide bombers are young and ignorant; some have clearly been quite skilled, and there must be a path to militancy for this set of martyrs as well.

In addition to targeting impressionable children in madrassas, militants have often resorted to outright coercion to procure a supply of suicide bombers. According to a Pakistani psychologist working to re-integrate captured suicide bombers, 58 percent of the 162 she was working with were abducted.<sup>250</sup> This practice has included the Taliban in Pakistan travelling to schools in territory they controlled, giving lectures on suicide bombing and Jihad and then forcing children to enrol to become martyrs; in one day they recruited over fifty youngsters in this fashion in the NWFP.<sup>251</sup> In another case, a trio of boys interviewed after the Pakistani army conquered a Taliban stronghold in the Swat valley claimed they had all been kidnapped, either from fields or their local towns. "I was coming from the shop to my house, I had some stuff with me. They said, 'put your stuff in the car.'... They asked if they should drop me in my village, but when we reached the village they blindfolded me and put a hand over my mouth," one boy said.<sup>252</sup> Another article substantiating the claim that children are kidnapped reports that the bombers are literally treated like a commodity; once trained, they may then be sold to other groups for use. Apparently the asking price is between \$6-12,000.<sup>253</sup> A more recent report suggested that the price for bombers had recently risen to nearly US\$90,000.<sup>254</sup> Given the low value apparently placed upon one of the key 'inputs' – that is, the value of the lives of the individuals – the enormous sums paid for 'weaponised' human bombs lends support to my argument that demand for suicide bombers is extremely high.

## **Training**

As with the recruitment process, training appears to be quite varied, ranging from quasi-military training to essentially none at all. According to a detailed account provided by S. H. Tajik, suicide bombers at a camp in Waziristan received a structured training reminiscent of the boot-camp like training which the Black Tigers of the LTTE received.<sup>255</sup> In addition, Tajik stated that individuals destined to be martyrs held a higher status within the camp

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<sup>250</sup> "Suicide Bomber Recruitment, a Meal a Day will Keep the Terrorists Away."

<sup>251</sup> Gunaratna and Iqbal, *Pakistan*, 243.

<sup>252</sup> Stan Grant, "Kidnapped Boys 'Brainwashed' to Die as Suicide Bombers," *CNN World*, August 3, 2009, accessed January 26, 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2009-08-03/world/pakistan.boys\\_1\\_taliban-suicide-bombers-boys?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2009-08-03/world/pakistan.boys_1_taliban-suicide-bombers-boys?_s=PM:WORLD).

<sup>253</sup> Nic Robertson, "Taliban Buying Children for Suicide Attacks," *CNN World*, July 7, 2009, accessed January 26 2011, [http://articles.cnn.com/2009-07-07/world/pakistan.child.bombers\\_1\\_baitullah-mehsud-taliban-leader-taliban-officials?\\_s=PM:WORLD](http://articles.cnn.com/2009-07-07/world/pakistan.child.bombers_1_baitullah-mehsud-taliban-leader-taliban-officials?_s=PM:WORLD).

<sup>254</sup> Doherty, "Terrorists Raise Price in Trade for Killers."

<sup>255</sup> Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," 12.

compared to ‘ordinary’ mujahedeen, because of the sacrifice that they were going to make. Bombers from this camp, he claimed, went to their deaths calmly.

In contrast to this description of well-treated martyrs, other reports have indicated that outright manipulation and coercion are often involved in the training process as well as recruitment. A group of boys released from a training camp in Swat said that they had been beaten and a psychiatrist treating the boys claimed that they had become depressed or psychotic from their experiences.<sup>256</sup> In another case, a 14 year old boy from Bajaur Agency in Pakistan was taken from his father as punishment for a crime and forced to become a suicide bomber. He initially refused to participate and was tied down and repeatedly beaten; in addition he was given drugs in order to overcome his obstinacy.<sup>257</sup> The use of drugs among captured trainee bombers has also been reported in other cases.<sup>258</sup> Moreover, even when children are ostensibly treated well, they are typically isolated from their family and friends and live in an environment completely controlled by their trainers.

A particularly vivid example of manipulative behaviour comes from Pakistani Political Scientist Hussain Nadim who interviewed three would be suicide bombers that were captured by the military.<sup>259</sup> All were aged 15-19 and hailed from North Waziristan. He found that they were profoundly ignorant of the world outside their village, to the extent that the 9/11 attacks were unknown to them. This was unsurprising, since their village possessed a single television and no internet access; information came largely through radio which itself largely played militant propaganda.<sup>260</sup> They were not particularly religious and their relationship to the militants was initially one of fear and resentment. The fear was due to threats of violence, and resentment was the result of conflict brought to their village by the militants.

The manner in which their ‘trainers’ produced motivation was simple but barbaric. They were locked away in seclusion by the militants for a month and forced to watch videos of women being raped. They were continually told that this would happen to their mothers and sisters at

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<sup>256</sup> Grant, “Kidnapped Boys ‘Brainwashed’ to Die as Suicide Bombers”.

<sup>257</sup> Daud Khattak and Nicola Smith, “Brainwashed Boy Bomber Flees Taliban,” *Sunday Times*, December 27, 2009, accessed November 1, 2012, [http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/world\\_news/article193792.ece](http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/news/world_news/article193792.ece).

<sup>258</sup> Iftikhar Firdous, “What Goes into the Making of a Suicide Bomber,” *Express Tribune*, July 20, 2010, accessed November 1, 2012, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/28976/what-goes-into-the-making-of-a-suicide-bomber>.

<sup>259</sup> Hussain Nadim, “Pakistan’s almost-suicide bombers,” *The AfPak channel*, October 9, 2012, accessed October 12, 2012, [http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/09/pakistans\\_almost\\_suicide\\_bombers](http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/10/09/pakistans_almost_suicide_bombers).

<sup>260</sup> On this see: Mukhtar A. Khan “The FM Mullahs and the Taliban’s Propaganda War in Pakistan,” *The Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 7 No. 14, (May 2009): 7-10, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM\\_007\\_25.pdf](http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TM_007_25.pdf).

the hands of the foreigners if they did not do something to stop it.<sup>261</sup> Therefore their duty was to become martyrs. One of the youngsters said, "I would wake up in the middle of the night, desperate to see or call my mother and sister to see if they were safe because of the fear I felt picturing my mother and sister to be in the same situation as those women in the videos. However, we were not allowed to make contact with the family because it would weaken us."<sup>262</sup> This emphasis upon the victimisation or dishonouring of women appears to be a common theme in the 'training' of suicide bombers. According to another 16 year old found at a training camp, they were told repeatedly of Muslim women languishing in Infidel jails in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>263</sup> Journalist Jason Burke described 'training' which amounted to months of isolation devoted largely to manipulative religious sermons and emotionally charged videos. This seems to be common method in training Pakistani bombers.<sup>264</sup>

The 'heavenly rewards' associated with suicide attacks are also often stressed by the trainers: "...a suicide attack is the direct path to paradise, where beautiful women and all the happiness of life are waiting for you".<sup>265</sup> According to one Taliban fighter interviewed by the Pakistani Journalist Imtiaz Gul, "When these 'fidayeen' are told that 'hoors' (beautiful girls) are waiting, looking out of the windows in paradise to embrace them, these youngsters they all clamour to be the first to go on a mission. They want to see how many 'hoors' out there are really waiting for them in paradise"<sup>266</sup> Moreover, a security official said that when a young boy who had attempted to carry out a suicide attack was taken to a hospital for a medical check-up, he was "visibly moved" by the nurses and that he "Blurted out, 'My ustad had promised me 'hoors' like these once I reached paradise'"<sup>267</sup>

In other cases, the bombers are so young and naive that there does not appear to be any 'training' or real motivation at all. Elders ask them to do something and they readily do it. If reluctant, they are told that the bomb will leave them unscathed.<sup>268</sup> A particularly clear case was a child, no more than six, wandering into the Governor's compound in Ghazni, looking

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<sup>261</sup> The use of the threat of rape to motivate in war seems to be relatively commonplace. For instance: Nicoletta F. Gullace, "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International law during the First World War," *The American Historical Review* 102, No. 3, (1997): 714-747.

<sup>262</sup> Nadim, "Pakistan's almost-suicide bombers."

<sup>263</sup> Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," 11.

<sup>264</sup> Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 206-208.

<sup>265</sup> Khattak and Smith, "Brainwashed Boy Bomber Flees Taliban."

<sup>266</sup> Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, 130.

<sup>267</sup> Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place*, 131.

<sup>268</sup> Kabuli, "Afghans Recall Sons from Extremist Madrassas."



scared and confused. He approached a guard, lifted his shirt and said: “I forgot what I was supposed to do with this,” revealing an explosive filled vest.<sup>269</sup>

Another clear example of coercion is the case of Ghulam, a boy of approximately sixteen who was interviewed in prison by UN officials after a failed attempt at carrying out a suicide attack. However, it was not clear he really knew what it was that he was doing. Ghulam was from Waziristan, but had been sent to Afghanistan for his mission.<sup>270</sup> Prior to the attempt, he had never left his home town. In his entire life, he had only attended three months of school, although in the interview it appears that his cognitive difficulties went beyond a lack of schooling. The headmaster of the school which Ghulam had briefly attended visited his parents, and convinced them to allow him to accompany the headmaster to work in Afghanistan. Instead, he was placed in the custody of three militants that were unknown to Ghulam.<sup>271</sup>

Ghulam said that they had wanted him to kill a ‘big commander’ and that they would give him 10,000 Pakistani Rupees if he did so. However, they also told him they would behead him if he did not go through with the mission. Prior to his attack, they gave him some kind of drug, which ‘intoxicated’ him. In addition to these coercive measures, his handlers also tried to convince him with religious arguments, saying that if he did not perform the mission then he would go to hell, whereas if he did, he would go to heaven. They told him that because he was innocent and young, he ‘would not die’. However, it appears that their exhortations were futile, since Ghulam stayed completely focused on the money; he did not seem to appreciate the difficulty he would face in collecting it if his mission succeeded.<sup>272</sup>

## Theory

Having now established that the character and training of suicide bombers in Afghanistan and Pakistan differ from those described in other countries, how are we to explain this fact? I argue that we can explain why suicide bombers in AfPak are vulnerable and coerced, and why this is not the case in other countries, by treating the recruitment of suicide bombers as akin to a conventional labour market. I am not the first to make this analogy; several other economic models of martyrdom have been proposed. However, those models have either

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<sup>269</sup> Monte Morin, “Taliban recruiting Afghan children for suicide bombings,” *Stars and Stripes*, June 27, 2007, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.stripes.com/news/Taliban-recruiting-afghan-children-for-suicide-bombings-1.65854>.

<sup>270</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 75.

<sup>271</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 75-76.

<sup>272</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” 77.

downplayed the ‘supply side’ of the market for martyrs or have focused on explaining why well educated individuals with good prospects would be involved in martyrdom. They are also based upon dubious psychology. Therefore, although these models are important analytical advances, they cannot explain the phenomena in the conflicts investigated here. My alternative market based theory is able to explain the data from AfPak and is also consistent with broader findings in behavioural science.

### **Economic Approaches to Martyrdom**

A number of studies have addressed religious militancy, terrorism and suicide bombing from an economic perspective.<sup>273</sup> Several works in particular have suggested that suicide attacks should be analysed from a labour market perspective. The initial paper to make this argument came from Laurence Iannaccone, a specialist in the economics of religion.<sup>274</sup> Despite the usefulness of making the analogy with a labour market, the specific form of Iannaccone’s argument makes it unsuitable for explaining my evidence. Firstly, Iannaccone asserts that we should focus on the demand side, rather than the supply side. This is because, he argues, suicide bombers are rational altruists and the supply of rational altruistic martyrs is generally plentiful enough for rebels’ needs.<sup>275</sup> What is different between them is the desire to use this ‘resource’ for suicide attacks. Secondly, he takes it for granted the suicide bombers are the well-educated martyrs discussed earlier. Third, drawing upon the sociology of religion, he argues that suicide bombers are unlikely to be coerced and that any notions of ‘brainwashing’ or coercive persuasion, are false.

These claims are deeply problematic. First, any theory which takes as a premise that suicide bombers are un-coerced, well-educated and highly competent individuals is incompatible with the evidence we are trying to explain. While this assumption is consistent with other research in the field, it is clearly false in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Second, simply asserting that suicide bombers are ‘rational altruists’ is more a case of sweeping the problem under the carpet than actually explaining it. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it is

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<sup>273</sup> Claude Berrebi has provided an excellent summary of economic or rational choice arguments about terrorism; see: Claude Berrebi, “The Economics of Terrorism and Counterterrorism: What Matters and Is Rational-Choice Theory Helpful?,” in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, ed. Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2009), 151-208, accessed January 28, 2014, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG849.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG849.pdf).

<sup>274</sup> Laurence R. Iannaccone, “The Market for Martyrs,” (Unpublished Manuscript, George Mason University, December 2003), accessed January 28, 2014,

[http://www.religionomics.com/archives/file\\_download/30/Iannaccone+-+Market+for+Martyrs.pdf](http://www.religionomics.com/archives/file_download/30/Iannaccone+-+Market+for+Martyrs.pdf).

<sup>275</sup> Iannaccone, “The Market for Martyrs,” 10-11.

quite clear that this behaviour, however common, is not easy to reconcile with fundamental evolutionary theory about the nature of other regarding behaviour.

A more useful approach to thinking about suicide attacks as a type of labour market comes from the work of Eva Meyersson Milgrom.<sup>276</sup> Contrary to Iannaccone she devotes considerable attention to understanding the supply side of the market. However, like him, she takes for granted the conventional wisdom that suicide bombers tend to be relatively well educated. Her argument therefore centres on explaining why these individuals would want to become suicide bombers. Meyersson Milgrom's theory, like Iannaccone's argument, rests on problematic psychology. Despite these flaws, it provides a key insight that can be used to construct a more useful theory.

Meyersson Milgrom begins by noting that many theories of militant participation, whether expert or lay, rest upon the implicit assumption that participation is subject to differential opportunity costs.<sup>277</sup> That is, since the opportunity cost for the poor and ill-educated are lower than those with wealth and education, they have 'the least to lose' by participation in political violence. She argues this is false, for the now familiar reason that terrorists and suicide bombers actually appear to be highly educated, relative to the surrounding population.

However, drawing upon Gambetta and Hertog's work on the over representation of engineers amongst Jihadis, Meyersson Milgrom argues that due to features of job markets in politically troubled countries, those with high levels of education can actually end up with *lower* opportunity costs for violence than the poor and uneducated.<sup>278</sup> This is because in these countries there is a tendency for job markets to be corrupt and otherwise non-functional; often there is little relationship between one's qualifications and the employment one is able to secure. Therefore, individuals with high levels of education may experience *relative deprivation* due to frustrated expectations.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Eva Meyersson Milgrom, "The Dispossessed. Why well educated might act as they have nothing to lose," (Unpublished Manuscript, Stanford University, 2009), accessed January 28, 2014, <http://meyersson.com/EvaDispossessedSept.pdf>

<sup>277</sup> Milgrom, "The Dispossessed," 5-6.

<sup>278</sup> Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?," *European Journal of Sociology* 50, No. 2 (2009): 1-30. Accessed January 28, 2014, [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29836/1/Why\\_are\\_there\\_so\\_many\\_Engineers\\_among\\_Islamic\\_radicals\\_\(publisher\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/29836/1/Why_are_there_so_many_Engineers_among_Islamic_radicals_(publisher).pdf); Milgrom, "The Dispossessed," 8-11.

<sup>279</sup> Gambetta and Hertog also discuss aspects of the mentality of engineers which may predispose them to finding extremism attractive. Specifically, that there may be selection effects and consequences of their training which produce a particular psychology. Gambetta and Hertog, "Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?," 215-222. Meyersson Milgrom tends to dismiss this individual differences aspect of their

Meyersson Milgrom argues that violent political organisations are able to use this relative deprivation by offering potential recruits an alternative means of obtaining what they are missing out on. She draws on work by psychologist Arie Kruglanski and his colleagues to argue that what rebel organisations are able to offer is ‘significance’.<sup>280</sup> This somewhat vague term seems to be similar to the more mundane concept of status. It seems to particularly connote the motivation for ‘self-transcendence’.<sup>281</sup> In any case, Meyersson Milgrom argues that significance and status are substitutes, in the economic sense.<sup>282</sup> Organisations are therefore able to offer individuals experiencing relative deprivation ‘significance’ through a heroic death in return for their participation as human bombs. Meyersson Milgrom argues that rebel organisations’ ability to bestow significance stems from the fact that in politically troubled states with weak governments, non-state actors are often able to gain legitimacy through the provision of public goods and protection which are usually the province of the government.<sup>283</sup>

Meyersson Milgrom’s theory is insightful, but it is also unable to explain the evidence of young, vulnerable and coerced bombers; indeed it is designed to explain the opposite.<sup>284</sup> Moreover, like Iannacone’s theory, it rests upon unconvincing psychology. In particular, the use of the ‘significance’ concept put forwards by Kruglanski et al. is problematic; it would be far simpler and more coherent simply to drop it and instead adopt the more straight forward concept of ‘status’ as the currency with which organisations are able to ‘pay’ prospective martyrs.

To see why the significance argument does not make sense, consider the prototypical terrorist graduate, the engineer, and consider what would happen in a normal labour market. What the successful engineer gains is wealth and prestige; it is much more difficult to argue that successful engineers typically gain ‘self-transcendence’ by say, being involved in Petroleum Engineering, but they do gain status. Secondly, Kruglanski et. al. also argue that individuals may ‘lose’ significance through trauma, and argue that this explains the participation of

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argument, which I also think is a mistake, since her argument is incapable of explaining why it is engineers specifically who have been so over represented in Islamist violence, rather than the educated in general. However, this is less relevant to my own case, since I am of course trying to explain a different phenomenon.

<sup>280</sup> Arie W. Kruglanski, et al., “Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers’ Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance,” *Political Psychology* 30, No. 3 (June 2009): 331-357. See also the other papers in the same journal issue, which all deal with Kruglanski et al.’s work.

<sup>281</sup> Kruglanski, et al., “Fully Committed,” 335.

<sup>282</sup> Milgrom, “The Dispossessed,” 7.

<sup>283</sup> Milgrom, “The Dispossessed,” 16.

<sup>284</sup> Martha Crenshaw, in a commentary on Kruglanski et al.’s article, also notes the seeming incompatibility of their theory with the evidence from AfPak: Crenshaw, “Intimations of Mortality or Production Lines?,” 359-365.

traumatised individuals in suicide attacks.<sup>285</sup> This may make sense *within* the significance theory, but then re-interpreting as Meyersson Milgrom does, to be substitutable with status, does not. Most plausibly, the reason that losing a parent might make one willing to become a martyr is because it leads to a desire for revenge; it seems exceedingly odd to argue that this trauma could be ‘compensated’ through a status increase. Finally, one of the foundations of the argument by Kruglanski et al. is terror management theory, which while presenting itself as biologically grounded, is actually in conflict with modern evolutionary thinking and is therefore likely false.<sup>286</sup>

### **A Generalized Model of the Supply of Martyrs**

Although Meyersson Milgrom’s theory is incapable of explaining the nature of suicide bombers in AfPak, the central idea that organisations which sponsor suicide attacks can be thought of firms which ‘pay’ for their martyrs through the ‘currency’ of status is nonetheless extremely useful. In Meyersson Milgrom’s formulation, the ability of organisations to generate this currency is linked to their provision of public goods and security. However, it seems more useful to make this argument more general. Instead of being linked to the provision of public goods, we can instead argue that militant organisations, like conventional firms, have a certain level of status and prestige, as do their ‘products’. These levels of approbation may be generated by a number of factors, including the provision of public goods, but also by fighting hated enemies, or even through successful ‘advertising’.<sup>287</sup>

Therefore, the prestige of an organisation, combined with the prestige of suicide attacks, determines the level of ‘wages’ that an organisation can offer to prospective recruits. Individuals who volunteer to become martyrs do so partly in order to raise their own status and in particular to be crowned with the mantle of heroism. Organisations which are disreputable are less able to offer such a reward. Similarly, if suicide attacks are not perceived as ‘martyrdom’ but rather simple self-destruction leading to wanton carnage, then individuals will be much less likely to be willing to offer themselves. It should be noted that the supply of martyrs is probably not wholly explained by these factors and even a highly unpopular organisation may be able to procure some individuals willing to die for the cause.

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<sup>285</sup> Kruglanski, et al., “Fully Committed,” 349-349.

<sup>286</sup> Lee A. Kirkpatrick and Carlos David Navarrete, “Reports of My Death Anxiety Have Been Greatly Exaggerated: A Critique of Terror Management Theory from an Evolutionary Perspective,” *Psychological Inquiry* 17, No. 4 (2006): 288-298.

<sup>287</sup> Scott Atran also suggests an advertising metaphor for thinking about how recruiters frame suicide bombing as martyrdom: Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism,” *Washington Quarterly* 27, No. 4 (2004): 79.

But all else being equal, where organisations and suicide attacks are held in high regard, the supply of martyrs will be larger than where the reverse is the case.

Moreover, where the prestige of suicide attacks and suicide attacks sponsoring organisations is highest, the *quality* of martyrs will be also be the highest. This is an important point because prior research has shown that there is, in general, a good reason why suicide-attack-deploying organisations should want ‘higher quality’ martyrs. In particular, economists Efraim Benmelech and Claude Berrebi found from studying the detailed information on 148 Palestinian suicide bombers active in attacks between 2000 and 2005, that those with higher ‘human capital’ were more effective than those with less. In particular, Benmelech and Berrebi found that older and more educated bombers on average killed more people than younger bombers, and that they were less likely to fail or be apprehended.<sup>288</sup> Moreover, organisations clearly perceived these advantages, since they sent higher quality bombers to higher value targets. This research indirectly strengthens my own, since it shows that children are not just as effective as older and more educated bombers and that therefore, where possible, organisations will select the best candidates to carry out attacks. Yet in order for them to be able to do this, there has to be sufficient supply for them to be able to reject lower quality bombers.<sup>289</sup>

Further evidence for my argument comes from studies of the relationship between the reputations of conventional firms and the applicants that apply to them. According to research by management scholars, prospective employees use the reputations of firms to gauge the quality of the work they will be involved in, and the level of pride they will achieve from being associated with the firm.<sup>290</sup> This research also showed that workers would be willing to accept lower pay from a firm with better reputation. More importantly, it has been found that firm reputation also leads to more and higher quality workers, just as my own theory would predict.<sup>291</sup> Therefore, my assumption that firm status leads to more and better employees seems warranted. It also fits with anecdotal evidence about the motivations of suicide

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<sup>288</sup> Efraim Benmelech and Claude Berrebi, “Human Capital and the Productivity of Suicide Bombers,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, No. 3 (Summer 2007): 236.

<sup>289</sup> Ethan Bueno de Mesquita constructs a formal model of this screening process in Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, “The Quality of Terror,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49, No. 3 (2005): 515-530.

<sup>290</sup> Daniel M. Cable and Daniel B. Turban, “The Value of Organizational Reputation in the Recruitment Context: A Brand Equity Perspective,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 33, No. 11 (2003): 2260.

<sup>291</sup> Daniel B. Turban and Daniel M. Cable, “Firm reputation and applicant pool characteristics,” *Journal of Organizational Behaviour* 24, No.6 (2003): 746.

bombers. A captured Iraqi suicide bomber, for instance, stated that it was vitally important that his family, friends and community supported his action and thought it praiseworthy.<sup>292</sup>

Moreover, my re-conceptualization of the status as wages argument can also help clarify an element of Meyersson Milgrom's work that does not really make sense. In particular, she argues that Al-Qaeda provides public services that lend them credibility.<sup>293</sup> However, Al-Qaeda, in the sense of 'Al-Qaeda central' led by Bin Laden and now Zawahiri, has never provided public services in the way that say, Hamas has.<sup>294</sup> Nonetheless, it has been able to recruit a great number of skilled operatives. However, we simply note that there are several sources of organisational reputation and that Al-Qaeda and Bin-Laden's 'brand' was built on things other than the provision of public goods.

### **Explaining Youth and Coercion**

The quantity and quality of the supply of individuals, I argue, is strongly determined by the status of organisations which attempt to use suicide attacks, and the status accorded to martyrdom itself.<sup>295</sup> But how does this help us explain why suicide bombers in AfPak are so often young and coerced?

My argument is that the nature of suicide bombers in AfPak is actually explained by an imbalance in the market for suicide bombers in AfPak. Because the militants are fighting an insurgency against large, skilled military forces, rather than just conducting strictly 'terrorist' attacks against civilians, their demand for martyrs is high. As we will see in chapters five and six, suicide attacks cause more damage than any other weapon available to the militants, create enormous media attention and are uniquely effective as tools of assassination; therefore the appetite for their deployment is likely to be massive. On the other hand, supply is low because the groups deploying suicide attacks, and the tactic itself, are simply not popular. Popularity, I argue, is a useful proxy for prestige, since people's judgements about the status of an organisation are likely to be heavily influenced by others' opinions.

Given this situation, in a normal labour market, the response would be for firms to raise wages. In the case of militant organisations, this would require improving the 'brand' of the organisation and the attractiveness of martyrdom. However, it appears the organisations in

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<sup>292</sup> Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 208.

<sup>293</sup> Milgrom, "The Dispossessed."

<sup>294</sup> With the caveat of Bin Laden's Largesse in Sudan; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda's Rode to 9/11*, (London: Penguin, 2007), 168-169.

<sup>295</sup> As per Meyerson Milgrom's argument, opportunity costs also matter; that is alternative sources of status.

question are unable or unwilling to do this. The consequence of this, I argue, is that organisations have taken to substituting ‘coerced labour’ for scarce ‘voluntary labour’. Additionally, even where they do not rely upon coercion, they have tended to target the young for recruitment because the incentives required to recruit them are less ‘costly’ than those for older and more capable individuals.

This raises the question of why organisations have failed to invest in enhancing their ‘brand’ and that of martyrdom. According to prior scholarship, the so called ‘death cults’ associated with suicide attacks in Palestine and Lebanon were anything but spontaneous, but rather were the product of purposeful construction by organisations.<sup>296</sup> As I have argued in chapter two however, the AfPak militants’ strategy has relied more upon coercion and control than on winning hearts and minds, rendering this option too difficult to put into practice. Coercing individuals and targeting those who require minimal incentives may therefore simply be cheaper than the alternatives. An additional reason for this may have to do with technology and sheer geography; it may be much easier to promulgate the value of martyrdom in countries with more advanced communication technologies and where urban living facilitates easier top down diffusion of information.

### **Militancy and Suicide Attacks are Unpopular**

Having presented a theoretical explanation for coercion and extremely young bombers, I now present evidence showing that militants and suicide attacks are in fact unpopular. As I noted above, popularity serves as a good proxy for the status of an organisation and therefore its ability to ‘pay’ martyrs. Similarly, public attitudes toward suicide attacks will also be important in assessing the likely recruitment ability of organisations. I will present data from Afghanistan and Pakistan in turn. While each country has differences in the public perceptions of militancy, evidence suggests that widespread support for militants and suicide attacks is absent in both countries.

#### **Afghanistan**

Of the two countries, data is the most limited in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the available evidence supports my position. Generally, the Taliban appear to be remarkably unpopular. This should not suggest by any means that the Government of Afghanistan or US and NATO forces are popular; despite initial enthusiasm, the popularity of both has fallen drastically.

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<sup>296</sup> Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 65-78; Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 158-164; Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 173-197.



What the data do seem to show is that the kind of deep enthusiasm which is needed to entice a large number of willing martyrs is absent.

Clear evidence for this comes from an ABC News/BBC/ARD/Washington Post poll that reported yearly answers from 2005-2010 on the question “Who would you prefer to rule Afghanistan?” In 2005, 91 percent preferred the current government to keep ruling, with only 1 percent wanting the Taliban to return as the rulers of Afghanistan.<sup>297</sup> By 2010, these figures had diminished to 86 percent in favour of the current regime and 9 percent wanting a return of the Taliban. Nonetheless, this is a very small figure. The poll also found that 69 percent of respondents saw the Taliban as the number one danger to their country. Extremely negative views of the Taliban were also reported in a WorldPublicOpinion.org poll of 2005 and 2006. In 2005, 88 percent of respondents said they had a somewhat or very unfavourable view of the Taliban and in 2006, 92 percent said they had a somewhat or very unfavourable opinion.<sup>298</sup> Respondents also generally viewed the overthrow of the Taliban as positive, with 82 percent expressing this opinion in 2005 and 86 percent in 2006.<sup>299</sup>

A different view is presented in a report published by the UK Government’s Department for International Development (DFID). The report tested a number of hypotheses on ‘radicalization’ in Afghanistan, seeking responses to the question why individuals joined or supported the Taliban or Hezb-i-Islami. Rather than conducting polling, the report was based upon 192 interviews with a variety of locals from Wadak, Kandahar and Kabul provinces.<sup>300</sup> This study found much greater support for the Taliban than is apparent from the previous polling results, although they did not provide any quantitative measures, so it is impossible to compare precisely. Despite the fact that the Taliban appear much more popular from the results of this study, the report also concluded that much of this support was simply because this organisation represented the only viable means of protesting against the current political arrangements, which were loathed.<sup>301</sup> Moreover, the report reinforced the point that while the

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<sup>297</sup> “Afghanistan: Where Things Stand,” *ABC News/BBC/ARD/Washington Post*, December 6, 2010, 11, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.langerresearch.com/uploads/1116a1Afghanistan.pdf>.

<sup>298</sup> Stephen Weber, “Afghan Public Opinion Amidst Rising Violence,” *WorldPublicOpinion.org*, 7, accessed January 30, 2014, [http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/dec06/Afghanistan\\_Dec06\\_rpt.pdf](http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/dec06/Afghanistan_Dec06_rpt.pdf).

<sup>299</sup> Weber, “Afghan Public Opinion Amidst Rising Violence,” 8.

<sup>300</sup> Sarah Ladbury, “Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do men join the Taliban and Hizb-I Islami? How much do local communities support them?” *Independent Report for the Department of International Development*, (Kabul: DIFID/CPAU, August 2009), accessed January 22, 2014, <http://d.yimg.com/kq/groups/23852819/1968355965/name/Drivers%20of%20Radicalisation%20in%20Afghanistan%20Sep%2009.pdf>.

<sup>301</sup> Ladbury, “Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan,” 20-27.

Taliban were liked for their provision of justice, they did not provide any other public services at all.

Probably the methodologically strongest study relevant to my work was carried out by The New America Foundation and The Peace Training and Research Organisation. This report was the product of 200 interviews with locals in Kandahar and Helmand provinces. It used ‘snowball’ rather than random sampling in order to deal with biases inherent in this type of research; it certainly did perform much better than other studies in one respect, namely that the non-response level for most questions was close to zero. The report again found extremely low levels of support for the Taliban, with 71 percent reporting an unfavourable view in Kandahar and 61 percent in Helmand.<sup>302</sup> Even Mullah Omar himself had an unfavourable rating of 67.5 percent. It is worth noting that the population, while disfavoured by the Taliban, tended to blame their problematic behaviour upon manipulation either by the Pakistani government/ISI or foreign jihadis. Despite this caveat, their activities were clearly resented. While NATO and US forces were even more unpopular than the Taliban, the most unpopular of all were Al-Qaeda and other Foreign Fighters; 93.9 percent of those in Kandahar, and 87.8 percent in Helmand reporting an unfavourable view.<sup>303</sup>

In Afghanistan, there has been no explicit gauging of public opinion regarding suicide bombing itself. However, the anecdotal evidence seems to strongly support my position. This is because there appears to be a complete lack of any sort of ‘martyrdom’ cult or public veneration of suicide bombers as manifested elsewhere.<sup>304</sup> Jean MacKenzie has also noted that in Helmand province locals tend to attribute suicide attacks to outside forces, since they prefer not to believe that locals would be involved in such unseemly activities which tend to victimise civilians.<sup>305</sup> So while the exact nature of the local populations’ attitudes towards insurgents may be somewhat ambiguous, this general absence of martyrdom propaganda as seen in other suicide attack campaigns is strong evidence for my argument that militants are relying upon

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<sup>302</sup> Christian Dennys, “Moving Towards Transition: A Survey of Opinion Leaders in Southern Afghanistan As the United States Begins its Drawdown,” (Washington, D.C.: The New America Foundation/Peace Training and Research Organization Public Opinion Survey, October 2011), 7-9, accessed January 30, 2014, [http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/DennysFinalPaper\\_0.pdf](http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/DennysFinalPaper_0.pdf).

<sup>303</sup> Dennys, “Moving Towards Transition,” 7-9.

<sup>304</sup> Rod Nordland, “Afghan Suicide Attacks Seen as Less Effective,” *New York Times*, February 15, 2010, accessed October 18, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/16/world/asia/16bomber.html>; Fergusson, *Taliban*, 183.

<sup>305</sup> Jean MacKenzie, “The Battle for Afghanistan: Militancy and Conflict in Helmand,” *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper*, (Washington, D.C.: New American Foundation, September 2010), 11, accessed January 30, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/helmand2.pdf>.

Finally, there is only very limited direct evidence about public perceptions of the Haqqani Network. The only available data is a Pew poll of Pakistani public opinion from 2012, which reported that just 5 percent of the population gave the Haqqanis a favourable rating.<sup>306</sup> This figure was somewhat ambiguous however, since 64 percent declined to answer; 31 percent gave an unfavourable rating to the organisation. In general, there is little reason to think that public attitudes would be substantially different towards the Haqqanis compared to the Quetta Shura, other than, perhaps, even greater fears of Pakistani interference. Therefore the result of the data from the Pew poll along with the evidence from Afghanistan in general seems to indicate the Haqqanis are no more popular than the Quetta Shura.

There is one other form of indirect evidence about attitudes towards the Haqqani Network from data on Pakistan. Since the Haqqani Network is actually headquartered in North Waziristan, opinion polling from FATA may give us some indication of attitudes towards the organisation. As we will see in the next section, attitudes in FATA towards militants are also very negative.

## **Pakistan**

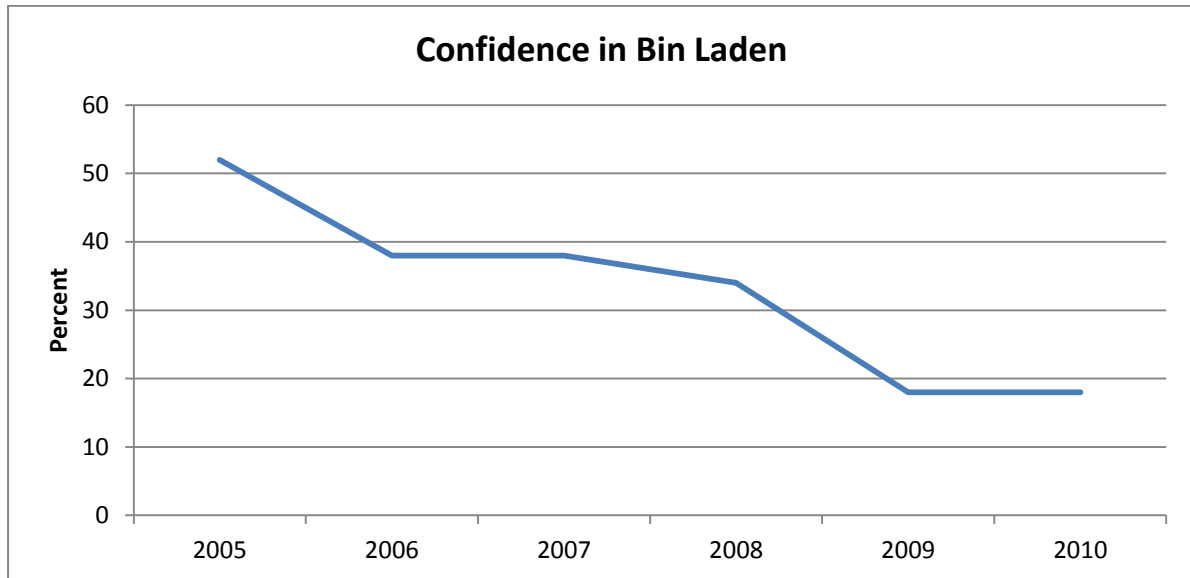
While militant groups and suicide attacks are demonstrably highly unpopular in Pakistan, support for militancy has at times been quite high. It was not until the realities of violent militancy began to encroach upon their daily lives that many Pakistanis began to reconsider this support. Despite the at times high level of support for militants, two facts make the argument about relatively low levels of willing candidates for martyrdom reasonable. First, support for suicide attacks has moved in the *opposite* direction to the number of suicide attacks over time. That is, as more suicide attacks have occurred, support has dropped. Second, despite Pakistan experiencing one of the largest campaigns of suicide attacks in history, it has also seen some of the lowest levels of support for suicide attacks in the Muslim world during the same period.

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, Western interest was mostly consumed with Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden rather than the Taliban and therefore most early polling was concerned with the former. The longest period of gauging Pakistani public attitudes towards militancy has been conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes project. This at least gives us some sense of

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<sup>306</sup> Pew Research, "Pakistani Public Opinion Ever More Critical of U.S.," *Global Attitudes Project*, June 27, 2012, 3, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2012/06/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Project-Pakistan-Report-FINAL-Wednesday-June-27-2012.pdf>.

broad attitudes towards militancy, although as subsequent research has demonstrated, support for different types of militants in Pakistan seems to be quite independent.<sup>307</sup> As the graph below demonstrates, during the period of my study, attitudes towards Bin Laden, although initially quite positive, have grown extremely negative over time, with under 20 percent expressing confidence by 2010.<sup>308</sup>



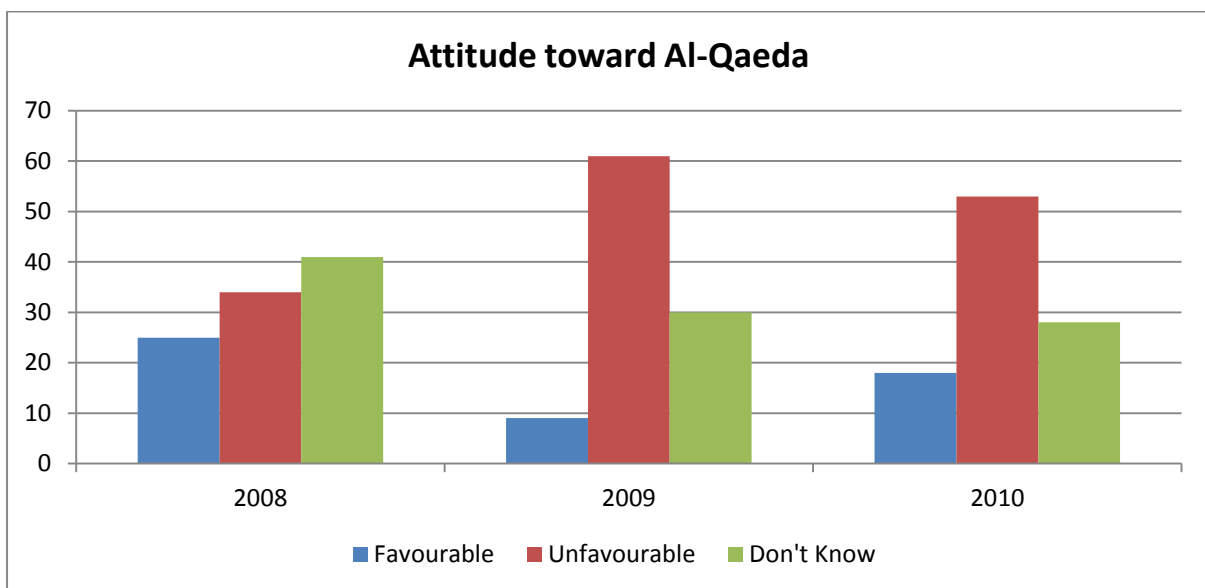
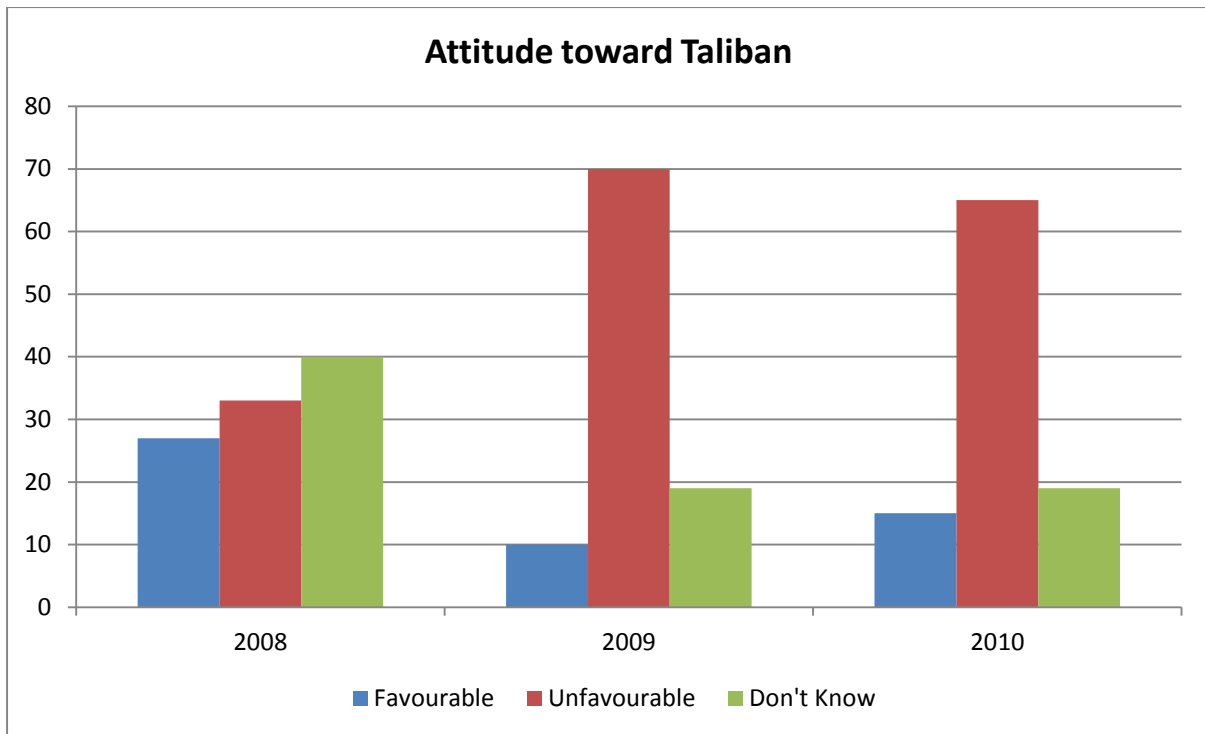
Increasingly Pew and other polling groups have also turned attention to attitudes towards the Taliban in Pakistan as well as Al-Qaeda. In general, levels of support for militancy have been moderate to low in Pew data and as with Bin Laden, attitudes have hardened over time.<sup>309</sup> However, the evidence is somewhat difficult to interpret since there have been a large number of “Don’t Know” responses which could be indicative of some respondents being unwilling to publicly endorse these groups, but nonetheless having some level of support for them.<sup>310</sup> Nonetheless, it is clear that attitudes towards them have increasingly become negative.

<sup>307</sup> Jacob N. Shapiro and C. Chris Fair, “Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan,” *International Security* 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/2010): 115.

<sup>308</sup> Pew Research, “On Anniversary of bin Laden’s Death, Little Backing of al Qaeda,” *Global Attitudes Project*, April 30, 2012, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/04/30/on-anniversary-of-bin-ladens-death-little-backing-of-al-qaeda/>.

<sup>309</sup> Pew Research, “U.S. Image in Pakistan Falls No Further Following bin Laden Killing,” *Global Attitudes Project*, 32, accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.PewResearchglobal.org/files/2011/06/Pew-Research-Global-Attitudes-Pakistan-Report-FINAL-June-21-2011.pdf>.

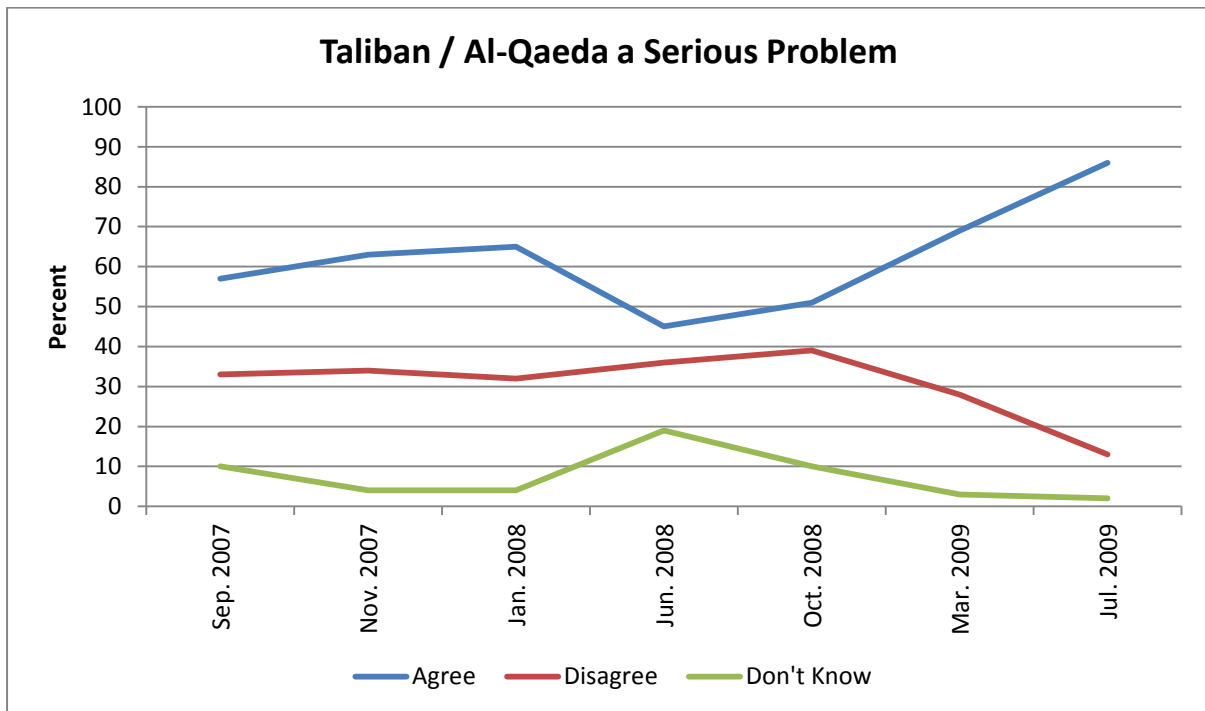
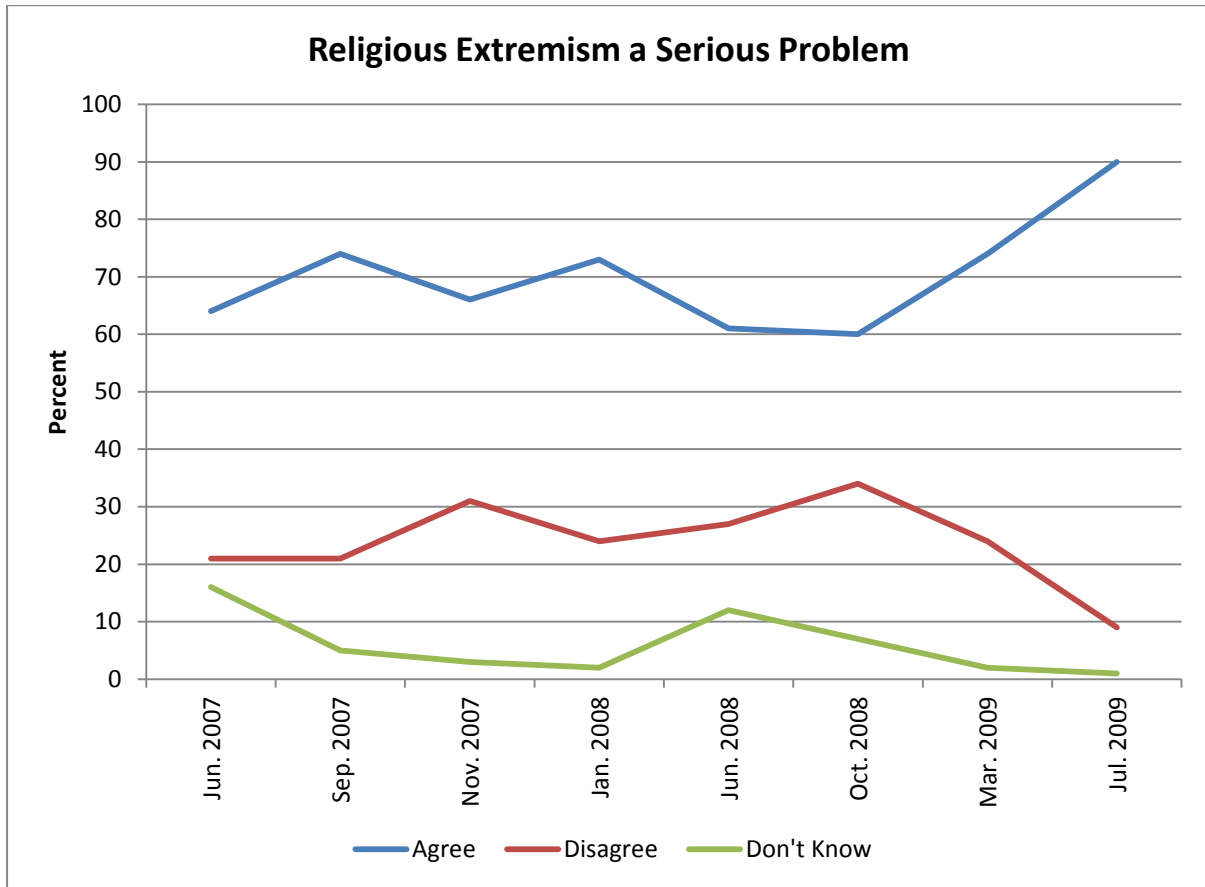
<sup>310</sup> Graeme Blair et al., “Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan,” *American Journal of Political Science* 57, No. 1 (January 2013): 4.



More data supporting the generally negative view of militants in Pakistan comes from the International Republican Institute (IRI), which tracked attitudes towards ‘religious extremism’ and the Taliban and Al-Qaeda from September 2007 to March 2009.<sup>311</sup> Specifically, respondents were asked whether or not they agreed that religious extremism was a problem, and whether or not they considered the Taliban and Al-Qaeda operating in

<sup>311</sup> International Republican Institute, “Pakistan Public Opinion Survey July 15 - August 7 2009,” October 1, 2009, 14-15, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2009%20October%201%20Survey%20of%20Pakistan%20Public%20Opinion,%20July%2015-August%207,%202009.pdf>.

Pakistan to be a serious problem. Again, majorities saw religious extremism in general and militant groups in particular as serious problems, especially by 2009.



While attitudes toward militants in Pakistan as a whole are important, evidence from the Taliban's homeland in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas is particularly important, since this seems to be the area from which most suicide bombers are drawn. A study of public opinion in the tribal areas conducted in 2010 by the New America Foundation and Terror Free Tomorrow found extremely negative attitudes towards both local and foreign militants; 67.3 percent of respondents said they had somewhat or very unfavourable opinions of Arab and other Foreign fighters. 63.8 percent said they had somewhat or very unfavourable opinions of the TTP. Only 5.4 and 4.4 percent expressed very favourable opinions of each respectively.<sup>312</sup> Even the Afghan Taliban were not particularly popular, with 57.1 percent reporting somewhat or very unfavourable views. As has been noted in chapter two, the Pakistani Taliban, like their Afghan brethren, have gained support or at least compliance in communities by their provision of justice. It is therefore instructive to note that in this sample, only 29.9 percent thought it was very or somewhat important that justice be delivered by the Taliban, whereas 67.7 percent thought it was very important or somewhat important that the tribal areas should be governed by Pakistani Government courts.<sup>313</sup>

Further results indicating the overall negative attitudes of those in the tribal areas towards militants comes from a report published in 2010 by the Community Appraisal & Motivation Program, a non-profit organisation working with disadvantaged groups within FATA and the NWFP. Al-Qaeda was again found to be extremely unpopular, with 72.6 percent having unfavourable or highly unfavourable views.<sup>314</sup> 64.3 percent had unfavourable views of the TTP, while only 15 percent had a favourable view of the group.<sup>315</sup> Interestingly, respondents were also asked for their opinions on the nature of the TTP. The most common response, given by 27.4 percent, was that they are terrorists. 24.2 percent thought they were uneducated youth and 18.2 percent thought they were foreigners. Only 5.4 percent thought they were defenders of Islam.

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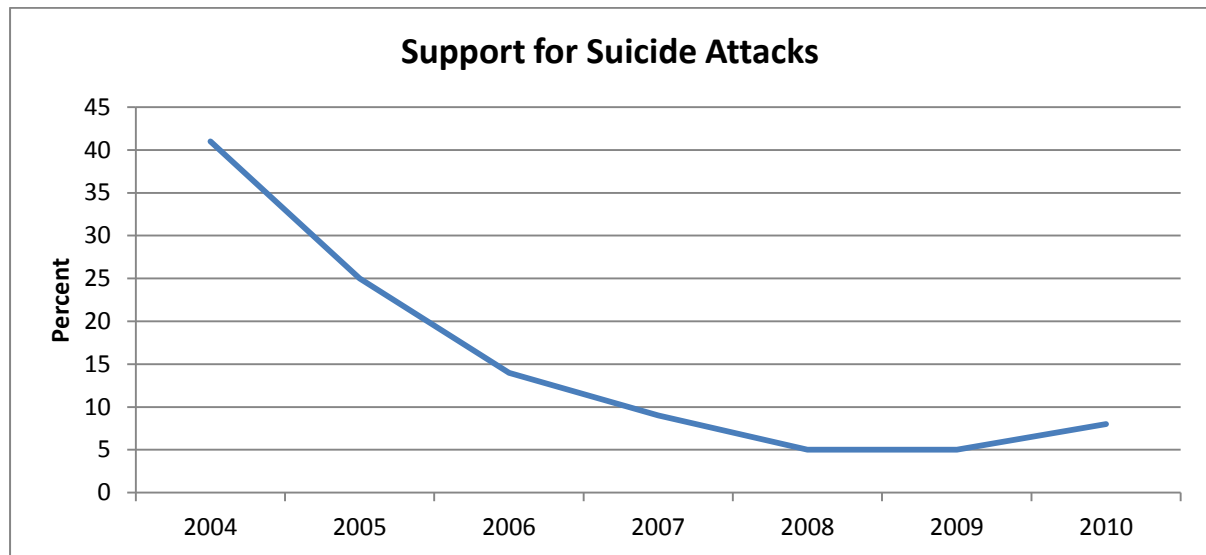
<sup>312</sup> Peter Bergan, Patrick C. Doherty and Ken Ballen, "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions," *Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative* (Washington D.C. New American Foundation/Terror Free Tomorrow, September 2010), 19, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/FATApoll.pdf>.

<sup>313</sup> Bergan, Doherty and Ballen, "Public Opinion in Pakistan's Tribal Regions," 18.

<sup>314</sup> Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, "Understanding FATA: Attitudes Towards Governance, Religion & Society in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Vol. 4," (Islamabad: Community Appraisal and Motivation Program, 2010), 71, accessed January 30, 2014, <http://www.understandingfata.org/files/Understanding-FATA-Vol-IV.pdf>.

<sup>315</sup> Shinwari, "Understanding FATA," 68.

While the evidence on public attitudes shows that, overall, organisations using suicide attacks are not popular in Pakistan, the evidence regarding attitudes toward suicide attacks is even stronger. While never highly popular, suicide attacks have become *very* unpopular in Pakistan and in fact it now registers amongst the lowest levels of support for suicide bombing in the Muslim world.<sup>316</sup>



	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Pakistan</b>	33	41	25	14	9	5	5	8	4
<b>Jordan</b>	43		57	29	23	25	12	20	13
<b>Lebanon</b>	74		39		34	32	38	39	35
<b>Indonesia</b>	26		15	10	10	11	13	15	10
<b>Turkey</b>	13	15	14	17	16	3	4	6	7
<b>Egypt</b>				28	8	13	15	20	28
<b>Palestinian Territories</b>					70		68		68

It is particularly instructive to compare the levels of popularity that suicide attacks continue to achieve in the Palestinian territories with the degree of support the tactic enjoys in Pakistan. Nearly three quarters of Palestinians express support even six years after the end of the second Intifada. These disparities appear to confirm the arguments advanced in this chapter. Organisations in Lebanon and Palestine, according to qualitative accounts, have been far more successful in generating ‘martyrdom cults’ which produce public acceptance and

<sup>316</sup> Pew Research, “Arab Spring Fails to Improve US Image,” *Global Attitudes Project*, May 17, 2011, 31, accessed October 30, 2012, <http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2011/05/Pew-Global-Attitudes-Arab-Spring-FINAL-May-17-2011.pdf>.



praise for the tactic. As a consequence, ‘more and better’ individuals are willing to sacrifice themselves. In Pakistan however, during 2009, the peak year of suicide attacks in my data, only 5 percent of individuals were willing to support the tactic.

In fact, it appears that in Pakistan, as the suicide attack campaign has intensified, there has been a consequent drop in support of the tactic. This is not particularly surprising, since almost all victims of suicide attacks by Pakistanis have been other Pakistanis. It is also consistent with widely reported anecdotal accounts that suggest Muslim populations, even where initially supportive, have often turned against the tactic once they have experienced it firsthand.<sup>317</sup>

In conclusion, these data demonstrate that widespread public approbation is not necessary to carry out large suicide attack campaigns. In addition to strongly supporting my own theory, these findings stand in contrast to claims made by others in the field, who argue that public support is positively related to the use of suicide attacks. In their strongest form such claims asserted that campaigns of suicide attacks are impossible without broad societal backing.<sup>318</sup> More conservatively, it has been argued that public approbation will make the tactic “flourish.”<sup>319</sup> Similarly, in Pape’s theory, public support for martyrdom is a key step which transforms a nationalist rebellion into a suicide attack campaign.<sup>320</sup>

It may well be true that public approbation for suicide attacks and the organisations that sponsor them has been common in the past and has been linked to the supply of those willing to participate. But in light of the evidence of this chapter, versions of an argument claiming that vehement popular support is the *only* means by which a large supply of suicide bombers can be produced are clearly false.

Nonetheless it *is* necessary to have a means of securing a supply of individuals to carry out attacks. It appears that the cheapest and easiest way to do this, absent public support, is either to target those who are most easily manipulated or simply abduct them. Again, it needs to be stressed that in any community there may be *some* individuals willing to participate, even without widespread support for militant organisations or for suicide attacks. However, in

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<sup>317</sup> Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, 255-257.

<sup>318</sup> A heading in Ariel Merari’s books states that “Public Support is a Necessary but Not Sufficient Factor for Large-Scale Suicide Campaigns: Merari, *Driven to Death*, 182; Ami Pedahzur argues that “In order to sustain a suicide campaign, every terrorist organization needs the support of the community.” Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 163.

<sup>319</sup> Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 78.

<sup>320</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win*, 96.

order to carry out the almost industrial production of human bombs that AfPak militants have engaged in, the supply of willing participants is clearly insufficient and coercion and manipulation are used as substitutes for the incentives used elsewhere.

## **Alternatives**

Although the youth of AfPak suicide bombers has been commented upon, there has been little attempt to account for this theoretically. The only alternative explanation has been advanced by Robert Pape and James Feldman, who have argued that the reason that bombers in Afghanistan are poor, young and uneducated is because Afghans in general tend to be poor, young and uneducated.<sup>321</sup> According to statistics quoted by Pape and Feldman, 72 percent of the Afghan population is illiterate, 70 percent are below the age of 22 and 50 percent live below the poverty line.

This evidence seems to undermine the argument I am presenting that the youth of AfPak bombers is driven primarily by the lack of availability of older bombers and the consequent need to focus on those who are more vulnerable to coercion. However if we look at AfPak in comparison with other suicide attack campaigns, then the straight line between the broader demographics and the demographics of the bombers themselves becomes harder to sustain. Specifically, as we will see below, in other suicide attack campaigns, there appears to be no relationship between the age structure of the population from which the bombers are drawn, and the age of the bombers themselves. Instead, their average age seems to consistently be around 20-22.

Therefore, even if Pape and Feldman were right that the age of Afghan bombers was purely a function of the age of the population from which they were drawn, this would itself require explanation. Since in every other campaign there appears to have been a selection process, either by the sponsoring group, or some form of self-selection, which produced bombers of quite similar average ages. As we have seen earlier, this is understandable as a consequence of militant organisations selecting, where possible, better quality candidates, because this results in more favourable attack outcomes. In order to justify the claim that the age of suicide bombers is a result of selection, rather than simply a consequence of the age structure of the populations from which they are drawn, we can examine available data on these parameters.

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<sup>321</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 133. They do not address these topics with regard to Pakistan, but presumably they believe the same argument holds.

There are two main published sources of information about the ages of suicide attacks by campaign, Pape's first book, *Dying to Win*, and the more recent set of data published by Ariel Merari in his book *Driven to Death*. In *Dying to Win*, Pape reports the ages of 278 bombers for which he found age data amongst suicide attackers from 1980 to 2003.<sup>322</sup> The mean age in his sample was 22.7 years. Pape also notes that while there were some younger bombers, only 13 percent of his sample were 15-18 years of age, with 55 percent being 19-23 and 32 percent being 24+. Broken down by campaign, mean ages were Lebanon 21.1, Sri Lanka 21.9, Palestine 22.5, Turkey 23.6, and Chechnya at 29.8.<sup>323</sup> Merari finds quite similar numbers: 21.6 for Lebanon, Sri Lanka 23.7<sup>324</sup>, Palestine 22.35<sup>325</sup>, Turkey 25.8 and Chechnya 23.9.

In order to see whether there is a relationship between the age of the surrounding population and the age of the bombers that are drawn from that population, I have used population data from the CIA World fact book, which provides median ages for most countries around the world.<sup>326</sup> Using the median age of the population to compare to the mean age of bombers in different countries is not, of course, ideal, because it is not an 'apples with apples' comparison, nonetheless, it provides a useful yardstick.

In addition to evidence on suicide bombers from other countries, I have also calculated an imputed average age of AfPak suicide bombers (labelled 'My Estimate' in graph 3.1 below) by taking the mean of the summed means of all the reports noted above which give a typical range of ages for suicide bombers in these countries. For instance, Zahid Hussain above reported an age of 12-18 for Pakistani bombers, so that would imply a mean age of 15.5. I have then taken the mean of the median ages provided by the CIA World fact book in order to compare the age of bombers with the ages of the populations from which they are drawn in my own cases.

Graph 3.1 below shows the median ages of the countries where suicide attack campaigns occurred, compared with the data from both Pape and Merari about the mean ages of bombers from those campaigns and my imputed age for AfPak bombers. The graph demonstrates that

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<sup>322</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win*, 203-208.

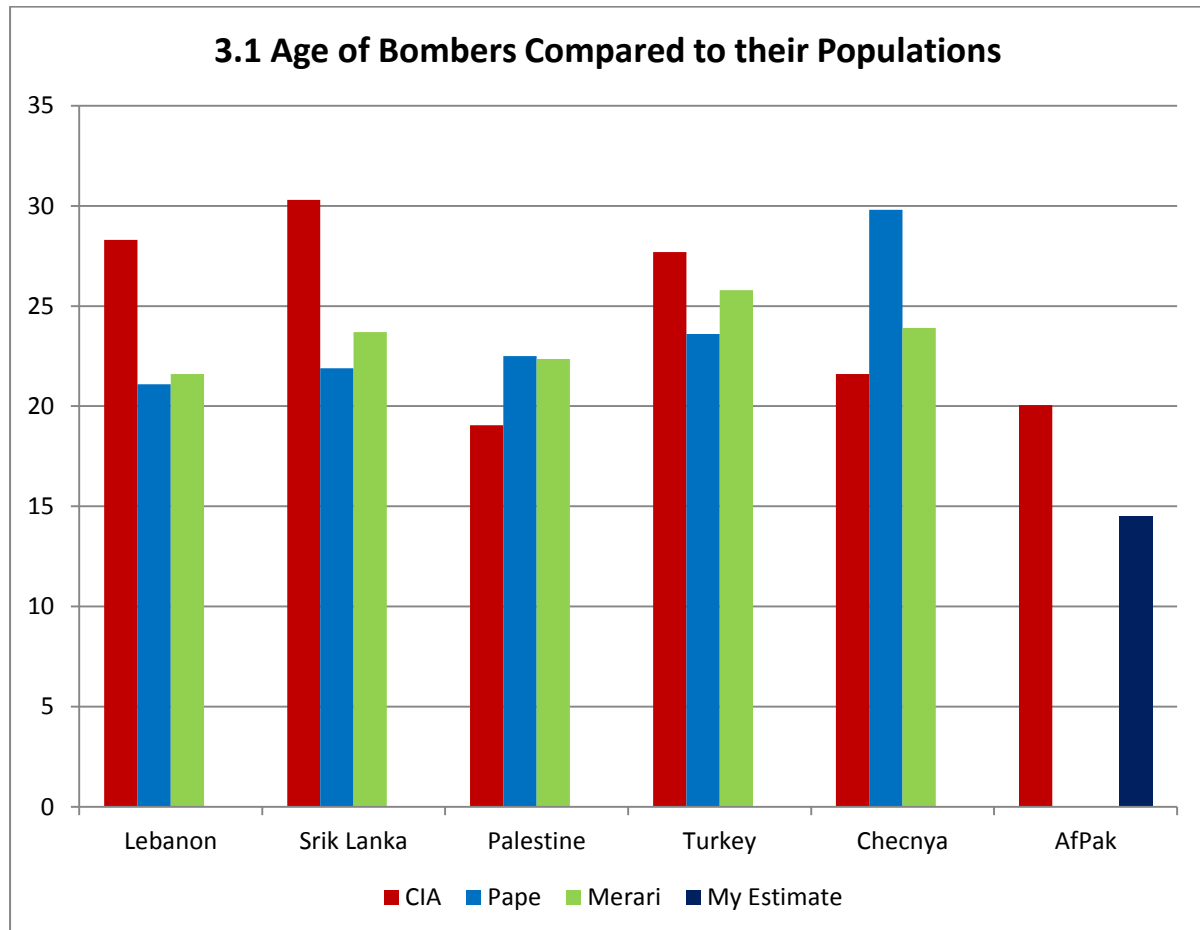
<sup>323</sup> As Merari notes, Pape does not, unfortunately, tell us how big the sample is for each campaign. Merari, *Driven to Death*, 69-71.

<sup>324</sup> Merari notes that he only has data on 10 out of 167 bombers in Sri Lanka that he is aware of, whereas a Sri Lankan military estimate suggested that the 60 percent of bombers were below the age of 18: Merari, *Driven to Death*, 70.

<sup>325</sup> Merari quotes figures of 22.6 for bombers before the second Intifada and 22.1 for bombers during and after the Intifada. For convenience I have quoted the mean of these figures.

<sup>326</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "World Factbook," accessed December 01, 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>.

there seems to be little relationship between the ages of the bombers and the ages of the populations from which they are drawn, including in the case of AfPak. In addition, it is notable that the ages of the bombers in all campaigns cluster around the early twenties, with notable exception of Pape’s data on the Chechen bombers.



This data suggests something different from what Pape and Feldman argue. They are quite correct that the populations of the tribal areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan are extremely young. However, elsewhere there has been a selection process which has meant that the demographics of the population at large do not translate directly into bombers with particular ages. In fact, Pape spent almost a whole chapter of *Dying to Win* making exactly this point, arguing that suicide bombers were typically better educated (and hence usually older) than the surrounding populations from which they were drawn.<sup>327</sup>

Therefore, it seems much more plausible to argue that the lower ages of AfPak bombers are in fact caused by the particular labour market situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Not only does my theory account for the younger ages of bombers, it also helps explain why they are

<sup>327</sup> Pape, *Dying to Win*, Chapter 10; see particularly the graphs on pages 214-215.

coerced, and how these factors relate to the unpopularity of militants and suicide attacks. Pape and Feldman's theory does not even try to account for these other issues.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has addressed a central puzzle about the nature of suicide bombers in Afghanistan in Pakistan, namely their often extreme youth and their tendency to be coercively recruited and trained. Here I have explained these unusual facts by considering by considering the recruitment of suicide bombers as a particular type of labour market. Demand in this model is determined by rebel organisations' perception of the usefulness of the tactic, and supply is determined by the reputation of the organisation in question and public attitudes toward suicide attacks. Because both militant organisations and suicide attacks are held in low regard, and because militants are conducting large scale insurgencies, there is an imbalance between supply and demand. Instead of 'raising wages', which would be the typical employer response, organisations have instead chosen to recruit those easiest to motivate, and have engaged in coercion where motivation is insufficient. Presumably this is because it is simply cheaper and easier to do so, given their overall strategies, than the alternative of trying to make martyrdom widely accepted. This is consistent with a wide range of evidence, and provides a richer explanation than earlier scholarly accounts.

## Chapter 4: The Psychology of Martyrdom

### Introduction

The central challenge to our understanding of suicide attacks is why individuals are knowingly willing to kill themselves. As we have seen in chapter three, those participating in suicide attacks in AfPak often do so under duress, or are so young that they may not fully appreciate what they are doing. These facts make the puzzle easier to resolve, and in some cases enable us to understand the phenomenon. But a question remains. For the majority who do have some conception that they are going to their deaths, what explains their behaviour? Even individuals who are abducted need to be motivated in some way. The very nature of the task they are carrying out means that coercion typically has to stop well short of the actual execution of the attack. Therefore, the training process must somehow affect individuals psychologically in ways that make martyrdom seem compelling.<sup>328</sup>

This chapter will attempt to explain how this occurs by advancing arguments drawn from findings in sociobiology, cognitive psychology, social psychology and neuroscience. First, I argue that trainers tap fundamental human motives with deep evolutionary histories to influence individuals to become martyrs, specifically: the desire to protect kin, the desire for sex, a type of ‘evolutionary heroism’ and the desire for revenge. While these motives are generally adaptive, they are prone to manipulation to non-adaptive ends. Second, I argue that trainers attempt to overwhelm their trainees’ limited capacities for rational deliberation and self-control which might override the motivational states they have elicited. Third I argue that youngsters in AfPak may be particularly vulnerable to being manipulated into martyrdom since their capability for rational thought and self-control are likely low to begin with. Both because of their youth and the fact that those involved have been selected for their malleability. Finally, I argue the methods of manipulating fundamental motives and the degradation of self-control are reinforced by trainers also employing the social forces of authority and conformity that can powerfully shape human behaviour.

### Coercion is not enough

As I noted in chapter three, the central question for many researchers has been why young people with apparently bright prospects have been willing to become martyrs. In AfPak

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<sup>328</sup> Although not influenced by his account, the arguments advanced in this chapter are similar in a number of ways to those found in Steven Pinker’s recent book: Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*, (New York: Penguin, 2011), 352-361.

however, the profile of suicide bombers is quite different: very young, uneducated, manipulated, and with probably few hopes in life. Given that insurgents in AfPak seem to be using coercion rather than incentives, it might be assumed that the behaviour of suicide bombers in AfPak does not require any deep explanation: they are simply forced into it. This assumption is misguided. Except in the cases of children who are so young or cognitively challenged that they literally do not know what they are doing, AfPak suicide bombers still present a profound explanatory challenge.

This puzzle exists because the means typically used to coerce individuals, that is threats or promised rewards, do not have the same force in the context of trying to produce a martyr. Of course in extreme coercion, the terminal threat is ‘do x, or I’ll kill you’. This might seem to be stating the obvious, but it is important for two reasons. First, ‘coercion’ *by itself* does not explain people’s participation in suicide attacks, even though it may be an important *part* of an explanation. Even if an individual is abducted for an attack, it is still necessary to prepare them psychologically to carry out the mission, otherwise once they have approached their target, they may well be free to give themselves up (which does in fact happen in some cases). Second, while analogies can be drawn between suicide attacks and other patterns of behaviour, we have to take careful consideration of the dissimilarity between the action of a suicide bomber and potentially similar models (such as mass suicides) where coercion is possible at every step of the process. A clear example of the difference is provided by accounts of the practice of *Sati*, another type of suicide supposedly conditioned and produced through social approbation. It seems clear that while the widow’s own resolution carries her a certain part of the way, social pressures are brought to bear so that there is little real alternative and the final act does not depend upon the individual’s ultimate decision the way a suicide mission does.<sup>329</sup>

This comparison seems to suggest that despite the apparently large differences between the type of individuals involved in AfPak and other countries, and in the nature of their recruitment, the training and psychological underpinnings of participation may be similar. This in turn suggests that other scholars’ work on the motivations of suicide bombers may still be relevant, despite the differences between martyrs in AfPak and elsewhere. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, scholarly accounts of suicide martyrdom have been incomplete or simply inapplicable to AfPak martyrs.

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<sup>329</sup> Jean-Antoine Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 362-363.

A crucial problem with earlier arguments is that they do not present an account of coercive training or indoctrination, but a model of martyrdom in AfPak must inevitably account for this. In addition, even accounts of the bombers' motivation that consider a wide range of factors, and as such seem plausible, lack systematic empirical support. Therefore, it will be helpful to turn to a range of more fundamental behavioural sciences, leveraging well established knowledge to account for participation in suicide attacks.<sup>330</sup>

While acknowledging that suicide bombings are carried out within complex cultural matrices, it is my contention that underpinning the act of participation in suicide missions is a set of fundamental cognitive mechanisms many of which have an evolutionary origin. These mechanisms are thought to be species universals and in some cases, exist in a number of non-human species. As a consequence, we can have more confidence in positing them as causes when trying to explain participation in suicide attacks, where we may otherwise struggle for understanding. In particular it allows us to partially ameliorate the problems caused by the inherent dearth of evidence regarding this phenomenon, since we are relying upon findings which we have strong independent reason to accept. I am not the first author to suggest evolutionary thought might be relevant to understanding suicide attacks, but the account presented here, I argue, subsumes previous accounts and is able to explain both the 'typical' non-coerced bomber and the 'indoctrinated' bomber more frequently found in AfPak.

### **The Sociobiology of Motivation**

Drawing upon evolutionary theory is helpful for two reasons. First, evolutionary thought gives us a principled way of making assumptions about plausible factors in the motivations of suicide bombers, because it is the ultimate source of explanations for the existence and function of human motives.<sup>331</sup> Secondly, evolutionary thought over the last thirty years has given careful consideration to explanations of altruism and related forms of other-regarding behaviour. Given that suicide attackers are arguably an example of this, its findings should be highly relevant.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Mia Bloom makes a somewhat similar point, although she does not seem to have in mind similar ideas about what type of research to draw upon. See: Mia Bloom, "Chasing Butterflies and Rainbows: A Critique of Kruglanski et al.'s 'Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance'," *Political Psychology* 30 No. 3, (June 2009): 394.

<sup>331</sup> Douglas T. Kenrick et al., "Goal-Driven Cognition and Functional Behavior: The Fundamental-Motives Framework," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 19, No. 1 (February 2010): 63-67.

<sup>332</sup> It is worth pointing out that there are a variety of different 'evolutionary' approaches to human behaviour, including 'evolutionary psychology', behavioural ecology and dual-inheritance theory. Even the most common of these terms, evolutionary psychology, actually refers to a number of things. Mostly, these distinctions are not



## Evolutionary Analysis of Behaviour

To appreciate the relevance of evolutionary theory for present purposes, several aspects of the way that it is used to explain behaviour need to be described. The first of these is the assumption that all living organisms are essentially ‘designed’ to maximize their fitness, or reproductive success.<sup>333</sup> Whether they are bacteria or Blue Whales, all forms of life exhibit this function.<sup>334</sup> While this is the case, it is immediately obvious that whales, let alone bacteria, are not to be understood as *consciously* trying to maximize their fitness, but rather, their behaviour, as fashioned by natural selection, operates ‘as if’ they were seeking this goal.<sup>335</sup>

The second important point about evolutionary accounts of behaviour is that, in any behaviour of interest, there are at least two parts of a satisfactory explanation: the ‘ultimate’ or evolutionary explanation and the proximate explanation.<sup>336</sup> As an example, consider my cat’s propensity to eat grass. Two explanations for this behaviour seem to present themselves. First, he may eat grass because it provides necessary roughage to maintain his digestive health. Alternatively, he may like the taste and texture of grass and eat it for that reason. Considered properly, these are not competing explanations, but rather different elements of the same analysis. The evolutionary *function* of eating grass is to maintain health and thus to promote fitness; the proximate *mechanism* which produces this behaviour is gustatory preferences for the taste and texture of grass.

The third point is not really specific to evolutionary theories of behaviour, but is rather shared by all of the area of behavioural science that I will draw upon. Although sometimes using slightly different terminology, the underlying concept is essentially the same: behaviour is

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relevant for the arguments I wish to make, although I will signal at a number of points which theoretical source I am drawing upon. For a good introduction to the major approaches, see: Daniel Nettle, *Evolution and Genetics for Psychology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 264-271. As Nettle notes, one of the key questions that divides different approaches is whether human behaviour is adaptive in the present human environment, or whether it is rather adaptive for a past environment. For a detailed discussion of the various approaches, see: Kevin N. Laland, and Gillian R. Brown, *Sense & Nonsense: Evolutionary Perspective on Human Behaviour*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>333</sup> Andy Gardner, “Adaptation as Organism Design,” *Biology Letters* 5, No. 6 (2009): 861-864.

<sup>334</sup> This notion of function is not, of course, to be understood teleologically.

<sup>335</sup> Thomas C. Scott-Phillips, Thomas E. Dickins and Stuart A. West, “Evolutionary Theory and the Ultimate-Proximate Distinction in the Human Behavioural Sciences,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6, No. 1, (January 2011): 42.

<sup>336</sup> There are actually four such questions which can be asked about a behaviour in an evolutionary account: 1) Its evolutionary function, 2) Its proximate mechanism, 3) Its developmental path and 4) Its evolutionary history. These are known as Tinbergen’s ‘four questions’ after pioneering animal behaviourist Niko Tinbergen. Only the first two are relevant to my analysis. See: John R. Krebs and Nicholas B. Davies, *An Introduction to Behavioural Ecology*, (London: Blackwell, 1993), 4-5.

often produced by mental mechanisms that are variously termed ‘heuristics’, or ‘rules of thumb’.<sup>337</sup> While human behaviour is far more flexible and less stereotyped than that of all other animals, our responses to the environment are often produced by simple rules that operate largely automatically, unconsciously and autonomously.<sup>338</sup> These rules typically have specific cues which produce their activation and subsequent motivational, cognitive and behavioural output.

This is clear from the study of animal behaviour. A classic example is cuckoos and other ‘brood parasites’.<sup>339</sup> Cuckoos lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. Spending time and energy raising other species’ eggs is not fitness enhancing for female birds of other species. However, the cognitive machinery with which host species are endowed is not fine grained enough to distinguish cuckoo eggs or chicks from its own, seeming to operate on the rule, “Be nice to any small bird sitting in the nest that you built”.<sup>340</sup> As a consequence mother birds will often raise the Cuckoo chick, despite the fact that it is nothing like her own chicks. This example is particularly useful for our purposes since it is a case of ‘misfiring’ that is purposefully engineered by the cuckoo, not a mistake.

A simple human example of heuristics at work is one of the cues that humans use to detect kinship and avoid inbreeding. It is not possible for human beings to ‘see’ the genetic relatedness of other individuals. As a consequence, cues are used which, statistically speaking, tend to correlate with relatedness. One of these appears to be childhood co-residence with members of the opposite sex. A ‘side effect’ of this heuristic is that even non-relatives who experience childhood co-residence feel that sex with the individual in question would be wrong. The fact that they are consciously aware that the individual in question is unrelated does not ordinarily serve to override the emotional results of the developmental trigger.<sup>341</sup>

The ultimate-proximate distinction and the fact that human cognition often operates through heuristics enable us to understand how the trainers of suicide bombers are able to indoctrinate

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<sup>337</sup> John M. C. Hutchinson and Gerd Gigerenzer, “Simple Heuristics and rules of thumb: Where psychologists and behavioural biologists might meet,” *Behavioural Processes* 69, No. 2 (May 2005): 97-104.

<sup>338</sup> Timothy D. Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves: Discovering the Adaptive Unconscious*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2002), 49-66.

<sup>339</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 102.

<sup>340</sup> Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 102.

<sup>341</sup> Debra Lieberman, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides, “Does Morality have a Biological Basis? An Empirical Test of the Factors Governing Moral Sentiments Relating to Incest,” *Proceedings of the Royal Society: B* 270, No. 1517 (April 2003): 819-826.

and motivate their charges. Through the use of videos, military style training, sermons, exhortation and the simple presence of others involved in the same activities, they attempt to produce cues which activate the motivational mechanisms discussed below. As noted, in general these mechanisms produce adaptive emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses from the individual. But because of their rigid response to the stimuli which activate them, these mechanisms are liable to be manipulated to produce maladaptive behaviour. While such manipulation is not uncommon, the training of suicide bombers is one of its most extreme manifestations.

### **Motivational Mechanisms**

Having established the basic background principles for thinking about suicide attacks from an evolutionary perspective, we now consider a number of fundamental motives derived from this approach which seem relevant to explaining the decision to become a martyr. Four main arguments seem plausible: altruism toward kin or ‘fictive kin’, the afterlife rewards of sex and favours towards one’s kin, what can be termed ‘evolutionary heroism’ and finally, the desire for revenge. In the following sections, each motive is dealt with in turn.

### ***Kin Selection***

As noted above, one of the central theoretical concerns of sociobiology since its fundamental theoretical formulation in the 1960’s and 70s has been the explanation of cooperative behaviour.<sup>342</sup> Whereas Darwinian theory has been popularly thought to imply that plants and animals should be relentlessly selfish, nature features a number of examples of spectacularly cooperative behaviour.<sup>343</sup> There have been attempts to explain this cooperative behaviour through arguments about the ‘good of the species’ or ‘good of the group’, but these arguments were generally rejected as being incapable of explaining cooperation in Darwinian terms. Instead, theoretical work by William Hamilton and Robert Trivers began to clarify how cooperative and altruistic behaviour could be explained within a Darwinian framework. Particularly important for our purposes is Kin Selection theory.

Kin selection or ‘inclusive fitness’ theory was developed by biologist William Hamilton in the 1960’s; arguably it was the main theoretical clarification to natural selections since Darwin. Kin selection explains why close relatives tend to behave altruistically towards each

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<sup>342</sup> Stuart A. West, Claire El Mouden and Andy Gardner, “Sixteen Common Misconceptions about the Evolution of Cooperation in Humans,” *Evolution and Human Behaviour* 32, No. 4 (July 2011): 236-240.

<sup>343</sup> Dennis Krebs, “How Selfish by Nature?,” in *Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology*, eds. Charles Crawford and Dennis Krebs, (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008), 293-294; Richard Joyce, *The Evolution of Morality*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT press, 2006), 13-19.

other; essentially because they are especially genetically similar to each other.<sup>344</sup> The behaviour of an organism may not only have fitness effects on that individual but may also have indirect fitness effects on relatives who carry the same genes. Therefore behaviour that lowers an individuals' fitness, but at the same time raises that of a relative(s) can have a net positive effect on the frequency of genes which produce this behaviour and this can lead to the evolution of helping behaviours between kin.<sup>345</sup>

Inclusive fitness seems to produce a straightforward explanation of individual participation in suicide attacks.<sup>346</sup> If becoming a martyr can be expected to produce large benefits for a number of one's kin, then perhaps martyrdom becomes a net fitness benefit. This is not to suggest however that martyrdom or self-sacrifice is itself an adaptive trait as it is in the case of a bee that stings and then dies as a consequence. Instead, Kin selected altruism has to work through proximate cognitive machinery that produces motivations and behaviours in response to relevant and in this case highly novel environmental (i.e. in this case social) cues. What is different about kin selection as an explanation compared to other evolutionary mechanisms is that, in some cases at least, the fitness benefits may not be illusory. Some martyrs may have actually significantly impacted their relatives' ability to live on and reproduce successfully.

In some countries there have been quite tangible benefits associated with being the family of a martyr; in the Palestinian case in particular, large sums of money have been given to the family of the deceased.<sup>347</sup> Moreover, due to the glory associated with martyrdom, the families' status may rise, which may also improve relatives' fitness.<sup>348</sup> For bombers in AfPak however, it seems unlikely these concrete rewards are a motivating factor. Reports have been contradictory about whether or not families are ever paid for their children's sacrifice, but it

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<sup>344</sup> This point is the source of much confusion with regards to Kin Selection, since it has often been stated, for instance, that parents are 50 percent related to their children. On the other hand, the great majority of genes in two individuals of the same species must be identical, otherwise they would not be members of the same species. This confusion is difficult to untangle verbally, but the usual formulation is to say that genes have to be identical by descent. For explanations, in ascending order of technicality, see: Richard Dawkins "Twelve Misunderstandings of Kin Selection," *Zeitschrift für Tierpsychologie* 51, No. 2 (January-December, 1979): 190-192; Nettle, *Evolution and Genetics for Psychology*, 64-65; West, Mouden and Gardner, "Sixteen Common Misconceptions about the Evolution of Cooperation in Humans," 238.

<sup>345</sup> Again, 'genes for x' is a short hand that should not be taken literally. Dawkins again provides a lucid explanation of the underlying complexities: Dawkins "Twelve Misunderstandings of Kin Selection," 192-194. For experimental evidence of kin selected altruism, see: Elaine A. Madsen et al., "Kinship and altruism: A cross-cultural experimental study," *British Journal of Psychology* 98, No. 2 (May 2007): 339-359.

<sup>346</sup> Hector N. Qirko, "Altruism in Suicide Terror Organizations," *Zygon* 44, No. 2 (June 2009): 289-322.

<sup>347</sup> The former Saddam regime apparently paid \$25,000 to the families of Palestinian suicide bombers: Chris McGreal, "Saddam Funds Fail to Buy Gaza Hearts," *Guardian* March 13, 2003, accessed January 19, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/mar/13/israel>.

<sup>348</sup> Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 38.

does not appear to be common.<sup>349</sup> This of course is what we would expect where children are recruited via coercion. Moreover, as we have seen, suicide attacks are generally unpopular, so having a martyr for a son in this case may not produce a rise in prestige that it has been in other countries. An alternative source of benefits to kin is the heavenly rewards to one's family that are supposed to accompany martyrdom. In particular, the martyr gains the right to intercede on behalf of 70 relatives.<sup>350</sup> Therefore, insofar as such a reward is realistic to a child, it may be able to motivate, even in the absence of more concrete rewards. The general plausibility of heavenly rewards associated with AfPak conflict will be considered in more detail below.

The arguments I have considered so far have discussed the 'normal' functioning of kin selected behaviours. As I noted earlier however, because of the way proximate mechanisms of behaviour often operate through rather simple rules, kin selected behaviours can operate in contexts different from those for which they were 'designed' in evolutionary terms. In the case of participation in suicide attacks, Hector Qirko draws on previous work on 'induced altruism' in military settings, arguing that various cues of kinship are used to produce altruistic behaviour between recruits.<sup>351</sup> These cues include training "...in close and intense proximity, in settings where uniforms and other apparel and insignias are used to enhance resemblances and relationships are characterized by the use of kin terms such as 'mother country' and 'brothers in arms'".<sup>352</sup> In a similar vein, Scott Atran has argued that the bonds of brotherhood between groups of young men is central to explaining who is likely to carry out suicide attacks.<sup>353</sup> Thus suicide bombers may be motivated by kin selected altruism for the sake of their 'adoptive' family, even though the individuals in question are not in fact related. Given that prospective suicide bombers often seem to be trained together in small quasi-military style settings, this picture does not seem implausible. In addition, for those who have also come from a background of many years in a madrassa separated from their parents and siblings, fictive kinship bonds with their surrogate family seem likely to be particularly strong.

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<sup>349</sup> Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, (London: Penguin, 2010), 133.

<sup>350</sup> David Cook and Allison Olivia, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007), 10.

<sup>351</sup> Qirko, "Altruism in Suicide Terror Organizations," 306-307.

<sup>352</sup> Qirko, "Altruism in Suicide Terror Organizations," 307.

<sup>353</sup> Scott Atran, *Talking to the Enemy: Faith, Brotherhood and the (Un)making of Terrorists*, (New York: Ecco, 2010), 35.

## Sex

An alternative approach to finding an evolutionary account of the motivations of suicide bombers has been to focus on the afterlife rewards offered to the individual. The most obvious such reward being the “72 black eyed Houris” who have been the subject of much comment in the West. The most highly developed form of this idea has been put forward by Bradley Thayer and Valerie Hudson, who suggest that suicide bombing could be considered a “...non alpha-male mating strategy”.<sup>354</sup> Thayer and Hudson argue that Islamic societies are more likely to produce individuals who are willing to die for the promise of heavenly sex. First, they suggest that cultures with high levels of gender differentiation tend to produce young men who are hyper vigilant about assaults upon their masculinity and honour, as well as the honour of their female family members.<sup>355</sup> Second, they note that the practice of polygyny, a feature of some Islamic societies, implies reduced marriage opportunities for low status men. This in turn makes the latter more willing to engage in violence to secure reproductive success and more willing in particular to become martyrs in return for access to 72 virgins.<sup>356</sup> Finally, they argue that the effect of polygyny on rising dowry prices in Islamic societies is a serious barrier to the marriage market for many young men.

Some elements of Thayer and Hudson’s argument seem dubious with regards to Afghanistan and Pakistan. For instance, they speculate that alpha males may view lower ranking individuals, relegated to bachelorhood by their polygamous practices, as a potential threat and therefore wish to direct their sexual frustration elsewhere through suicide attacks.<sup>357</sup> This argument makes little sense in AfPak however because those who organize the attacks are not really threatened by those they are sending to their deaths. This theory would make more sense for ensconced rulers sending young men to fight wars. Moreover, although there have been large numbers of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan in relative terms, the total number of individuals in comparison to the populations of the country in question is miniscule. Suggesting that sending a few individuals to their deaths would seriously change the marriage opportunities of low ranking males and therefore secure the political position of the ‘alphas’ makes little sense.

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<sup>354</sup> Bradley A. Thayer and Valerie M. Hudson, “Sex and the Shaheed: Insights from the Life Sciences on Islamic Suicide Terrorism,” *International Security* 34, No. 4 (Spring 2010): 52.

<sup>355</sup> Thayer and Hudson, “Sex and the Shaheed,” 45-48.

<sup>356</sup> Thayer and Hudson, “Sex and the Shaheed,” 48-56.

<sup>357</sup> Thayer and Hudson, “Sex and the Shaheed,” 49.

Another problem with Thayer and Hudson's argument stems from a lack of appreciation for the proximate/ultimate distinction discussed earlier. Specifically, they raise the question of whether or not Islamic theology implies that one can have children in heaven, and they question whether prospective martyrs believe this.<sup>358</sup> This is nonsensical; the desire for sexual gratification is independent of its consequences, in heaven or on earth.

Despite these flaws, sex is a core human motivation, among young males in particular, and sexual desire may well be implicated in predisposing participation in suicide attacks. As a factor of motivation, it is intuitively and hypothetically sound. This is particularly likely given the religious and cultural elaboration of the '72 virgins' story. That the promised virgins are tied to a military-style action is especially suggestive since, over evolutionary time, direct fitness benefits arise in warfare in the form of rape and the abduction of women to be wives or concubines.<sup>359</sup> Even in current Western student populations, experiments have shown a link between war and sex in male psychology.<sup>360</sup> Moreover, as we saw in chapter three, there is some evidence that youngsters in AfPak find this reward promising. It may also be the case that teenagers in AfPak, being unsophisticated and brought up in cultures which are strongly conservative in gender relations, may find this reward more plausible than say, the relatively urbanised young men in Palestine or Lebanon. More concretely, and in line with Thayer and Hudson's theory, the combination of bride price, expensive weddings and lack of employment are plausible motivators for some individuals. Evidence for this comes from a survey of 420 men in Kandahar and Helmand in 2010 which asked what could be done to prevent youth from joining the Taliban; 82 percent suggested providing money for weddings or dowries.<sup>361</sup> Therefore, even if scholars have been right to criticize the idea that sex could motivate suicide bombers, it could well be effective in Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite being doubtful in other cases.

### **Heroism**

The mechanisms cited so far are basically well established within the evolutionary psychology and animal behaviour literatures. A more recent and speculative theory provides an additional motivation underlying suicide attacks; namely that they are a form of

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<sup>358</sup> Thayer and Hudson, "Sex and the Shaheed," 53.

<sup>359</sup> Azar Gat, *War in Human Civilization*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 69.

<sup>360</sup> Lei Chang et al., "The Face that Launched a Thousand Ships: The Mating-Warring Association in Men," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 37, No. 7 (July 2011): 976-984.

<sup>361</sup> Kenneth R. Weiss, "Runaway population growth often fuels youth-driven uprisings," *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 2012, accessed December 30, 2012, <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/population/la-fg-population-matters2-20120724-html,0,982753.htmlstory>.

‘evolutionary heroism’.<sup>362</sup> While this argument draws upon less established theory, it does provide a very close fit with the more ‘nationalistic’ or group based protective motivations cited in non-evolutionary discussions of suicide attacks. Moreover, as we will see it ties together rather neatly with other motivations suggested by the preceding analysis.

An interdisciplinary team of scholars has argued, on the basis of wide variety of evidence drawn from primatological, archaeological and psychological findings, computer simulation, and economic modelling, that a distinct psychological propensity to engage in risky altruistic acts in battle may have been favoured by evolution, despite the often large costs to individuals who possessed such a propensity.<sup>363</sup> It is crucial here to understand that this is hypothesized to be a specific form of altruism which can evolve separately from ‘peaceful’ altruism toward kin or in group members. One of the main reasons that this counterintuitive hypothesis is plausible is because of the savagery of prehistoric fighting; in the absence of such bravery, one’s genes, residing both in one’s self and one’s relatives, would likely face extinction.<sup>364</sup> In particular, economic and computational modelling shows that a combination of small group size and a high likelihood of the losing group being wiped out tends to produce very high levels of heroism. If risky acts of heroism could help the group prevail, the costs paid by the individual may be balanced by benefits to many of their relatives and the rewards they receive if they survive. This theory has already been applied to one important type of suicide mission, namely the Kamikaze attacks of World War II.<sup>365</sup>

As with other suicide attack campaigns, a common motivational tool used by the trainers of AfPak bombers are videos of atrocities committed by the other side against the in group.<sup>366</sup> From the perspective of heroism theory this makes a great deal of sense. Cues of severe threats to an individual’s group seem likely to produce the desired motivations and beliefs, since they may be perceived on an intuitive level as presaging total annihilation of the group. Psychologically, they would, as a consequence, prime the performance of highly risky violent

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<sup>362</sup> Oleg Smirnov, et al. “Ancestral War and the Evolutionary Origins of Heroism,” *The Journal of Politics* 69, No. 4 (November 2007): 927-940.

<sup>363</sup> Holly Arrow et al. “Selective Consequences of War,” in *Conflict in Organizational Groups: New Directions in Theory and Practice*, eds Kristin J. Behfar, And Leigh L. Thompson, (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 113-142.

<sup>364</sup> According to Keely, deaths in war were proportionately *much* higher in ‘primitive’ societies than in 20<sup>th</sup> C cases such as Germany and Russia which are typically thought of as being enormous: Lawrence H. Keely, *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88-89.

<sup>365</sup> John Orbell and Tomonori Morikawa, “An Evolutionary Account of Suicide Attacks: The Kamikaze Case,” *Political Psychology* 32, No. 2 (April 2011): 297-322.

<sup>366</sup> Murtaza Hussain, “Pakistani Taliban’s indoctrinated child bombers,” *Al Jazeera*, October 17, 2012, accessed 30/12/2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/10/20121014102539659862.html>.



acts to protect one's group and hopefully attain glory in the process. Given the evolutionary importance of status in male reproductive success, the promised high rank in heaven for martyrs also ties in neatly with the motive of group defence, as do the sexual rewards discussed in the previous section.<sup>367</sup>

### ***Altruistic Suicide?***

Arguments that assert suicide bombers are motivated by factors similar to conventional military heroes have also been put forward in the non-evolutionary literature on suicide attacks. Some authors have explicitly compared suicide bombers to commandos and other high risk military units, suggesting that their actions are related to military heroism.<sup>368</sup> The most developed form of this argument is due to Robert Pape, who has claimed that suicide bombers are an example of what Emile Durkheim termed 'altruistic suicide'.<sup>369</sup>

Given the existence of this body of theory it might therefore be argued that a speculative evolutionary account adds little to our understanding. However, Durkheim's theory has been shown to be flawed and the evidence for the theory is suspect. 'Altruistic suicide' is one of a number of types of suicide that Durkheim proposed. These types are a fundamentally sociological; they are a consequence of differing patterns of social integration. Egoistic suicide, which is closest to the everyday conception of a suicide as someone who finds life

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<sup>367</sup> Davies, A. P., Shackelford, T. K., "Two Human Natures: How Men and Women Evolved Different Psychologies", in Crawford, C., Krebs, D. (eds.) *Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology*, (New York: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2008), 268-270.

<sup>368</sup> Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want: Understanding the Terrorist Threat*, (London: John Murray, 2006), 136; Stephen Hopgood, "Tamil Tigers 1987-2002", in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 76.

<sup>369</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 173-187; Pedahzur, Perliger and Weinberg also argue that altruistic suicide is important in motivating some Palestinian suicide bombers: Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, A and Leonard Weinberg, "Altruism and Fatalism: the Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists," *Deviant Behaviour* 24, No. 4 (2003): 419-420; More recently, Riaz Hassan has also argued that suicide bombers are altruistically motivated: Riaz Hassan, *Life as a Weapon: The Global Rise of Suicide Bombings*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 93-96. Hassan draws upon research from behavioural economics which has advanced the concept of 'altruistic punishment' to explain the tendency of individuals in experimental games to punish cheaters, even when there is a net cost to the punisher; Ernst Fehr and Simon Gächter, "Altruistic Punishment in Humans," *Nature* 415, (January 2002): 137-140. Hassan's argument is somewhat similar to that developed here, since Fehr and Gächter argue that the propensity for altruistic punishment is an adaptive mechanism and in fact is central to explaining human cooperation. This argument is deeply controversial among biologists however. The mechanism I propose seems more credible, since the assumptions made by theory are more in keeping with standard social evolutionary theory. On the problems with Altruistic Punishment, see: West, Mouden and Gardner, "Sixteen Common Misconceptions about the Evolution of Cooperation in Humans," 239-253.

too painful to continue, is caused, he claims, by a lack of social integration.<sup>370</sup> Altruistic suicide, on the other hand, is caused by social integration which is too tight.<sup>371</sup>

Durkheim suggests that altruistic suicide is most typical of ‘lower’ societies and that there are three prototypical cases: 1) suicides of men who are reaching old age, or who are chronically ill, 2) suicides of women on their husband’s death, 3) suicides of servants on the death of their masters.<sup>372</sup> Despite the differences amongst individual types and cases of altruistic suicide, Durkheim argues that in each one the individual is held to be subordinate to the interests of the group and that suicide, at least in specific circumstances, is held in high regard.

It seems to me however that these three supposedly connected instances actually belong to two *different* types. Suicide amongst the elderly and the ill requires a different explanation than the obligatory suicides of brides and servants. It has been shown in Western populations that perceived burdensomeness amongst the elderly is a strong predictor of their propensity to commit suicide.<sup>373</sup> What makes this sort of suicide more common and more highly praised amongst what Durkheim termed ‘lower’ societies is the fact that they occur in more resource stressed ecologies where older individuals are objectively more of a burden. While there does not appear to be any standard explanation for the self-destruction of wives and servants, it seems unlikely that it would bear any resemblance to the explanation for suicide amongst the elderly, since a widow is likely to be only a burden due to the norm for suicide, rather than being a calorific burden as the elderly may be.<sup>374</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Although not directly germane to my discussion, the theory of egoistic suicide is, if anything, *less* credible than the altruistic suicide theory. There are a number of reasons for this, but the two most telling are the following. First, Durkheim argues that psychological explanations are irrelevant to understanding suicide, which is clearly untenable in light of subsequent evidence of the role of psychopathology and genetic factors. Secondly, research has shown that much of Durkheim’s evidence is vitiated by the ‘ecological fallacy’; that is inferring individual behaviour from aggregate measures of behaviour. Subsequent analysis has shown that individual level data fails to corroborate Durkheim’s findings. With regards to the first point, see: Ping Qin, “The Impact of Psychiatric Illness on Suicide: Differences by Diagnosis of Disorders and by Sex and Age of Subjects,” *Journal of Psychiatric Research* 45, No. 11 (November 2011): 1445-1452; Nancy L. Pedersen and Amy Fiske, “Genetic Influences on Suicide and Nonfatal Suicidal Behaviour: Twin Study Findings,” *European Psychiatry* 25, No. 5 (June 2010): 264-267. With regards to the second, see: Frans van Poppel, and Lincoln H. Day, “A Test of Durkheim’s Theory of Suicide – Without Committing the ‘Ecological Fallacy’,” *American Sociological Review* 61, No. 3 (June 1996): 505-506.

<sup>371</sup> Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 175.

<sup>372</sup> Durkheim, *Suicide*, 177.

<sup>373</sup> Thomas E. Joiner et al., “Perceived Burdensomeness and Suicidality: Two Studies On The Suicide Notes Of Those Attempting and Those Completing Suicide,” *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology* 21, No. 5 (October 2002): 531-545.

<sup>374</sup> In fact, it seems that from most perspectives, the destruction of a still fertile wife would be a net biological loss. This leads to the speculation that this is an odd, and perhaps maladaptive, form of costly signalling;

Suicides of wives and servants actually do seem related to suicide attacks, because according to existing accounts, there appears to be a mixture of public approbation and coercion used to induce participation.<sup>375</sup> Of course, because these suicides occur in a public setting, with the individual surrounded by those who wish them to carry it out, it is obviously easier to bring these pressures to bear. These accounts suggest that common human motives are manipulated to produce this behaviour; therefore as with suicide attacks we need to understand these in closer detail, rather than simply explaining the phenomena through the vague notion of altruistic suicide.

Finally, what is even more problematic about Durkheim's theory is that his main source of evidence is statistics on suicides amongst the military. Pape himself quotes Durkheim to illustrate the argument:

Influenced by this predisposition, the soldier kills himself at the least disappointment, for the most futile reasons, for a refusal of leave, a reprimand, an unjust punishment, a delay in promotion, a question of honour, a flush of momentary jealousy or even simply because other suicide have occurred before his eyes or to his knowledge.<sup>376</sup>

The argument that these examples of suicide occur because the individual is too tightly enmeshed in his community or group simply does not make sense. All of these examples seem to be a clear case of the individual going *against* the duties that are required, and seem the precise opposite of, for instance, the elderly sacrificing themselves for the good of the group. Moreover, whatever the role of military life in suicide, all of Durkheim's examples clearly indicate the need to identify individual level psychological processes which *interact* with the environment the individual is in. It seems as if Durkheim is arguing that simply

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particularly since the practice seems to be most common amongst the upper class. Pursuing this speculation is beyond the scope of this chapter. The concept of costly signalling is discussed at length in chapter six.

<sup>375</sup> The account provided by the Abbe Dubois in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century of the practice of Sati in India makes this particularly clear: "It must, however, be confessed that some widows commit this folly readily enough, spurred on as they are by the thought of the wretchedness of widowhood, by vanity, by the hope of acquiring notoriety, perhaps also by a genuine feeling of enthusiasm. It should be remembered that they are awarded boundless honours, and are even deified after death... To these inducements of vain and empty glory--sufficient of themselves to make a deep impression on a feeble mind-- must be added the entreaties of relatives, who, if they perceive the slightest inclination on the part of the widow to offer up her life, spare no means in order to convince her and force her to a final determination. At times they go so far as to administer drugs, which so far deprive her of her senses that under their influence she yields to their wishes."; Jean-Antoine Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, 358-359.

<sup>376</sup> Durkheim, *Suicide*, 198.

because an individual is part of a collectivist culture like the military, this by itself explains suicide, which it does not, without specifying how.

Therefore Pape's arguments have problematic foundations. However, we can reformulate this and similar theories for participation in suicide attacks as actually being examples of 'evolutionary heroism'. As a consequence, while these arguments may be undermined by their reliance upon dated theory, their inadequacy tends to provide indirect support for my argument.

### **Revenge**

The final motive which is relevant to understanding participation in suicide attacks is revenge which, like heroism, has been suggested by a number of non-evolutionary theorists as an important factor.<sup>377</sup> Although the proximate mechanism motivating the desire for revenge, namely righteous anger, is easy enough to understand, revenge also has an important evolutionary function, namely, deterrence. Vengeful actions which impose costs upon those who have aggressed against an individual serve to raise the perceived cost of future aggression against that individual and therefore make it less likely.<sup>378</sup> Although a number of non-human animals engage in revenge like behaviour typically termed 'punishment',<sup>379</sup> human beings have uniquely elaborate systems of revenge. Particularly important for our purposes is the tendency for individuals to seek to kill those who have killed one of their relatives and even more broadly to kill any near substitute for the killer.<sup>380</sup>

The Pashtuns' well known cultural tradition of revenge (*Badal*) suggests that revenge may be an important motive amongst AfPak suicide bombers, since cultural elaborations on the importance of revenge clearly serve to enhance its attractiveness.<sup>381</sup> Some have cited the impact of drone strikes in producing a desire for revenge in the population of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas which has produced a large proportion of suicide bombers and

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<sup>377</sup> Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "The Making of a Martyr: Chechen Suicide Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, No.5, (2006): 466-467; Ariel Merari, *Driven to Death: Psychological and Social Aspects of Suicide Terrorism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 124-127; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 256.

<sup>378</sup> Michael E. McCullough, Robert Kurzban, R. and Benjamin A. Tabak, "Cognitive Systems for Revenge and Forgiveness," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 36, No. 1 (February 2013): 4.

<sup>379</sup> Tim H. Clutton-Brock and George H. Parker, "Punishment in Animal Societies," *Nature* 373, (January 1995): 209-216.

<sup>380</sup> Christopher Boehm, "Retaliatory Violence in Human Prehistory," *British Journal of Criminology* 51, No. 3 (March 2011): 518-524.

<sup>381</sup> Boehm, "Retaliatory Violence in Human Prehistory," 521-522. On the Afghan tradition of revenge: Nabi Misdag, *Afghanistan: Political frailty and external interference*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 273-274;

appears to house the main training grounds.<sup>382</sup> It seems plausible that anger over the deaths of drone victims could be used as fertile material for both recruitment and training purposes. Additionally, it could be that the nature of such deaths, which occur unexpectedly and without any ability to confront the attacker, tend to make them particularly arousing. However, we should not place too much emphasis upon this particular factor, since suicide attacks have occurred in other campaigns without any drone strikes, and it is the perception of unjustified killing, rather than its modality, which seems most important in arousing the desire for revenge.

### **Are Afterlife Rewards Plausible?**

It is worth briefly addressing criticism directed at the idea that afterlife rewards may motivate suicide bombers, since I have suggested these rewards are likely to be quite important. The central criticism is that it is inconsistent with sincere religious belief to attempt to gain a reward for religious behaviour.<sup>383</sup> That is, trying to ‘bargain with God’ but simultaneously being a firm believer in his existence is somehow a contradiction. Elster argues that, in Christianity, exchanging worldly things for spiritual rewards would be a case of ‘simony’ and theologically unacceptable. He suggests that the same line of reasoning might make it theologically suspect for Muslims as well.<sup>384</sup>

Such a criticism, whilst theologically coherent, is untenable in light of religious practice as it exists in much of the world, a conception of religious practice which is highly Western and intellectualised. In fact, it is perhaps more specifically a consequence of the Protestant intellectual background of authors who naively universalise the doctrine of *Sola Fide*.<sup>385</sup> Such a conception is actually an oddity in comparison with broader religious practices that focus on rituals and sacrifices which are more often than not intended to bring about benefits for the supplicants either in this world or the next.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*, (London: Reaktion, 2011), 237; Mirza Shahzad Akbar, “The folly of drone attacks and U.S. strategy,” *CNN*, October 5, 2010, accessed December 30, 2012, <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/10/04/opinion/pakistan-drone-attacks-akbar/index.html>.

<sup>383</sup> Bruce Hoffman, and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling and Suicide Attack,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol. 27, 2004, p252

<sup>384</sup> John Elster, “Motivations and Beliefs in Suicide Missions,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 242.

<sup>385</sup> That is, justification by faith alone.

<sup>386</sup> J. G. Frazer in his classic work *The Golden Bough*, for instance, defines religion as “...a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life”. The point of such appeasement is to receive beneficial treatment in return. James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, (London: Papermac, 1994 [1890]), 49.

Rodney Stark has made a similar point in criticising anthropologists and sociologists who, on the basis of a commitment to functionalist explanation, deny that the people they study genuinely believe that their prayers may be efficacious, or that their belief in God(s) is sincere and authentic.<sup>387</sup> As Stark notes, it is difficult to understand why these prayers would ever be made if we were to take the functionalist perspective seriously.<sup>388</sup> It is far simpler and more plausible to simply argue that people really do wish to gain benefits from normative religious behaviour. If indeed the faith of suicide bombers is not genuine, it seems clear that an impossibly onerous burden of proof must rest with the critics, not the bombers.

### **Mental architecture and Indoctrination**

So far we have argued that participation in suicide attacks may be partly explained by fundamental human motivations which have evolutionary functions. In the case of kin selected altruism, it is plausible that a ‘misfiring’ of the proximate cognitive machinery produces this motivation, so that fellow trainees and militants may be perceived as kin, thereby producing self-sacrificial behaviour on their behalf. However, practically speaking it seems even more plausible to argue that all of the motivational mechanisms are ‘misfiring’ and that they are being purposely engineered to do so by the trainers who are indoctrinating youngsters who experience, opportunities and limited understanding expose them to easy manipulation. In order to understand how this may be the case, it is necessary to delve further into cognitive science, specifically with regard to the architecture of the mind.

One of the strongest assumptions of many contemporary branches of psychology and neuroscience is that the mind is divided into two separate systems which have different characteristic functions and modes of operation.<sup>389</sup> These two systems have been given a variety of names in various literatures, but here they will be referred to by the most generic and neutral terminology of system 1 and system 2.

One way of approaching the distinction is in relation to the motivational systems previously discussed. The archetypical system 1 components are thought to be unconscious, automatic, rapid, parallel, effortless, and domain specific. Considerable affective response is commonly

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<sup>387</sup> Rodney Stark, “Microfoundations of Religion: A Revised Theory,” *Sociological Theory* 17, No. 3 (November 1999): 270-274.

<sup>388</sup> This is not to suggest that religious practices do not have functions which the individuals practicing them are unaware of. Acknowledging this does not remove the manifest motivation for the behaviour.

<sup>389</sup> Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, “Dual Processing Accounts of Reasoning, Judgment and Cognition,” *Annual Reviews of Psychology*, (January 2008): 256; Daniel Kahneman, “Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics,” *The American Economic Review* 93, No. 5 (December 2003): 1450-1452.

involved in their activation. Important point for our purposes is the fact that they are thought to be lacking heritable differences between individuals and they are not linked to general intelligence (IQ) or differences in working memory capacity. System 2 processes, on the other hand, are much closer to what we typically understand by ‘rational thought’. They are conscious, controlled, slow, serial, effortful, and domain general. Correspondingly, they show heritable differences between individuals via variation in general intelligence and working memory capacity.<sup>390</sup>

Another crucial difference between the two systems is that system 2 is responsible for inhibitory control of system 1 responses.<sup>391</sup> Since system 1 tends to produce automatic responses to domain specific cues, which may be non-adaptive due to their lack of global ‘perspective’, system 2 may need to override these automatic responses in order to produce behaviour consistent with the individual’s goals.<sup>392</sup> In some types of research, and in neuropsychology in particular, this is referred to as the ‘executive control’ function. The understanding of this function has been advanced and empirically confirmed by observation of the results of neurological disease or damage to brain regions which subserve these functions produces disordered behaviour.<sup>393</sup> Thus the inhibitory control function of system 2 is fundamental since it essentially allows individuals to engage in rational behaviour by keeping short range system 1 motivations in check.<sup>394</sup> Therefore *contra* Hume’s famous dictum, we might say that ‘reason’ is not just the slave of the passions, because at least in healthy individuals, it serves to keep the ‘passions’ in check. Unfortunately, system 2 resources are limited and may be compromised by numerous features of the environment and particular states of the individual.<sup>395</sup> Moreover, as noted earlier, there are also important differences between individuals in the nature of their system 2 functions, which are partly captured by measures of general intelligence and working memory.

Building on this important division within the human mind, we now turn to how this enables us to understand the indoctrination of suicide bombers. I argue that the trainers of prospective

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<sup>390</sup> Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, “The Heuristic-Analytic Theory of Reasoning: Extension and Evaluation,” *Psychonomic Bulletin* 13, No. 3, (June 2006): 382.

<sup>391</sup> Jonathan St. B. T. Evans, “In Two Minds: Dual Process Accounts of Reasoning,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, No. 10 (October 2003): 456.

<sup>392</sup> Keith E. Stanovich, *The Robot’s Rebellion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 61-79.

<sup>393</sup> Frank N. Dempster and Alice J. Corkill, “Interference and Inhibition in Cognition and Behavior: Unifying Themes for Educational Psychology,” *Educational Psychology Review* 11, No. 1 (March 1999): 13.

<sup>394</sup> Todd F. Heatherton and Dylan D. Wagner, “Cognitive Neuroscience of Self-regulation Failure,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 15, No. 3 (March 2011): 134.

<sup>395</sup> Wilhelm Hofmann, Malte Friese and Fritz Stack, “Impulse and Self-Control From a Dual-Systems Perspective,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4, No (March 2009): 162-176.

(or conscripted) martyrs are systematically attempting to elicit strong activation of the system 1 components that produce motivational responses as detailed in the first section of the chapter, while at the same time attempting to overwhelm system 2 resources that otherwise would be available to be used by the individual to rationally evaluate or counteract these processes.

This is fundamental in the method employed by advertisers, politicians, journalists and others to ‘push buttons’ by the manipulation of cues which produce desired beliefs, motivations and behaviours which are the consequence of the activation of system 1 mechanisms.<sup>396</sup> It is also obviously intimately related to description above of trainers activating cues to produce adaptive motivations. In everyday life, most individuals have some ability to avoid such cues and to engage effortful system 2 processes to override the automatic heuristic processing of system 1. Nonetheless, it has become increasingly apparent that even for the highly educated members of post-industrial rich nations, problems produced by over-reliance on system 1 processes are widespread.<sup>397</sup>

For children and teenagers with little formal education, especially those who may suffer from poor nutrition and who have been brought up in a culture where their interests are marginal, there are likely to be even less resources to cope with the exhortations of their trainers. Moreover, since the trainers have considerable control over the environment and behaviour of the trainees, they can easily use repetition, exhaustion and physical punishment to degrade the system 2 resources necessary to make rational evaluations, in a process similar to the manner and means of a military boot camp drill sergeant. A vivid example is the simple but brutal tactic of creating motivation by continually playing rape videos to youngsters cited in the previous chapter. The children in question seem to have been simply overwhelmed with protective feelings toward their female kin and were given a straightforward means of dealing with these feelings, namely by becoming martyrs.

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<sup>396</sup> Although not presented within a slightly different framework, Lowenstein’s account of the effect of the manipulation of what he terms visceral factors is particularly apposite: George Loewenstein, “Out of Control: Visceral Influences on Behaviour”, in *Exotic Preferences*, ed. George Loewenstein, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 530.

<sup>397</sup> Heatherton and Wagner, “Cognitive Neuroscience of Self-regulation Failure,” 132; Matt DeLisi, “Pandora’s Box: The Consequences of Low Self-Control into Adulthood”, in *Handbook of Life-course Criminology*, eds. Chris L. Gibson, and Marvin D. Krohn, (New York: Springer, 2013), 261.



## Individual Differences and Age

### Individual Differences

As I noted in chapter three, most research has suggested that suicide bombers are either basically normal or even above average individuals. There has also been a tendency to argue that no particular traits single them out.<sup>398</sup> More recently however, evidence that suicide bombers may have common characteristics has been advanced by Israeli psychologist Ariel Merari and his colleagues. He conducted interviews and psychological testing with failed Palestinian bombers who were incarcerated and concluded from the results that suicide bombers do have some typical personality traits.<sup>399</sup>

Merari used two ‘control groups’: a number of other young men charged with non-suicidal terrorism related offences who were matched with the bombers on demographic variables and another group who had been involved in organising suicide attacks.<sup>400</sup> While the small number of individuals tested (15 would-be martyrs, 12 non-martyrs and 14 organisers) and the doubtful validity of some aspects of the testing involved mean that Merari’s results must be considered provisional, they are still the strongest source of systematic evidence on the characteristics of suicide bombers.<sup>401</sup>

Merari found that suicide bombers seem to have relatively low levels of ‘ego strength’ compared to the ‘normal’ terrorists and particularly compared to the organisers of suicide attacks.<sup>402</sup> More importantly perhaps, would be suicide bombers typically had lower levels of ego strength than what is regarded normative for well-adjusted adults. By ‘ego strength’ Merari means a person’s capacity to “...act independently with self control, to establish and maintain focus and attention, to actualize pre-conceived plans...to prevent intrusion of

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<sup>398</sup> Scott Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly* 29, No. 2 (Spring 2006): 141-142. The notable exception is Victoroff, who suggests that future research should consider individual differences as an explanation for why some individuals are involved in suicide attacks; see: Jeff Victoroff, “Suicide Terrorism and the Biology of Significance,” *Political Psychology* 30, No.3 (June 2009): 399.

<sup>399</sup> Merari, *Driven to Death*, 104-120. Merari also found that a number seemed to have suicidal traits, but then later concluded that their behaviour was not in any way suicidal. Because this is a somewhat paradoxical conclusion, I do not emphasise it.

<sup>400</sup> I put scare quotes around control groups since these are not in fact control groups in the experimental sense.

<sup>401</sup> Three out of the four psychological tests used by Merari were ‘projective’ tests which are deeply suspect from a methodological point of view (The Rorschach Inkblot Test, Thematic Apperception Test and the House-Tree-Person Drawing Test). The fourth, the California Personality Inventory, is relatively well regarded. For more on the problems with projective testing, see: Scott O. Lilienfeld, James M. Wood and Howard N. Garb, “The Scientific Status of Projective Techniques,” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 1, No. 2 (2000): 27-66.

<sup>402</sup> Ariel Merari et al., “Personality Characteristics of ‘Self Martyrs’/’Suicide Bombers’ and Organizers of Suicide Attacks,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, No. 1, (December 2009): 93-94.

primary thinking and impulse[s]...<sup>403</sup> Merari also found that suicide bombers tended to have particular personality characteristics. Roughly 70 percent were found to have ‘dependent and avoidant’ style personalities and 30 percent were found to have ‘impulsive and emotionally unstable’ personalities.<sup>404</sup> The preponderance of dependent personalities was not found in either of the other groups. Overall, he argues that “...the main profile of a suicide bomber found in the present study...[is] an avoidant-dependent personality type, socially marginal and downgraded by the people around him, who finds an opportunity to soar to importance and fame by becoming a *shahid*.”<sup>405</sup>

These findings are consistent with the evidence reported in chapter three that AfPak suicide bombers are often chosen because they are shy, timid and incapable individuals who are most vulnerable to manipulation. More generally, Merari’s results seem to suggest two points. Firstly, his finding that the suicide bombers he studied tended to have low ‘ego strength’ can be interpreted in the terminology of recent cognitive science to mean that they are lacking in system 2 resources and consequently they are more open to outside influence and persuasion.<sup>406</sup> Secondly, the fact that the individuals involved appeared to be dependent and shy seems to suggest that the rewards offered by trainers might be particularly attractive, since these individuals may feel that they have fewer options available to enable them to obtain important outcomes, as Merari’s own interpretation suggests.

AfPak bombers then are presumably similar to those in Merari’s sample. As a consequence, their typical characteristics probably do play a part in explaining their participation through the relative ease with which they may be indoctrinated. Lacking the mental resources to resist the temptations and pressures used by the trainers to manipulate them and also lacking many alternative means to secure fitness relevant goals, liking obtaining a job, social standing or a wife, they would be susceptible to psychological commitment to suicide martyrdom.

While Merari’s account does dovetail with my arguments in this chapter, it creates a degree of tension with the argument of chapter three. There I argued that suicide bombers elsewhere,

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<sup>403</sup> Ariel Merari et al., “Personality Characteristics of ‘Self Martyrs’/’Suicide Bombers’ and Organizers of Suicide Attacks,” 93.

<sup>404</sup> Ariel Merari et al., “Personality Characteristics of ‘Self Martyrs’/’Suicide Bombers’ and Organizers of Suicide Attacks,” 95; Note this was of those found to have a pathological personality style; two of the attempted suicide bombers were unclassified.

<sup>405</sup> Merari, *Driven to Death*, 120.

<sup>406</sup> Particularly with regards to role of the inhibitory function of the executive control system; note the close parallels in terms of the functions of the executive control system with Merari et. al’s statements in: Hose Leon-Carrion et al., “Development of the Inhibitory Component of the Executive Function in Children and Adolescents,” *International Journal of Neuroscience* 114, No. 10 (2004): 1293.

and in Palestine in particular, are more likely to be self-motivated rather than pressured into carrying out an attack. Yet Merari's findings seem to suggest that this picture of Palestinian suicide bombers is incorrect. However, considering that there is likely to be variation both within and between campaigns in the type of individuals involved, the apparent conflict can be resolved. As Merari notes, his sample may not in fact be representative of Palestinian suicide bombers in general, since his subjects were bombers who did not succeed. In fact two thirds of the bombers in the sample did not actually try to use their bomb.<sup>407</sup> In addition, we can recall from chapter three the fact that Benmelech and Berrebi found that suicide bombers with higher human capital were less likely to fail or be apprehended. This also seems to suggest that Merari's sample may be biased.<sup>408</sup> Therefore, we might well expect the bombers that Merari and his team interviewed are a closer fit to average AfPak bombers than to average Palestinian bombers. As I have noted, there is no doubt a spectrum of individuals in every campaign, and thus there is likely to be overlap between the spectrums of individuals involved in each country, even if the average individual in each campaign is quite different.

### **Age**

Since the average suicide bomber in most campaigns is typically thought to be a young adult and therefore presumably fully mentally competent, the effect of the age of participants has usually been ignored.<sup>409</sup> Intuitively, it would seem likely that the relative youth of AfPak suicide bombers also makes them more vulnerable to indoctrination than older individuals, thus reinforcing the effects of the personality traits we just discussed.

According to a review of the evidence of adolescent risk taking by Laurence Steinberg, the slow maturation of cognitive control systems which are needed to inhibit risk taking behaviour is the critical factor in producing risky behaviour, since the risk assessments and logical reasoning abilities of teenagers are actually similar to those of adults.<sup>410</sup> In particular he argues that "...psychosocial capacities that improve decision making and moderate risk taking – such as impulse control, emotion regulation, delay of gratification and resistance to

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<sup>407</sup> Merari, *Driven to Death*, 143.

<sup>408</sup> Efraim Benmelech and Claude Berrebi, "Human Capital and the Productivity of Suicide Bombers," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, No. 3 (Summer 2007): 236.

<sup>409</sup> There only exception to this neglect that I am aware of is the work of Richard Sosis and Candace Alcorta: Richard Sosis, and Candace S. Alcorta, "Adaptive Militants and Martyrs?: What Evolutionary Theories of Religion Tell us about Terrorism," in *Darwinian Security: Perspectives from Ecology and Evolution*, eds. Raphael Sagarin, Terrence Taylor, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 115-116.

<sup>410</sup> Lawrence Steinberg, "Risk Taking in Adolescence: New Perspectives From Brain and Behavioral Science," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 16, No. 2 (2007)

peer influence – continue to mature well into young adulthood”.<sup>411</sup> In a similar vein, Angela Prencipe and her colleagues, in a recent study of children between the ages of 8-15, found steady increases in executive function. But they also found that control over emotionally and motivationally ‘hot’ tasks lagged well behind control of ‘cool’ tasks.<sup>412</sup> As a consequence they argue that adolescents will typically tend to struggle with self-control when emotional and motivational factors are high. Finally, evolutionary anthropologists Richard Sosis and Candace Alcorta argue that due to the neuro-developmental importance of adolescence, it is a prime period for the inculcation of beliefs and values that militants wish to foster.<sup>413</sup> It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that AfPak bombers, being on average considerably younger than suicide bombers in other countries, are likely to be considerably more vulnerable to manipulative appeals by their trainers.

These findings about individual differences and age also suggest that there is a trade off involved in the recruitment of suicide bombers. Those with higher system 2 capacity, proxied in Benmelech and Berrebi’s finding by higher levels of education, would require greater potential rewards for participation and would be more difficult to indoctrinate or manipulate. However, these older and more educated individuals are likely to be much better at maintaining self control in order to optimally execute a suicide attack. The typical AfPak bomber, on the other hand, with lower system 2 resources, will require smaller rewards, will be easier to indoctrinate, but probably make an inferior martyr.

### **The Social Psychology of Persuasion**

The core of my argument so far is that trainers attempt to tap fundamental human motives and override more analytical mental processes that may dampen the influence of the more ‘short sighted’ motivational processes, such as the desire for revenge or sexual gratification. This argument can be extended by considering findings from social psychology about the nature of persuasion and obedience. Although these findings have not always been theoretically framed in terms of the dual process model of the mind that I have presented, they are nonetheless compatible with it. In fact, in most cases these mechanisms of persuasion and obedience themselves seem to be due to heuristic processes that are part of the automatized system 1. Because of the parallel and high capacity of system 1 processes, these

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<sup>411</sup> Steinberg, “Risk Taking in Adolescence,” 56.

<sup>412</sup> Angela Prencipe et al., “Development of Hot and Cool Executive Function During the Transition to Adolescence,” *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 108, No. 3 (March 2011): 631-634.

<sup>413</sup> Sosis and Alcorta, “Adaptive Militants and Martyrs,” 115-116.

persuasion mechanisms can be used in combination with the motives of kin protection, sex, heroism and revenge to buttress attempts to change preferences, beliefs and behaviour.

### **Authority**

One of the simplest and most effective means of securing compliance is through the use of cues of authority. This was made clear by some of the infamous experiments in behavioural science conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960's.<sup>414</sup> Milgram sought to test the degree to which individuals would knowingly hurt others simply on the basis of a command by an authoritative figure to do so. In order to accomplish this, Milgram created an experimental protocol whereby individuals thought they were being recruited to conduct experiments on learning and memory. The test subject and another individual, who was actually a confederate of the experimenter, were sorted by a rigged draw into the role of 'teacher' and 'learner'. The learner, who was always the confederate, was strapped to a type of electric chair in an adjacent room. The teacher was then instructed to read word pairs to the learner, and to administer an electric shock to the learner when they made a mistake in learning the associations. For each mistake the learner made, the teacher was instructed to increase the voltage of the shock administered from 15 volts up to a maximum of 450 volts; each step on the 'shock generating machine' was marked with a verbal descriptor from 'Slight Shock' to 'Danger: Severe Shock'.<sup>415</sup> As the shock levels increased, the learner became increasingly agitated and began to emit groans, shrieks and other signs of pain and distress. Eventually they demanded to be released from the experiment. The experiment supervisor, dressed in a lab coat and holding the ubiquitous experimenters' clipboard, continually instructed the teacher to continue with the shocks, irrespective of the demands of the learner.

Prior to the experiment, 40 medical school psychiatrists were polled regarding their beliefs about the number of individuals who would administer successive levels of shock. Their opinion was that one tenth of one per cent would administer the maximum level of 450 volts. In the experiments however, *sixty two per cent* complied with the experiment to the end and administered the maximum shock.<sup>416</sup> There are obviously several possible interpretations of these results, and Milgram's experiments have since their inception been the subject of

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<sup>414</sup> Stanley Milgram, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority," *Human Relations* 18, No. 1 (February 1965): 57-76; Thomas Blass, "Understanding Behavior in the Milgram Obedience Experiment: The Role of Personality, Situations, and Their Interactions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 60, No. 3 (March 1991): 398-413.

<sup>415</sup> Milgram, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority," 59-60.

<sup>416</sup> Milgram, "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority," 72.

controversy. For example, it has been argued that other factors such as individual differences and prior beliefs also affect the level of obedience obtained.<sup>417</sup>

However, Milgram's own explanation, that the situational force of authority is a powerful driver of behaviour, *irrespective of the individual's own desires*, is quite persuasive. Several factors serve to support this conclusion. Firstly, it should be noted that the test subjects themselves suffered greatly during the experiment; they did not enjoy inflicting pain on others. So punishment was not inflicted because Milgram had tapped a hitherto unknown population of sadists and psychopaths, but rather in spite of the subjects' desires. Second, while the general nature of the experiment may be familiar to many readers, Milgram performed a whole series of experiments in order to assess alternative explanations. One of these was particularly effective in demonstrating how important perceived authority really is as a cause of behaviour. In this version of the experiment, the roles of learner and experimenter were reversed: the experimenter told the teacher to desist from shocking the learner, while the learner asked to continue the experiment despite the pain. In this case, one hundred per cent of subjects ended the experiment.<sup>418</sup> Finally, a variety of experimental and anecdotal evidence has demonstrated how even flimsy cues of authority are able to produce apparently unthinking obedience in real world scenarios. Titles, uniforms and other superficial trappings of authority have again and again been demonstrated to produce obedience and are regularly used by both marketers and conmen to produce compliance.<sup>419</sup>

In the context of individuals being prepared for suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the power of authority is used to induce willingness to carry out an attack. Obviously, in one sense, the situation differs from Milgram's experiment, since the suicide trainee is being asked to carry out a self-destructive act in addition to inflicting suffering on others. However in the case of suicide bombers, the trainer is able, as I have detailed, to offer a number of rewards and control the entire learning environment. Therefore it seems highly likely that children and young adults, faced with the older and more prestigious warriors and clerics, may find it extremely difficult to resist their claims and demands, or even see them as such. Indeed, as I have argued above, the potential martyrs are chosen precisely because they lack the ability to resist such demands.

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<sup>417</sup> Blass, "Understanding Behavior in the Milgram Obedience Experiment," 402-404.

<sup>418</sup> Robert B. Cialdini, *Influence: Science and Practice*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 175.

<sup>419</sup> Cialdini, *Influence*, 177-187.

## Conformity

One of the most powerful and ubiquitous heuristics used to guide a person's behaviour is simply copying what others do. Social Psychologists have studied the power of conformity in detail and have found that individuals are particularly likely to use this cue when they are uncertain about appropriate behaviour for a given situation. However seeking guidance and information are not the only motives for conformist behaviour. Social approbation and disapprobation regarding appropriate or normative behaviour can powerfully motivate conformity, due to a desire for affiliation and self-esteem.<sup>420</sup>

One example of conformism obviously suggestive for understanding participation in suicide attacks is the contagion effect which surrounds suicides. It is well known that media reporting seems to produce a wave of 'copycat' suicides.<sup>421</sup> This is another example of the ubiquitous effects of others' behaviour on the perceived value of different courses of action. Merari, in addition to his work on individual differences, has also emphasised the role that contagion may play in explaining participation, since many of the factors which have been found to predict contagion effects seem to appear in suicide attack campaigns.<sup>422</sup> In particular contagion is influenced by: similarity between model and potential suicide, duration and intensity of publicity, praise of the suicide and the potential suicide being a teenager. Since Merari is attempting to explain the participation of Palestinian suicide bombers, these factors all seem plausible and they serve to provide some of the psychological detail necessary to explain the so called 'martyrdom cults' which have been constructed in Palestine and other countries.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the situation is considerably different and a more case specific model for thinking about the role of conformity is needed. For example, the training and indoctrination of suicide bombers is typically conducted in secluded camps. Therefore, instead of the 'advertising' model, a variant of the contagion effect, which fits with the suicide bombers from other campaigns, the most appropriate analogies for the role of conformity are military boot camps, cults and other completely controlled environments. In these types of situations, the power of conformity (and indeed of authority) is likely to be at

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<sup>420</sup> Robert B. Cialdini, and Noah J. Goldstein, "Social Influence: Compliance and Conformity," *Annual Review of Psychology* 55, (2004): 610-611.

<sup>421</sup> Daniel Romer, Patrick E. Jamieson and Kathleen H. Jamieson "Are News Reports of Suicide Contagious? A Stringent Test in Six U.S. Cities," *Journal of Communication* 56, No. 2 (June 2006): 264-268.

<sup>422</sup> Merari, *Driven to Death*, 208-210.

its greatest and far more powerful than the spontaneous contagion effect of suicides in the general population.

There are a number of specific reasons why this is the case. First, as Cialdini notes, cult groups, for instance, get much of their leverage over individuals from the fact that they remove them from their existing modes of life. As noted earlier, uncertainty is a particularly powerful motivator for relying upon others' actions to guide behaviour. Therefore in a secluded and new situation detached from one's previous mode of life, uncertainty is likely to be high and conformity will therefore be correspondingly high.<sup>423</sup> Moreover, a recruit will also lack other sources of emotional and cognitive support or alternative models of behaviour to counteract the effects of social pressure. Age is again a factor here, since younger individuals tend to be the most conformist.<sup>424</sup> Similarity is also likely an important factor here. As noted above, similarity between model and imitator increases conformity; since most suicide bombers are likely to be young men of similar ages and backgrounds, other, perhaps slightly older or more advanced recruits, within the camps are likely to serve as viable role models. Consistent with this, Tajik's relatively detailed account of a suicide bomber training camp in Waziristan noted that individuals were sorted by age into two groups.<sup>425</sup> While conformity is a simple and common means of shaping behaviour, it is likely a powerful weapon in the militants' indoctrination program.

## **Conclusion**

The decision to become a martyr is a fundamentally mysterious phenomenon that inevitably defies definitive analysis, even in the case of AfPak martyrs, who seem easier to understand than most. While this chapter has not resolved the mystery, by drawing upon findings which are solidly based in theory and evidence, a plausible account of the factors contributing to the decision to become a martyr has been constructed. Martyrs, I claim, are motivated by innate biological mechanisms which usually produce adaptive behaviour, but which are prone to manipulation. These fundamental motives are elicited and reinforced in the process of training which attempts to break down or overwhelm rational-analytical thought processes which may resist such elicitation. Young individuals and those with weak system 2

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<sup>423</sup> Cialdini, *Influence*, 125-126.

<sup>424</sup> Michael B. Walker and Maria G. Andrade, "Conformity in the Asch Task as a Function of Age," *The Journal of Social Psychology* 136, No. 3, (1996): 371.

<sup>425</sup> S. H. Tajik, "Insight into a Suicide Bomber Training Camp in Waziristan," *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 3 (2010): 10-13, accessed 27 January, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/insight-into-a-suicide-bomber-training-camp-in-waziristan>.



capabilities are often chosen just because they have little ability to overcome this type of manipulation, although this probably makes them poorer bombers. Finally, trainers also rely upon the forces of authority and conformity to further buttress their attempts to mould the behaviour of the martyrs to be.

## Chapter 5: The Organisational Decision to Use Suicide Attacks

### Introduction

Suicide attacks are almost always an organisational phenomenon.<sup>426</sup> If we consider suicide attacks from this point of view, the central question we can ask is why militant organisations in South Asia have chosen to adopt the tactic. In order to answer this question it is necessary to broach a number of possible explanations. I argue that three factors are the most plausible candidates to explain why organisations have chosen to employ suicide attacks. Firstly, as many authors have argued, suicide attacks have a number of operational and tactical characteristics which make them attractive to insurgents. Secondly, post 9/11, the organisations I am considering, or at least individuals within them, became increasingly influenced by the ideology of Al-Qaeda which appears to be associated with a propensity to adopt the tactic. However, the exact way in which this influence explains the use of suicide attacks remains unclear. Finally, I argue that due to features of the organisations in question and the environment they are operating in, they are able to ignore audience costs that inhibit or prevent other organisations from adopting the tactic. I also consider a number of other hypotheses, such as the role of occupation, or the need to attack hard targets, but argue that the evidence makes them implausible as explanations of organisational choices to use suicide attacks.

### The Problem

Before turning to the substantive analysis, it is necessary to outline the specific problem I address in this chapter. Considered from the point of view of the economic model I presented in chapter 3, so far we have examined the ‘supply side’ of the market. If we turn our focus on the demand side of the equation, two main questions suggest themselves. First, there is the decision whether to adopt the tactic in general, and then the subsequent choice of how the tactic is employed.<sup>427</sup>

This chapter will deal with the first problem: why do organisations choose to use suicide attacks? A satisfactory answer to this question will have to consider both the *desirability* and *feasibility* of suicide attacks from an organisational point of view. That is, what factors make

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<sup>426</sup> Diego Gambetta, “Can We Make Sense of Suicide Missions,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 260.

<sup>427</sup> It may be that these two questions may not always separate perfectly cleanly. In my analysis, there appears to be one particular theory which arguably is related to both questions, Eli Berman’s ‘Hard Targets’ theory, which I will deal with in this chapter.

suicide attacks attractive for particular organisations, and what factors encourage or prevent an organisation's ability to adopt the tactic. Feasibility is important to consider because explanations that only focus on the desirability of suicide attacks are often unable to explain why some organisations adopt, whereas others do not. Arguments which only focus on the advantages of suicide attacks imply far wider adoption of suicide attacks than we observe because they make suicide attacks appear universally attractive. Variation in preferences may explain part of the variation in the adoption of the tactic. But by also considering constraints that make suicide attacks *infeasible* for certain organisations, we are better prepared to develop convincing explanations for the adoption and execution of suicide attacks.

### **Tactical Advantages**

Almost all analysts agree that from a tactical and operational point of view, suicide attacks present many advantages to rebels fighting an asymmetrical war against stronger opponents.<sup>428</sup> These advantages, it is claimed, explain why organisations would want to adopt the tactic. For instance suicide attacks present a effective substitute for groups who cannot afford regular artillery or guided missiles. From a purely financial point of view, suicide attacks are very cheap, the figure generally cited being approximately US\$150.<sup>429</sup> This is in stark contrast to the cost of the weaponry used against the insurgents; AGM 114 hellfire missile fired by a Predator or Reaper drone costs around US\$68,000. Suicide attacks also preclude the need for escape plans. More importantly, as long as the bomber is actually killed, they foreclose any chance that he will divulge critical or sensitive information about the organisation. This is crucial because one of the main threats to clandestine organisations is the defection or capture and interrogation of operatives which, from the organisation's perspective, may be far more damage than the loss of the bomber's life.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1, 2003, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/06/the-logic-of-suicide-terrorism/302739>; Mia Bloom, "Dying to Kill: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism*, ed. Ami Pedahzur, (London: Routledge, 2006), 38-40; Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 27-29; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 259; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 27-33.

<sup>429</sup> Scott Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism." *Science* 299, No. 5612 (March 2003): 1537. That being said, it is interesting to note that suicide bombers appear to have become a commodity of sorts in the tribal areas of Pakistan who are sold for quite large quantities of money.

<sup>430</sup> Eli Berman, *Radical, Religion and Violence: The New Economics of Terrorism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2009), Chapter 2.

Also important from a tactical point of view is the fact that suicide attacks effectively function as the ‘poor man’s smart bombs.’<sup>431</sup> That is, they may be used against very specific targets, be they locations, groups or individuals, and the bomber is able to wait for the best moment to detonate their weapon to maximize the damage they do. This also makes them tough to defend against, since it is very difficult to completely screen all individuals from even militarily and politically sensitive sites, as a number of high profile attacks in both countries have shown.

This has been particularly evident in their use as a tool of assassination as in the cases of Ahmed Shah Massoud, and Burhanuddin Rabbani, former president of Afghanistan.<sup>432</sup> In my analysis of the Worldwide Incident Tracking System (WITS) data, 37 attacks in Afghanistan and 21 attacks in Pakistan appeared to be assassination attempts. In Pakistan in particular, suicide attacks have been used repeatedly to wipe out tribal leaders who have attempted to organize opposition to the TTPs activities in FATA.<sup>433</sup>

It has been claimed that suicide attacks are the most lethal weapons that militants have available to them and this is clearly the case for both Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>434</sup> In Afghanistan, my analysis of the WITS data shows that the average conventional (non suicide and non IED) attack between 2004-2010 resulted in 1.6 dead and 1.7 wounded, the average IED resulted in 1.5 dead and 2.3 wounded, while the average suicide attack caused 4.4 deaths and 10.4 wounded. The evidence is even starker in Pakistan. Conventional attacks caused 1.6 deaths and 1.9 wounded, whereas IEDs caused 0.6 deaths and 2.3 wounded. Suicide attacks however caused 15.5 deaths and 39.4 wounded per attack.

Care is needed in how claims of suicide bomb effectiveness are interpreted. The *realized* effects of adoption cannot actually explain why suicide attacks were adopted in the first place. We cannot, in general, explain an action by its actual consequences, but only by its anticipated consequences. We can explain why the behaviour continues or becomes more

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<sup>431</sup> Robert A. Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, No. 3 (August 2003): 346; Jeffery W. Lewis, “Precision Terror: Suicide Bombing as Control Technology,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, No. 2, (2007): 238.

<sup>432</sup> Assassination of Rabbani: Ernesto Londoño, “Key Afghan leader Rabbani Killed in Kabul bombing,” *Washington Times*, November 20, 2011, accessed September 21, 2012, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/key-afghan-peace-maker-rabbani-killed-in-kabul-bombing/2011/09/20/gIQAxIF9hK\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/key-afghan-peace-maker-rabbani-killed-in-kabul-bombing/2011/09/20/gIQAxIF9hK_story.html); Assassination of Massoud: Jon Lee Anderson, “Letter from Kabul: The Assassins,” *New Yorker*, June 10, 2002, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://archives.newyorker.com/?i=2002-06-10#folio=072>.

<sup>433</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 386.

<sup>434</sup> Bruce Hoffman, “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1, 2003, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/06/the-logic-of-suicide-terrorism/302739>.

frequent by consequences, but not the initial decision. This is particularly important in the case of the data on the lethality of suicide attacks; the *actual* effectiveness, whatever the organisations' hopes, could not be known until the tactic was used.

Of course groups that adopted suicide attacks in AfPak may well have observed their effects elsewhere, in Iraq for instance. The demonstrated benefits in other theatres may have convinced individuals that the same benefits could be realized in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It appears that at least within the Quetta Shura, where the tactic was controversial, the operational benefits helped them to put aside their initial qualms about suicide as a weapon. As Gopal relates, eventually "The realities on the ground eventually won out...and today the leadership appears to have made a virtue of necessity."<sup>435</sup>

### **Hard Targets**

As noted above, a workable explanation of suicide attack adoptions requires a focus on both desirability and feasibility; the arguments we have considered so far have only considered the former. However there is one tactical theory that does take account of feasibility considerations. This is the 'hard targets' theory, which has been developed in a series of publications by David Laitin and Eli Berman, culminating in a book by Berman. However, despite the theoretical sophistication of this work and the quantitative evidence which is offered in its favour, my own assessment based on more reliable and pertinent data from Afghanistan and Pakistan suggests that the hypothesis does not have as much explanatory value as its authors have claimed.

To begin with Berman argues that worldwide, suicide attacks are mostly conducted against those of a different faith.<sup>436</sup> On the other hand, he notes that insurgencies in general are mostly conducted against those of a *similar* faith. He claims that 87 percent of suicide attacks are carried out against targets of a different religion, whereas 84 percent of insurgencies are targeted at those of a similar religion. Berman argues that this regularity is explained by the fact that suicide attacks are chosen primarily against 'hard targets'; that is targets which would be very difficult for the rebel group to attack otherwise. There are a number of possible reasons why a target may effectively be 'hard'. It can be hard in the literal sense of

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<sup>435</sup> Anand Gopal, "The Taliban in Kandahar," in *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders between Terror, Politics, and Religion* eds. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54.

<sup>436</sup> Eli Berman, *Radical, Religious and Violent: The New Economics of Terrorism*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009), 161-162.

being ensconced in fortifications, but a military foot patrol can also be quite a hard target for insurgents, particularly if the patrol can quickly call in air support.

In addition, non-coreligionists may be hard targets because it is much easier for the target to 'profile' them compared to coreligionists.<sup>437</sup> In general, Berman argues that groups will employ non suicide attacks where possible, since suicide attacks are more difficult and problematic to carry out than conventional attacks. Coreligionists present soft targets to each other because they are unable to engage in the profiling that often enables non-coreligionists to identify each other easily. Therefore, militants attacking coreligionists will employ conventional, non-suicide attacks.

In support of his theory, Berman presents quantitative evidence from the Israel-Palestine conflict and claims shows that almost all suicide attacks are employed when Israelis are hard targets for the Palestinian militants.<sup>438</sup> His data show that almost all of the violence, in numerical terms, conducted against Israelis occurred outside Israel proper. In contrast, almost all suicide attacks occurred within Israel proper, where Israeli citizens were effectively hard targets.

Berman does not present a systematic analysis of suicide attacks in Afghanistan or Pakistan, but he appears to believe that his argument is relevant to these countries as well. He cites the case of Lashkar-e-Taiba's attacks against Mumbai as an example where the hard target logic is relevant because it would be highly difficult if not impossible to cause the same amount of damage deep within enemy territory and expect to escape alive.<sup>439</sup> Berman also claims that his theory explains why the Taliban did not use suicide attacks in their initial campaign to conquer Afghanistan, but have taken to using them against NATO-ISAF forces with such enthusiasm. NATO forces, he argues, are simply much harder targets than the Taliban faced during the 1990s.<sup>440</sup>

In order to evaluate the hard targets theory with respect to Afghanistan and Pakistan, I used suicide attack incident data from the WITS database. The database does not explicitly describe targets in terms of their 'hardness' and none of the attributes recorded in the database readily serve as a proxy for it. Therefore, I hand coded the attack incident data for

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<sup>437</sup> Berman, *Radical, Religious and Violent*, 171-172.

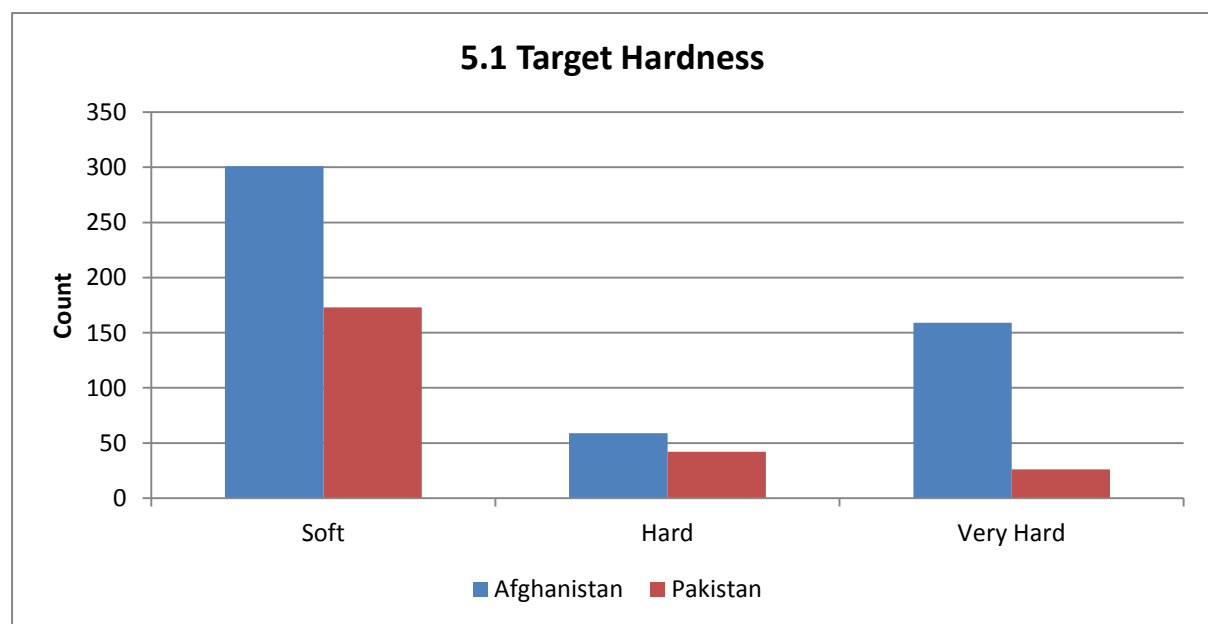
<sup>438</sup> Berman, *Radical, Religious and Violent*, 169.

<sup>439</sup> As I have noted earlier, I do *not* consider the LeT to be carrying out suicide attacks in the strict sense, since their Fidayeen attacks, such as the Bombay incident, do not *require* the death of the perpetrators.

<sup>440</sup> Berman, *Radical, Religious and Violent*, 170.

level of hardness, using a three point scale: soft, hard and very hard. I chose this scheme because it seemed analytically useful to sort the targets in a more specific way. ‘Soft’ targets included civilians, police and others who have minimal protection. ‘Hard’ targets include local Afghan and Pakistani military forces and others who would present a reasonable challenge to the insurgents. ‘Very hard’ targets were primarily US and NATO forces, although some Pakistani military installations and the like were coded as ‘very hard’.<sup>441</sup> While Berman’s use of the geography of conflict in the Israel-Palestine data is an elegant solution to testing his theory, it is weaker than my own approach of individually coding targets for hardness. Therefore, the results of this analysis should provide the most stringent test of Berman’s hypothesis conducted so far.

The graphs below depict the proportions of different types of targets which were attacked by suicide missions in each country.



In both Afghanistan and Pakistan it is clear that the majority of attacks were not directed at hard targets. This result remains even if we collapse together the hard and very hard categories; 58 percent of targets being classified as soft and only 42 percent being classified as hard or very hard. This result rests upon the very large numbers of civilians and police who have been targeted by suicide attacks in both countries, and in particular in Pakistan. In

<sup>441</sup> Full details can be found in the appendix.

Afghanistan, attacks where the primary target was either civilians or police accounted for 37.2 percent of attacks, whereas in Pakistan, they accounted for 56 percent of attacks.

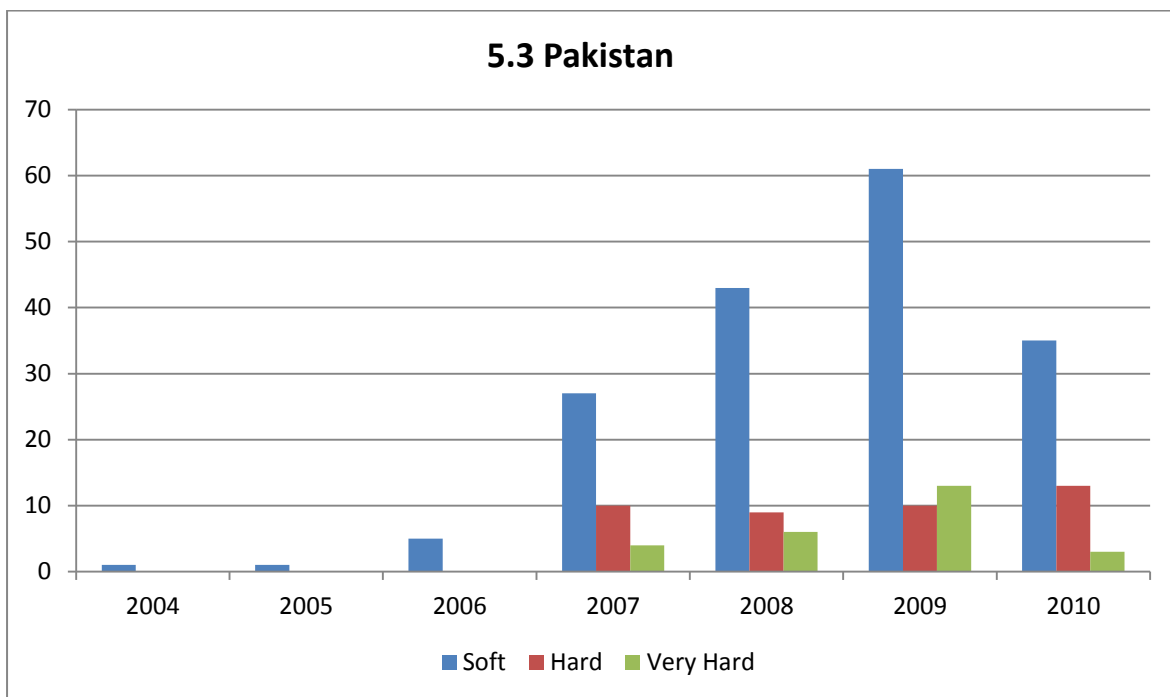
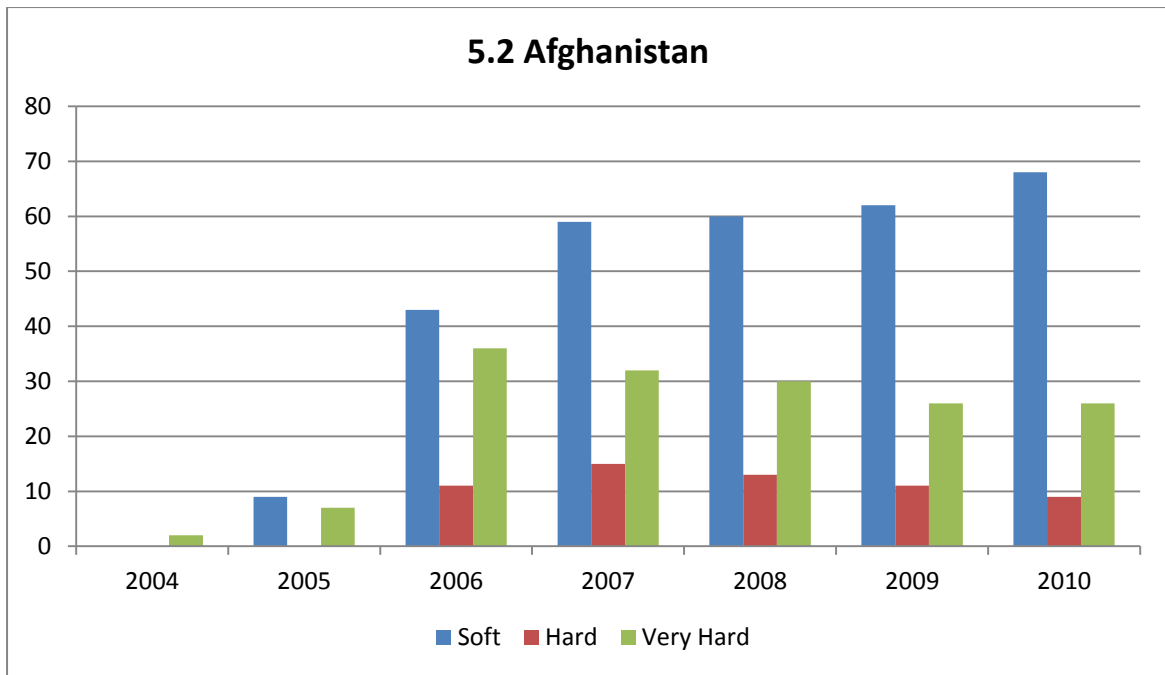
If either country could be taken to support the hard targets theory it would be Afghanistan, particularly early on in the conflict. As graph 3.2 demonstrates, at the very beginning of the Afghan war, suicide attacks were only employed against very hard targets, mostly US forces. This suggests that suicide attacks were initially adopted to counter the US military. However, within a single year there was a shift to a majority of soft targets rather than very hard targets. It also appears that there has been a steady decline in targeting of very hard targets over time compared to soft targets. However a Pearson chi-square test of independence indicates this change is not statistically significant, so this trend is not as important as it seems.<sup>442</sup> Results of the test are displayed in the table 5.1

Graph 5.3 depicts the time series data for Pakistan, which like the overall results, do not support Berman's hypothesis. As with Afghanistan no statistically significant difference in targeting patterns over time, the Pearson chi-square results are also reported in table 5.1. It is interesting to note that in comparison to Afghanistan, the initial attacks in Pakistan were against *soft* targets. This suggests that even if we accept that the existence of hard targets caused the initial use of the tactic in Afghanistan and that its use subsequently spread to soft targets, the same story cannot be applied to Pakistan.

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<sup>442</sup> The chi-square test is discussed in: Razia Azen and Cindy M. Walker, *Categorical Data Analysis for the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 30-32. The chi-square test allows us to test whether or not membership in sets of categories is independent. For instance, hair colour and eye colour are categorical variables. Therefore we could perform a chi-square test to determine whether or not one's eye colour was statistically independent of hair colour. Informally, we could say that we were attempting to determine whether knowing something about someone's hair colour could allow us to predict something about their eye colour.





**Table 5.1: Chi Square - Target Hardness versus year**

	$\chi^2$	df	Significance
Afghanistan	16.94	12	.178
Pakistan	10.611	12	.563

## Audience Psychology and Availability Cascades

A number of authors writing about suicide attacks have argued that they are inherently disturbing in a way that other tactics are not, and this may help to explain why militants use them. For instance, Avishai Margalit, writing about Palestinian suicide bombers, argued that "...the impression suicide bombing leaves on Israelis is very different from a no-escape attack. The suicide bombers make most Israelis feel not just ordinary fear but an intense mixture of horror and revulsion as well."<sup>443</sup> Because of their spectacular and gruesome nature, it is argued, suicide attacks also tend to garner more media attention.<sup>444</sup> And in general, it has been argued that suicide attacks are uniquely capable of putting psychological pressure on opponents.<sup>445</sup> There is a natural connection between these aspects of suicide attacks, and the increased importance of the media in the campaigns of insurgents in both countries. The Afghan Taliban, for instance, have themselves argued that "Wars today cannot be won without media. Media aims at the heart rather than the body, if the heart is defeated, the battle is won".<sup>446</sup>

In order to make analytical sense of both the spectacular nature of suicide attacks and the role of violence in the insurgent's media campaigns, we can place them in the framework of 'availability cascades' advanced by Timur Kuran and Cass Sunstein.<sup>447</sup> This theory was developed to understand how biases in the public's perception of risk can lead to demands for regulation which is not related to objective assessments about the severity of those risks. In AfPak, the same theory can shed light on how asymmetric actors such as insurgents can use highly 'noticeable' tactics such as suicide attacks to make themselves more threatening than they otherwise might appear to be, and thereby advance their agenda.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Avishai Margalit, "The Suicide Bombers", *The New York Review of Books*, January 16, 2003, accessed January 20, 2014, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2003/jan/16/the-suicide-bombers/?pagination=false>.

<sup>444</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1, 2003, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/06/the-logic-of-suicide-terrorism/302739>.

<sup>445</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 27-28.

<sup>446</sup> Bashir Ahmad Gwakh, "Taliban Employs Modern Weapons in 'War of Words'," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 16, 2011, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://www.rferl.org/content/taliban\\_employs\\_modern\\_weapons\\_in\\_war\\_of\\_words/2340644.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/taliban_employs_modern_weapons_in_war_of_words/2340644.html).

<sup>447</sup> Timur Kuran and Cass R. Sunstein, "Availability Cascades and Risk Regulation," *Stanford Law Review* 51, No. 4 (April 1999): 683-768.

<sup>448</sup> In the existing literature, my claim is closest to that of Hoffman and McCormick who argue that suicide attacks are used to make organizations appear more threatening than they otherwise would in the context of a violent bargaining situation: Bruce Hoffman, and Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorism, Signalling and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (2004): 246-247.

The concept of ‘availability cascades’ has been developed from two prior social mechanisms which are themselves quite well established. The first is the ‘availability heuristic’. This is another example of one of the cognitive ‘rules of thumb’ discussed in chapter four. The availability heuristic “...is used to evaluate the frequency or likelihood of an event on the basis of how quickly instances or associations come to mind.”<sup>449</sup> So, for example, we may be trying to judge how reliable a particular brand of car is. In making this judgement, we will see if we can recall whether friends or family members who own this brand of car have had many problems with parts breaking and so on. If many examples quickly come to mind, then we may infer that this brand is not reliable.

While the use of this strategy can be effective, it is clear that it can also produce serious biases. In this example, for instance, say we know two friends who own a car of brand X and both have had problems. We may therefore conclude that brand X is unreliable. However a sample size of 2 is far from an optimal way to judge the reliability of a mass produced commodity like a car and therefore it would be far more preferable to consult statistics which give a more representative measure of the overall reliability of brands. In addition to the number of examples we can bring to mind, the vividness of the examples also seems to increase the apparent likelihood of the event in question. An interesting example is the case of Bin Laden’s beliefs about the likelihood that the United States would retaliate with force after the 9/11 attacks. It appears that the events that were most available to him psychologically were the recent attempts on his life via cruise missiles, the ‘black hawk down’ incident in Somalia and the withdrawal from Lebanon after the massive suicide attack by Hezbollah. From these events, it appears he concluded that the United States was a ‘paper tiger’ which would not fight back aggressively.<sup>450</sup>

Of course it needs to be borne in mind that in many real world situations, even with the best of intentions it may be difficult or impossible to get the data to make appropriate inferences. Information may be partial, misleading, unavailable or simply non-existent.<sup>451</sup> Therefore, in many cases, relying upon the availability heuristic may be the best that a decision-maker can do. Nonetheless, even as a ‘least-worst’ option, it may still fare poorly and lead to widely inaccurate judgements.

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<sup>449</sup> Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition*, (New York: Random House, 1984), 270.

<sup>450</sup> Vaughn P. Shannon and Michael Dennis, “Militant Islam and the Futile Fight for Reputation,” *Security Studies* 16, No. 2 (April-June 2007): 303-304.

<sup>451</sup> Susan T. Fiske and Shelley E. Taylor, *Social Cognition*, (New York: Random House, 1984), 279.

The other mechanism in question making up the ‘availability cascade’ model is an ‘informational cascade’.<sup>452</sup> This refers to a model whereby when faced with an uncertain situation, people may use the statements and behaviour of others to inform their judgments about the likelihood of various events or indeed, other things, including a willingness to embrace martyrdom, as discussed in relation to conformity in chapter four. While it is reasonable to use information about others’ statements and behaviour to inform one’s judgements, in some situations it may produce perverse consequences. Consider, for example, a situation where two new restaurants have opened up near each other and have yet to obtain reputations or clientele.<sup>453</sup> Imagine a couple walking down the street and deciding that they want to try one of these new restaurants. Both being new and appearing equally appealing superficially, they chose at random. Now imagine the next group of people to make a similar choice, this time between an empty restaurant and one with at least *some* customers. It is easy to see how an initial arbitrary choice can predispose subsequent behaviour, even though that choice is ‘unjustified’. Indeed, the initial arbitrary choice and subsequent cascade effect may result in one restaurant being full and the other empty, even though the initial decision was made in complete ignorance. This scenario is obviously simplified and abstract, but it demonstrates how the opinions and behaviour of others may affect an individual’s judgement arbitrarily.

It is easy to see how these two mechanisms, the availability heuristic and information cascades interact to reinforce each other. To return to the judgement of risks, the ease with which one is able to bring examples of a risk to mind influences the judged severity of such risks, and the ease with which one can bring such examples to mind will be influenced by the statements and behaviour of others. Moreover, according to Kuran and Sunstein, these mechanisms are purposefully manipulated by ‘availability entrepreneurs’ such as politicians, marketers and activists to produce perceptions and consequently behaviour favourable to the causes of such entrepreneurs.<sup>454</sup>

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<sup>452</sup> David Easley and Jon Kleinberg, *Networks, Crowds and Markets: Reasoning in a Highly Connected World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 484-485.

<sup>453</sup> This example is adapted from: David Easley and Jon Kleinberg, *Networks, Crowds and Markets: Reasoning in a Highly Connected World*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 483-484.

<sup>454</sup> Timur Kuran and Cass R. Sunstein “Availability Cascades and Risk Regulation,” *Stanford Law Review* 51, No. 4 (April 1999): 687.

It seems plausible to consider the Taliban, Haqqani Network and other insurgent organisations as availability entrepreneurs.<sup>455</sup> From this perspective, suicide attacks are particularly attractive, over and above their operational benefits, because the vivid and horrifying nature of suicide attacks makes them widely mediated and easy to recall. This may lead to judgements that the amount of damage the insurgents are inflicting is even greater than it already is. It also means that individuals will be likely to share this judgment with others, which will still further increase the perceived risk of the same events. Given that the insurgents in AfPak are militarily weaker than their opponents, it is natural that they should aim to magnify the nature of the threat they represent so as to improve their bargaining power vis-a-vis their opponents. Suicide attacks therefore seem an ideal choice.

To consider how availability cascades work in practice, imagine an average Afghan or Pakistani being asked to consider how safe they feel in their village, or whether they think the insurgency is winning or losing. If they are easily able to bring to mind a suicide attack which occurred close by, and they also have friends from other villages who can do the same, they are likely to feel that their lives are very unsafe indeed. Note that their judgment is not 'irrational' per se, just that the proximity and disturbing nature of suicide attacks makes them more psychologically available will tend to *increase* the perceived sense of risk compared to the actual probability of risk.<sup>456</sup>

Suicide attacks do not just have one audience.<sup>457</sup> This is especially relevant if we consider, for instance, the case of a US citizen considering the state of the War in Afghanistan and assessing how US and NATO forces are faring compared to their enemies. Given the even greater level of uncertainty and lack of information faced by persons remote from the conflict zone, they will rely upon repetitive news reports, judgements of friends and on other informal sources on to assess the situation. Given that suicide attacks create an impression of chaos, danger and senseless destruction, the individual may well conclude that the war is

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<sup>455</sup> It should be noted that the weaker the availability entrepreneur relative to his or her opponents, the more they must rely upon irrational risk judgments to make their case plausible. Although I have generally avoided talk of 'terrorism' in this thesis, because it seems to be more trouble than it is worth, it seems to me that the availability entrepreneur concept neatly encapsulates a central part of the terrorist methodology. When one is particularly weak relative to one's opponent, then carrying out spectacular acts of violence that are likely to produce availability cascades seems the most appropriate course of action. In general, the stronger one is, presumably the less one has to rely upon the irrational elements of risk perception about one's abilities. That being said, there will typically always be uncertainty about others' military capabilities, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

<sup>456</sup> Obviously, for many Afghan villagers this is already very high.

<sup>457</sup> Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 77.

unwinnable and that foreign forces should withdraw. In other words, the conflict's cascade effect is extensive and self-reinforcing.

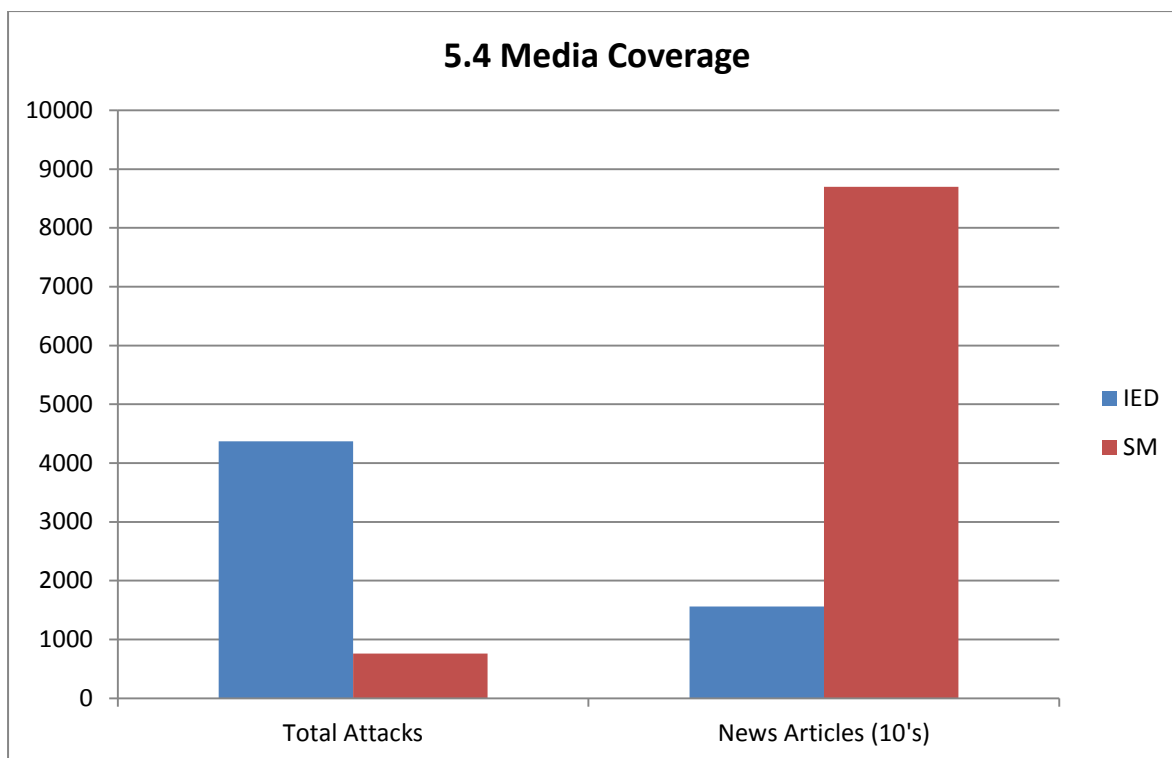
While the Availability Cascade theory is obviously difficult to test directly, it is possible to provide some strong indirect evidence in its favour. In particular we can examine how often suicide attacks are reported in the media compared to other types of attacks. Media exposure is a key driver of the availability heuristic.<sup>458</sup> Therefore, if suicide attacks attract more media attention, we can underwrite part of the claim that they are effective in creating the availability cascades that enable insurgents to advance their cause.

Perhaps because of the popular assumption that suicide attacks attract more media attention, authors have shown little interest in providing empirical evidence for this view. In order to assess the media impact of suicide attacks versus other tactics, I used Google text searches via the Google News Archive for the period 2004-2010.<sup>459</sup> The results seem to strongly support the conjecture that suicide attacks are more effective at garnering attention. Conducting searches for articles related to Improvised Explosive Devices in Afghanistan and Pakistan produced 15,600 hits in this time period, whereas a similar search for articles relating to suicide bombings produced 87,000 hits. This is a ratio of 5.58 which is suggestive, but not overwhelming, evidence. However, if we then divide these numbers of hits by the number of attacks recorded for each attack type in the WITS data during the same time period, a much stronger result is apparent. It then emerges that there were approximately 3.6 news stories per IED attack in the period, and 114.5 news stories per suicide attack. This implies that there was a ratio of over 32 to one in the number of news stories by attack type, controlling for number of attacks. This result is displayed in the graph below, which compares the numbers of each attack type to the numbers of Google News hits in the same time period (in '10s).

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<sup>458</sup> Jonathon Baron, *Thinking and Deciding*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 153.

<sup>459</sup> For specific replication instructions, see the appendix.



We can formalise the analysis by conducting a Pearson chi square test of independence. This test examines whether the amount of coverage an attack receives is dependent upon whether or not it is a suicide attack. Results are reported in table 5.2. The result of the test shows we can easily reject the null hypothesis that the amount of media coverage an attack receives is independent of the modality of the attack. Suicide attacks receive *far* more coverage, on the web at least, than IED attacks.

**Table 5.2: Chi Square - Attack Modality versus Web Hits**

$\chi^2$	df	Significance (2-sided)
15844.585	1	.000

For both suicide attacks and IEDs, there is a bias which is difficult to control for. Ideally one would control for the number of victims of an attack, since all else being equal one would assume that higher casualties produce more coverage. It is notable that in both cases the coverage multiplier is *greater* than the average ‘causality multiplier’ across tactics. In Afghanistan, the average ratio of casualties caused by a suicide attack compared to an IED attack is a healthy 3.9, whereas in Pakistan, it is a staggering 18.9. So even taking into

consideration this disparity, suicide attacks draw twice as much media attention as IED attacks and therefore, the evidence for the availability cascades argument remains strong.

### **Al-Qaeda and the Ideology of Martyrdom**

While in popular discourse suicide attacks are intimately associated with religion and in particular, Islam, many academic studies have tended to downplay the role of religion, and particularly religious beliefs, in understanding suicide attacks.<sup>460</sup> One of the main arguments here has been that in the pre-9/11 period, the greatest exponent of suicide attacks was the Tamil Tigers, who were certainly not Islamic and arguably not religious.<sup>461</sup> However, in the post 9/11 period, suicide attacks have shifted decisively to being largely the province of Islamic groups.<sup>462</sup> Amongst analysts of suicide attacks, Assaf Moghadam has emphasised this change and attempted to explain it by arguing that it is the spread of the ‘Salafi-Jihadi’ interpretation of Islam promoted by Al-Qaeda that explains the diffusion of suicide attacks.<sup>463</sup>

Moghadam argues that while the tactical and operational advantages described above are important in understanding groups’ choice of the tactic, post 9/11, the massive numerical growth and geographical spread of suicide attacks is largely attributable to groups espousing ‘Salafi Jihadi’ ideas. Moghadam specifically claims that his theory applies to insurgents in

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<sup>460</sup> It is worth noting that Robert Pape, whose arguments regarding suicide attacks are still by far the most influential, does accord an important role to religion; specifically he argues that it is religious difference that is important in explaining the use of suicide attacks. His arguments will be considered in detail below. In his account, religion is mostly relevant as a mechanism of group difference in identity rather than belief. In addition, there is a considerable literature about the *content* of various religious rulings about the permissibility and status of suicide attacks within Islam. This literature does not seem to be relevant to explaining the occurrence of suicide attacks however. For useful discussions see: David Cook, “The Implications of ‘Martyrdom Operations’ for Contemporary Islam,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 32, No. 1 (2004): 129-151; Munawar A. Anees, “Salvation and Suicide: What Does Islamic Theology Say?,” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 45, No. 3 (2006): 275-279; Muhammed Munir, “Suicide attacks and Islamic law,” *International Review of the Red Cross* 90, No. 869 (2008): 71-89; Shireen Khan Burki, “Haram or Halal? Islamist’ Use of Suicide Attacks as ‘Jihad’,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24, No. 4 (2011): 582-601.

<sup>461</sup> Pedahzur for instance notes the standard picture of the LTTE as disproving the religion/Islam hypothesis: Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 24. What, exactly the ideology of the LTTE amounts to and whether or not they were religious in some sense has been a matter of controversy. Hopgood argues that the idea that the LTTE were ‘Marxist’ is unfounded. Stephen Hopgood, “Tamil Tigers, 1987-2002,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, Gambetta, D. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47-48. While Michael Roberts has argued that the Tamil Tigers display religious aspects to their practices: Michael Roberts, “Tamil Tiger ‘Martyrs’: Regenerating Divine Potency?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, No. 6 (2005): 504-505.

<sup>462</sup> Scott Atran, “Mishandling Suicide Terrorism”, *The Washington Quarterly* 27, No. 3 (2004): 67.

<sup>463</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 251-268; Assaf Moghadam, “Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks,” *International Security* 33 No. 3 (2009): 46-78. David Cook and Allison Olivia make a similar argument, stating that: “The ideological responsibility-of al-Qa`ida in helping to create an environment in which martyrdom-operations are one of the primary tactics used by radical Muslims is clear.” David Cook and Allison Olivia, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007), 60.



both Afghanistan and Pakistan. With regards to the Afghan Taliban, he argues that “Salafi-Jihadist ideology is a clear influence on the Taliban, which has increasingly adopted Al-Qaeda’s global jihadist ideology justifying suicide attacks”.<sup>464</sup> He does also note that the Deobandi beliefs of the Taliban actually make them somewhat unlikely supporters of the Salafi ideas of Al-Qaeda, but argues that nonetheless Al-Qaeda influence has grown since the mid-2000s.<sup>465</sup> Moghadam is less clear about his reasons for identifying the Pakistani Taliban as ‘Salafis’, although Al-Qaeda’s presumptive residence in FATA is probably the strongest connection; at the time Moghadam wrote his book the TTP had presumably not yet come into existence and Pakistani militancy was little understood. He does however specifically name Jaish-e-Mohammed as a ‘Salafi-Jihadi’ organisation.<sup>466</sup>

These limitations aside, does Moghadam’s argument fit with the facts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as he seems to suggest? The question of the exact ideological orientation of the organisations we are considering is ambiguous. In regards to the Quetta Shura Taliban, the picture is mixed. On the one hand, they have distinguished very clearly between themselves and the Global Jihadis, and tend to portray themselves as pious nationalist fighters seeking only to repel an invasion and restore religious values *within* Afghanistan.<sup>467</sup> Sirajuddin Haqqani, Jalaluddin’s son, has also implied that there is a gulf between the goals of the Haqqani Network and Al-Qaeda, since his group firmly follows the Quetta Shura’s policy.<sup>468</sup> Moreover, the organisation is continually linked with Pakistani ISI, which is clearly at odds with Al-Qaeda’s activities in Pakistan. The Haqqani Network also recently brokered a peace deal in the Kurram agency of FATA between Sunni and Shia which is considerably at variance with typical Al-Qaeda behaviour.<sup>469</sup> On the other hand, as noted earlier, the figure most often linked to the rise of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, Mullah Dudullah, was also seen as being the individual among the Afghan Taliban’s leadership most close to the

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<sup>464</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 157.

<sup>465</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 157.

<sup>466</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 180.

<sup>467</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the self-perception of the Afghan Taliban, see: Anne Stenersen, “The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: Organization, Leadership and Worldview,” *FFI-rapport 2010/00359*. Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment., February, 2010), 54-57, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/10-00359.pdf>

<sup>468</sup> Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*, (London: Hurst & Co, 2012), 321.

<sup>469</sup> On the Haqqani – ISI link, see: Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt, “New Boldness from Militants Poses Risk to US-Pakistan Ties,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2012, accessed September 21 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/world/asia/haqqani-network-threatens-us-pakistan-ties.html?pagewanted=2&ref=haqqaninetwork&pagewanted=all>.

ideology of the Global Jihadis<sup>470</sup> and according to one recent account, Haqqani not only has connections to Al-Qaeda, but also is one of the original drivers of the global Jihad.<sup>471</sup> This view appears to me to be overblown, but Haqqani clearly has longstanding ties to Bin Laden and indeed foreign Jihadis more broadly.<sup>472</sup> The lengthy nature of these connections actually makes the argument somewhat weaker in Haqqani's case, since he has had a long time to be influenced and yet only adopted suicide attacks after 9/11. Another factor must seemingly therefore be involved.

Arguably, the most straightforward cases are the TTP and the Punjabi Taliban groups, both typically portrayed as being far more enthusiastic adopters of the Salafi-Jihadi beliefs than the Afghan groups.<sup>473</sup> The TTP, according to Simon Valentine, believe in the restoration of the Caliphate, seek to establish a Sharia-based regime in Pakistan and adhere to the *Takfiri* doctrine, which allows them to freely excommunicate and therefore attack other Muslims.<sup>474</sup> The Pakistani Taliban have also at times explicitly placed their actions in the context of the 'Global Jihad', saying in 2010 for instance that America would 'burn' for its crimes and that the Pakistani regime deserved to be overthrown for being complicit with America's agenda.<sup>475</sup> More importantly, the Pakistani Taliban are the only indigenous South Asian group who have actually been operationally linked to the 'global Jihad' through the Times Square bombing.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Alex Strick van Linschoten and Felix Kuehn, *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*, (London: Hurst & Co, 2012), 275-278

<sup>471</sup> On Haqqani as driver of global Jihad, see: Don Rassler, and Vahid Brown, "The Haqqani Nexus and the Evolution of Al-Qaeda," *Harmony Program*, (West Point, New York: Combatting Terrorism Centre, July 2011).

<sup>472</sup> Jeffrey Dressler, "The Haqqani Network: From Pakistan to Afghanistan," *Afghanistan Report No. 6*, (Washington, D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, October 2010), 7-8.

<sup>473</sup> Jenkins argues that "Al Qaeda's allies in South Asia—the Pakistan Taliban, Lashkar-e-Toiba, and others—have increasingly adopted its vision of a broader war against the West, although not in its entirety" see Brian Michael Jenkins, "Al-Qaeda in its Third Decade: Irreversible Decline or Imminent Victory?" *Occasional Papers*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2012), 3, accessed January 27, 2014, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2012/RAND\\_OP362.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2012/RAND_OP362.pdf); Gunaratna and Iqbal argue that the Pakistani militants using suicide attacks are all connected to Al-Qaeda: Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*, (London: Reaktion, 2011), 232.

<sup>474</sup> *Takfir* is apostasy; in the past only the *Ulema* have been able to declare another Muslim an apostate and for this judgement to be vindicated a legal process had to be followed. Summarily declaring other Muslims apostates has been a key feature of the so called 'Salafi-Jihadi' ideas of Al-Qaeda and those influenced by it. Consequently, some scholars have described these groups as "*Takfiris*". See: Simon Ross Valentine, "The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan: Ideology and Beliefs," *Brief Number 49*, (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit, February-September 2009), 3, 7-9, accessed January 27, 2014, <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/psru/briefings/archive/Brief49B.pdf>.

<sup>475</sup> Augustine Anthony, "Pakistani Taliban say America will 'burn'," *Reuters*, May 14, 2010, accessed December 9, 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/05/14/us-pakistan-taliban-idUSTRE64D2GK20100514>.

<sup>476</sup> Jane Perlez, "US Urges Action in Pakistan After Failed Bombing," *New York Times*, May 8, 2010, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/world/asia/09pstan.html?src=me>. As noted in chapter

In regard to the Punjabi Taliban groups, according to a report by the International Crisis Group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is even closer to Al-Qaeda in Pakistan than the TTP, and is intimately involved in both its operational activities in Pakistan and providing a links to the TTP and other organisations.<sup>477</sup> The same report claims that Jaish-e-Mohammed is also tightly linked to Al-Qaeda in Pakistan, and notes that JeM's parent organisation Harakatul Mujahideen was amongst the signatories of Bin Laden's famous 1998 Fatwa. Moreover, JeM has also been linked to several Al-Qaeda related plots inside and outside Pakistan, including the London 7/7 bombings.

It is interesting to note that the campaigns of suicide attacks occurred after militants from across Afghanistan and Pakistan were congregating in FATA. In general, physical co-residence tends to produce social ties conducive to the spread of beliefs.<sup>478</sup> This may go some way towards explaining why the Jihadi Salafi ideas spread to native groups when they did, since previously Al-Qaeda had led a somewhat segregated existence in Afghanistan and therefore its chance for influence was probably less.<sup>479</sup> This also helps account for the very puzzling fact that suicide attacks were never adopted during the Anti-Soviet Jihad or during the Taliban's original rise to power. On the other hand, as noted above, both the Haqqani Network and members of the Punjabi Taliban have long standing ties to Bin Laden and Al-Qaeda, which makes it less clear why, from the perspective of Moghadam's theory, they only recently adopted suicide attacks.

Overall the evidence seems to support Moghadam's broad claim that the adoption of suicide attacks is associated with the spread of the Jihadi-Salafi beliefs espoused by Al-Qaeda. Even in the case of the QST, who seem to be disconnected from the Al-Qaeda world view, the adoption of suicide attacks appears to have been spearheaded within the organisation by the individual who was closest to the Al-Qaeda ideology. While there does seem to be an association between taking on Al-Qaeda-style beliefs and adopting suicide attacks, it remains unclear what role, exactly, these beliefs have played. Although Moghadam seems to have

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2, Lashkar-e-Taiba have been involved in international actions, but they have not broadly been involved in suicide attacks.

<sup>477</sup> International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: The Militant Jihadi Challenge," *Asia Report 164*, (Kabul: International Crisis Group, March 2009), 6-7, accessed January 26, 2014, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/164\\_pakistan\\_\\_the\\_militant\\_jihadi\\_challenge.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/pakistan/164_pakistan__the_militant_jihadi_challenge.pdf).

<sup>478</sup> Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin and James M. Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, (2001): 429-430.

<sup>479</sup> Camille Tawil notes that the Taliban struggled to keep their Arab guests under control during their reign, even going to the extent of shutting down some training camps: Camille Tawil, *Brothers in Arms: The Story of Al-Qa'ida and the Arab Jihadists*, (London: Saqi, 2010), 169.

demonstrated an association which also appears to hold to a reasonable degree in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is unclear what mechanism produces the effect in question.

Moghadam's own arguments suggest that it may be mainly a supply side issue. That is, the veneration of martyrdom that is part of the Al-Qaeda ideology gives organisations a useful tool to encourage a supply of bombers willing to carry out attacks.<sup>480</sup> This might be a particularly important issue with regards to Islamic countries, since there is such a strong prohibition on suicide within orthodox Islam doctrines. In this case, Salafi-Jihadi ideas, by reframing suicide as martyrdom, allow the removal of a constraint that may stop other organisations carrying out suicide attacks. For an organisation cannot begin to use the tactic without a number of martyrs willing to participate. This does seem at least partly plausible in my cases, although the amount of ideological indoctrination of many bombers seems to be minimal.

Another possibility for the role of Al-Qaeda's ideology in explaining the spread of suicide attacks is that it tends to produce a 'taste' for suicide bombings in the organisations so influenced. That is, it makes them more willing to carry out suicide attacks *regardless* of the other costs and benefits involved. The argument put forward by some authors that the tactic is now completely entwined in the world view of Al-Qaeda and its affiliates seems to suggest this idea.<sup>481</sup> The problem with this argument is that it comes dangerously close to tautology: the adoption of suicide attacks is explained by the adoption of an ideology which says that suicide attacks are a good idea.<sup>482</sup> But why organisations think they are a good is precisely what we are trying to explain. Therefore to make this argument work ideally requires a systematic explanation of why particular individuals and organisations find Al-Qaeda's ideology attractive.

A more workable version of this argument is that what Salafi-Jihadi ideas provide is a moral loophole for organisational tacticians who may find the tactic attractive on cost-benefit grounds, but regard it as morally problematic. However, according to Antonio Giustozzi, Mullah Omar and others within the Afghan Taliban leadership were opposed to the tactic because of the civilian casualties it caused and the effect this had on the organisation's image,

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<sup>480</sup> Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 254-55.

<sup>481</sup> Yoram Schweitzer, "Al-Qaeda and the Global Epidemic of Suicide Attacks," in *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, ed. Ami Pedahzur, (London: Routledge, 2006), 134-137.

<sup>482</sup> Jeremy Ginges, Ian Hansen and Ara Norenzayan, "Religious Belief, Coalitional Commitment, and Support for Suicide Attacks," *Evolutionary Psychology* 8, No. 3, (2010): 347-348.

rather than normative religious concerns.<sup>483</sup> In fact, there are broader empirical grounds to be suspicious of the argument that religious doctrines are having a role in explaining the adoption of suicide attacks through normative argument. For instance, a recent Pakistani newspaper detailed a *Fatwa* that had been issued against suicide bombings by a senior Pakistani cleric. The article noted that despite the fact that the ruling was a 600 page, point by point rebuttal to the arguments used by Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, it was unlikely to have any effect by itself, because the militants have their own clergy which provide more palatable rulings.<sup>484</sup> As the article also noted, *fatwas* have been repeatedly made against suicide attacks and terrorism, including by clerics from the Indian Darul Uloom Deoband, the top Deobandi institution in the world.<sup>485</sup> In addition the Ulema Council in Afghanistan called on the Taliban to desist using suicide attacks in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, a conference of both mainstream and conservative clergy (including both Ahl-e-Hadith and Deobandi clerics) came together to denounce suicide attacks.<sup>486</sup> The Jihadis' response to this was to send a suicide bomber to assassinate the cleric who organized the conference. As several commentators have noted, the actual *content* of religious rulings tend to twist normative Islam in ways that appear quite sophistic.<sup>487</sup> So in practice, as well as in theory, it seems difficult to sustain the argument that it is normative religious concerns that are driving the adoption of suicide attacks.<sup>488</sup>

An alternative conjecture to explain the relationship between Al-Qaeda's ideology and the use of suicide attacks is that what we are actually observing is *confounding*. That is, Salafi-

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<sup>483</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 117.

<sup>484</sup> Kalsoom Lakhani, "A Fatwa vs. Suicide Bombings", *Dawn*, December 3, 2012, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.dawn.com/news/813189/a-fatwa-vs-suicide-bombings>.

<sup>485</sup> As noted earlier, all of the organizations I am discussing here (apart from Al-Qaeda) hail from the Deobandi school.

<sup>486</sup> Afghanistan: Seth G. Jones, S. G., *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 237. Pakistan: Rohan Gunaratna and Khuram Iqbal, *Pakistan: Terrorism Ground Zero*, (London: Reaktion, 2011), 246.

<sup>487</sup> For instance with regards to a characteristic religious text justifying suicide attacks, Israeli notes that "Characteristic of this treatise is that it almost disregards the 13 centuries of Shari'a developments since the era of the Prophet. For had he surveyed the entire span of Muslim Law, it is doubtful whether he would have come to the ultimate conclusion that every 'true Muslim' must be...willing to sacrifice his life in the course of Jihad...the Hadith stories cited by the author are not always accurate and sometimes are turned around as to illustrate his point." Raphael Israeli, "A Manual of Islamic Fundamentalist Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, No. 4 (2002): 38. As Cook and Allison note, suicide attacks are a more natural religious 'fit' with Shia beliefs and doctrine, where they originated and consequently, the arguments in Sunni Islam for them are characteristically weak. David Cook, D and Olivia Allison, *Understanding and Addressing Suicide Attacks*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2007), 20.

<sup>488</sup> Imtiaz Gul, writing about the initial reluctance of Pakistani clerics to denounce the tactic, often because of security concerns, finally concludes that: "At this point no religious decrees or legal order will deter militants from executing their mission". Imtiaz Gul, *The Most Dangerous Place: Pakistan's Lawless Frontier*, (London: Penguin, 2010), 146.

Jihadi ideology does not *cause* the adoption of suicide attacks, rather something else causes the adoption of both the ideology and suicide attacks. Although suicide attacks are an organisational phenomenon, the decision to use them is ultimately made by individuals. As a consequence, it is possible that adherence to Al-Qaeda's beliefs and the decision to use suicide attacks might both be explained by some more basic feature of individuals that makes both attractive. As we have seen, focus on individual differences has mostly been regarded as unsatisfactory in the study of suicide attacks and indeed in the study of terrorism more broadly.<sup>489</sup> The evidence indicates that there is no one 'type' which inclines one to engage in militant violence. Moreover, this could again be a case of the 'fundamental attribution error'; that is the tendency to attribute to 'traits' what is actually the result of exogenously induced 'states'.

Nonetheless, individuals' propensity for violence and extreme beliefs clearly does vary endogenously, and it does not seem implausible to think that there is a link between the two.

<sup>490</sup> It is also worth noting that both Mullah Dadullah and his inspiration, Zarqawi, two of the recent pioneers of suicide attacks, both exhibited behaviour that led to speculation about psychopathy.<sup>491</sup> Even within the militant milieu, both have been regarded as spectacularly blood-thirsty.<sup>492</sup> Therefore, while it is highly doubtful that every employer of suicide attacks is a psychopath, it *may* be that an unusual willingness to use counter-normative violence is an important part of the explanation for adopting suicide attacks, particularly when it has previously been untried and presumably rejected by an organisation.

Finally, there is also the fact that Al-Qaeda fighters from Iraq have travelled to Afghanistan to provide reports on 'lessons learned' from their experiences there.<sup>493</sup> There appears to be

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<sup>489</sup> Most of the psychological speculation regarding suicide attacks has of course centred on the bombers, not their despatchers.

<sup>490</sup> The most fundamental argument that can be made for this proposition comes from Behaviour Genetics, which has found that *all* studied behavioural traits have heritable variance. See Eric Turkheimer, "Three Laws of Behaviour Genetics and What they Mean," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 9, No. 5 (October 2000): 160-164.

<sup>491</sup> On the other hand, according to Thomas Ricks, some 24 Million dollars was spent on a campaign to demonize Zarqawi by the US military, so it has to be conceded that some of his reputation may be hyperbole. Nonetheless, beheadings did occur, and *someone* was organising a suicide attack campaign that slaughtered thousands of Iraqi civilians. See Thomas E. Ricks, "Military Plays Up Role of Zarqawi," *Washington Post*, April 10, 2006, accessed September 21, 2012, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/09/AR2006040900890.html>.

<sup>492</sup> Zarqawi's campaign of suicide attacks, beheadings and assassination proved so counterproductive that Bin Laden was forced to offer his first apology. Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 110.

<sup>493</sup> Brian Glynn Williams, "Mullah Omar's Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan," *Middle East Policy* 15, No. 4. (Winter 2008): 27-29.

some suggestion that suicide attacks could thus have been imported into South Asia via Iraq. While it seems logical that knowledge of, for instance, explosives technologies, weaknesses of US vehicles, and other technical matters could have been transmitted, it seems difficult to understand what, precisely, the Iraqi fighters could have delivered to Afghanistan and Pakistan to instigate adoption of the tactic. Presumably most of the knowledge needed was already present among the Al-Qaeda fighters still resident in Pakistan, even if the Iraqis did perhaps suggest technical improvements. The only plausible explanation therefore seems to be that Iraq was important mostly as a demonstration of the effectiveness of suicide attacks against the US and other foreign forces (as discussed earlier in the chapter). It seems strange that AfPak militants should need to have such evidence presented to them directly, but perhaps the foreign Jihadists' personal testimony had more persuasive power than more impersonal media reports. In addition, there is some evidence that the initial suicide attacks in Afghanistan were carried out by Arab fighters. It seems therefore that there was likely a local demonstration effect as a consequence of this as the Taliban saw firsthand the effects of the tactic. While important in itself, this actually makes the importance of the Iraq influence somewhat difficult to understand.<sup>494</sup>

### **Constituency Costs**

As we have seen above, suicide attacks seem to be uniquely capable of generating media attention. However, the attention attracted by suicide attacks may not be positive, on balance, for the organisations that adopt them. If suicide attacks are perceived to be unpopular with the population the rebels are trying to win over, either because of normative considerations or because they anticipated suffering from the use of the tactic, this might prevent organisations from adopting them.

Stathis Kalyvas and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca have argued that there may be a specific kind of relationship between an organisation's willingness to adopt the tactic and the nature of their support base.<sup>495</sup> They argue that there are two types of relationships between organisations and their constituencies which are most likely to produce adoption: either when the organisation enjoys high levels of support from a similarly radicalized constituency, or when the organisation has very low levels of support and is estranged from its constituency. Hamas

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<sup>494</sup> Brian G. Williams "Return of the Arabs," *CTC Sentinel* 1, No. 3 (February 2008): 22, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a493795.pdf>.

<sup>495</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca, "Killing Without Dying: The Absence of Suicide Missions," in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 218-223.

or Hezbollah for instance, have enjoyed high levels of support, as have suicide attacks in those countries. Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, a more prototypical ‘terrorist’ organisation, has been largely disconnected from the broader communities from which it has developed. If organisations have some intermediate level of support then the tactic is generally unlikely to be adopted. Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca claim that adoption of a suicide attack strategy will be rare since most rebel organisations have intermediate levels of support.

Does this model work for Afghanistan and Pakistan? As was noted earlier for the Afghan Taliban, the leadership was concerned about the effect of suicide attacks upon their popularity and this probably served as a brake upon adoption. More broadly as well, the Afghan Taliban have sought to shape and control their public perception through, for instance, the issuing of multiple editions of the code of conduct, or *Layha*, which includes injunctions about the proper and improper use of suicide attacks.<sup>496</sup> Despite this, others in the organisation, particularly Mullah Dudullah, appear to have convinced the Taliban leadership that the tactic should be used. Unfortunately we lack any similar types of evidence for the Pakistani groups.

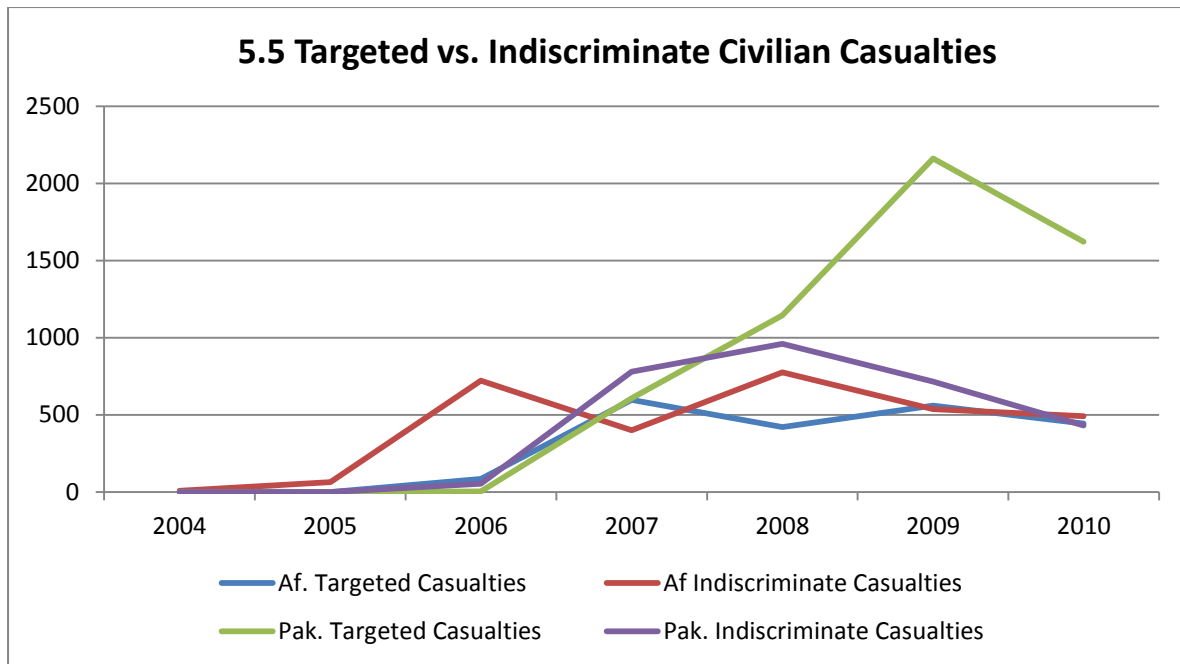
The main empirical question raised by Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca’s argument is this: What is the relationship between the various insurgent organisations and the populations that they claim to represent?<sup>497</sup> As we saw in detail in chapter three, insurgents in both countries are remarkably unpopular. Moreover, one reason for this unpopularity may be *because* they use suicide attacks, particularly, it seems, in Pakistan. We can add to the evidence documented above by noting that not only do suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan often cause ‘collateral damage’, they are often intentionally targeted at civilians, as graph 3.5 makes clear. In both Afghanistan and Pakistan, civilians have intentionally been killed with suicide attacks in large numbers since at least 2007.

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<sup>496</sup> Kate Clark, “The Layha: Calling the Taliban to Account,” *AAN Thematic Report 6/2011*, (Afghanistan Analysts Network, July 2011), accessed January 28, 2014, [http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110704\\_CKClark\\_The\\_Layha.pdf](http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110704_CKClark_The_Layha.pdf).

<sup>497</sup> There is another reason that constituency costs may be lower in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but which probably did not have an effect upon them deciding whether to adopt the tactic. This is the fact that conspiracy theories have widely circulated about attacks carried out by the militants, blaming them on foreign hands.





Taking these two pieces of evidence together, I suggest that a variation on the argument put forward by Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca is more satisfactory. For the insurgent groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it seems that ‘popular support’ of the type which has often been argued is necessary to support insurgencies, has been perceived as largely unnecessary. Indeed the insurgents are able to acquire suicide bombers without need for widespread support, simply conscripting them through coercion. The relative unpopularity of these organisations has not stopped them from mounting long-running and powerful insurgencies that, in Afghanistan at least, seem to have a reasonable chance of achieving many of their goals. In chapter two I presented some important factors behind the success of the Taliban in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, in particular their provision of justice and widespread use of coercion. Through these methods, they have been able to secure compliance, without the need for the populace to approve of their goals or methods. In addition, all of the groups in question have strong sources of revenue from drugs, crime, and foreign donors, meaning they are not reliant upon the local population to provide resources to fuel their activities. Therefore, in the case of the AfPak insurgents, attempting to win the hearts and minds of the locals has become secondary to achieving control. This strategy has meant that suicide attacks do not present the strategic liability that they do for many other organisations.

## Occupation

By far the most influential account of the adoption of suicide attacks comes from Robert Pape.<sup>498</sup> He argues that suicide attacks are chosen by rebel organisations when two critical conditions are met. Firstly, the country that the rebels claim to represent must face a foreign occupation by an enemy force led by a democratic regime. The type of regime is important, Pape insists, because rebels believe that democracies are ‘soft’, that is, are more vulnerable to coercion, and at the same time, they are more restrained than other regime types. So retaliation by foreign, democratic forces will be relatively mild.<sup>499</sup> He also argues that because of their open media, suicide attacks will be more widely publicized within democracies and therefore have greater coercive effect.

Secondly, Pape argues that suicide attacks will only be chosen where there is a difference in religion between the occupier and the occupied.<sup>500</sup> Three mechanisms contribute to the importance of religious difference to the adoption of suicide attacks: religious difference reduces the possibility of compromise, it makes demonizing the enemy easier, and it helps to provide legitimacy by reframing suicide attacks as ‘martyrdom’.

In his newer work with James Feldman, Pape argues that the suicide attack campaigns in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are consistent with his theory.<sup>501</sup> Here Pape makes some amendments to his theory, particularly with regards to the campaign in Pakistan. The suicide attack campaign in Pakistan seems to be flatly inconsistent with Pape’s theory because Pakistan is not under occupation. Pape and Feldman argue, however, that Pakistan is under an ‘indirect occupation’. This is defined as a situation where the nation in question gives greater priority to the policy preferences of the ‘indirectly occupying’ nation than its own national interest would otherwise dictate.<sup>502</sup> Pape and Feldman also seem to downplay the issue of religious difference compared to Pape’s previous work, presumably because of the other important contradiction posed by Pakistan, namely that almost all of the suicide attacks in Pakistan are being directed at people of the *same* faith.

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<sup>498</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005).

<sup>499</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 44-45.

<sup>500</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 88-92. In his newer book with Feldman, the issue of religious difference seems to be somewhat downplayed compared to the previous version of the theory, possibly because of the case of the important case of Pakistan: pp. 24-25

<sup>501</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), Chapters 5-6.

<sup>502</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 139-140.

While Pape's approach overall is insightful, it runs into a number of problems when applied to the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan. To begin with, the most fundamental problem is the concept of 'indirect occupation'. It is difficult not to see this as an *ad hoc* move designed to integrate a case that is clearly at odds with Pape's theory.<sup>503</sup> It changes the definition of 'occupation' from an objective one based upon the presence of foreign troops to a subjective one based upon the *perception* of occupation.

While this new theory *could* be correct, it seems to me that Pape's earlier work would have to be reformulated even more broadly given that the independent variable of interest has shifted from 'countries occupied by democracies of a different religion' to countries putting the interests of another nation above that of their own. Consider, for instance, that according to the work of John Mearsheimer and Steven Walt, the United States favours Israel in its foreign policy at the expense of its own national interest.<sup>504</sup> By Pape's account, this would imply that Israel is 'indirectly occupying' the United States and that we might expect suicide attacks by US nationals against the US government as a consequence. In fact some even argue that Australia puts the interest of the United States above its own national interest, which would seem to imply suicide attacks by Australians against the Australian government.

Nonetheless, it could be argued that Pape and Feldman's 'indirect occupation' argument is viable because it seems to mirror the attitudes of Pakistani militants themselves. As discussed above, the Pakistani Taliban have outlined an anti-Western and anti-US agenda. And more specifically, the TTP has accused Pakistani politicians of being "... 'lapdogs', and 'cronies of America', and [being guilty of] supporting 'America's dirty war'"<sup>505</sup>. Therefore, the TTP's adoption of suicide attacks could be consistent with Pape and Feldman's new 'indirect occupation' thesis. This suggestion does not get around the theoretical inconsistency created by this ad-hoc broadening of the theory. However, it does suggest that a reformulated version might be able to explain the spread of suicide attacks to Pakistan and be consistent with other cases. But in order to establish the validity of this approach additional cross national research would be required. Therefore at this stage Pape and Feldman's approach to explaining the spread of suicide attacks to Pakistan should be responded to with a Scottish 'not proven.'

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<sup>503</sup> In addition to Pakistan, there is also the case of Syria, which seems incompatible with the occupation theory, as well as the ongoing conflict in Iraq after the US's withdrawal, among others.

<sup>504</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, and Stephen M. Walt, "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy," *Middle East Policy* 13, No. 3 (2006): 29-87.

<sup>505</sup> Simon Ross Valentine, "The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan: Ideology and Beliefs," *Brief Number 49*, (Bradford: Pakistan Security Research Unit, February-September 2009), 3, 7-9, accessed January 27, 2014

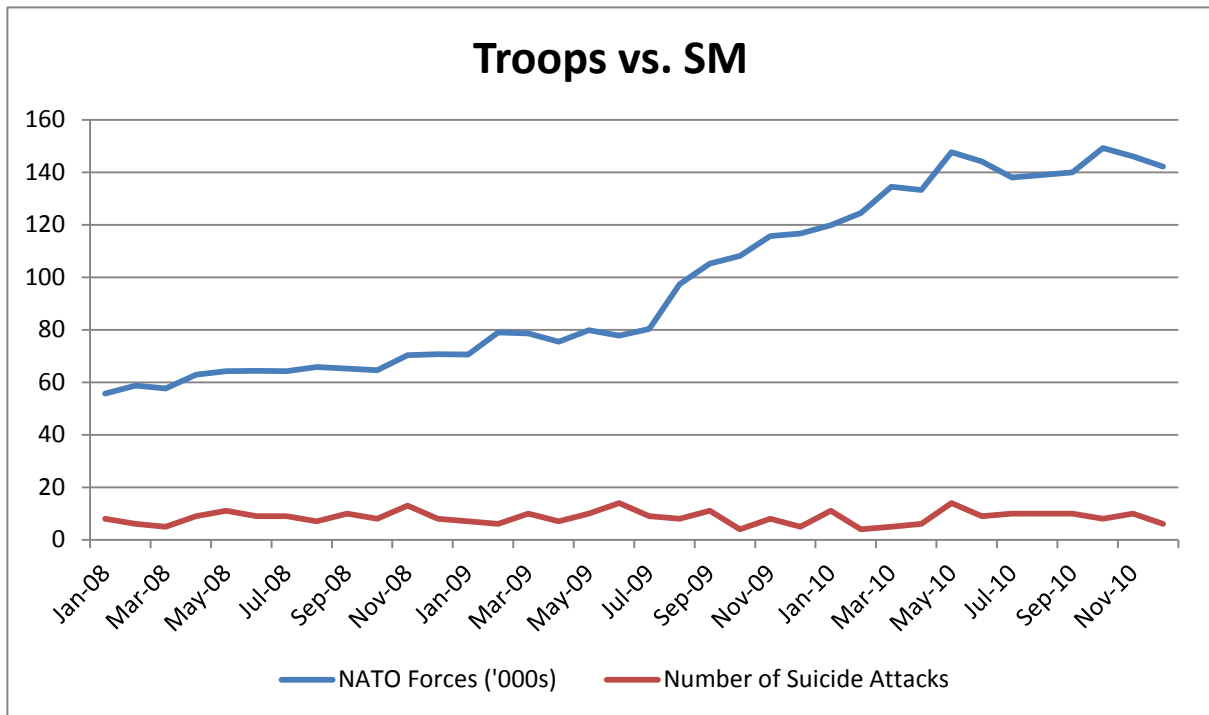
With regards to Afghanistan, Pape's account does have one major advantage since it is able to explain the puzzling fact that the Mujahedeen fighting the Soviets did not adopt suicide attacks. The Soviet Union was not, of course, a democracy, so Pape's theory predicts that the Mujahedeen would not have chosen to employ suicide attacks.<sup>506</sup> This is important because it is quite difficult in to account for the Mujahedeen's avoidance of the tactic. There is, however, another sense in which the data from Afghanistan do not appear to support Pape's argument. This is the positive relationship between the size of the occupying force and the number of suicide attacks that have occurred. This relationship appears to be an implication of Pape's theory. In an editorial in 2009 he argued that increasing troop numbers in Afghanistan would lead to more suicide attacks: "The picture is clear: the more Western troops we have sent to Afghanistan, the more the local residents have viewed themselves as under foreign occupation, leading to a rise in suicide bombings...."<sup>507</sup>

In order to test this aspect of Pape's theory, I have compared the number of foreign troops in Afghanistan with the number of suicide attacks from January 2008 to December 2010. Below is a graph which compares the number of suicide attacks per month in Afghanistan to the number of NATO troops in the country (the numbers reported are thousands of troops). There is simply no relationship between these figures. It may not be possible to falsify Pape's theory from this data alone, but it is striking, given Pape's argument, that suicide attacks were completely unaffected by a greater than doubling of foreign troop numbers.

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<sup>506</sup> Robert A. Pape and James K. Feldman, *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism & How to Stop It*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 119-120.

<sup>507</sup> Robert A. Pape, "To Beat the Taliban, Fight from Afar," *New York Times*, October 14, 2009, accessed May 22, 2012, [www.nytimes.com/2009/10/15/opinion/15papehtml?pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/15/opinion/15papehtml?pagewanted=all).



There is, nevertheless, at least some evidence for Pape’s theory with regards to Afghanistan. The country *is* experiencing an occupation by a democratic foreign force of differing religion. Moreover, suicide attacks did *not* occur during the (undemocratic) Soviet occupation, which seems to support his argument. However the quantitative evidence shown in the above graph is squarely at variance with Pape’s claim in 2009. It should also be remembered that the findings of chapter three strongly conflict with Pape’s account of the way in which suicide attacks are supposed to be produced by occupation. Pakistan is simply not an occupied nation; moreover suicide attacks are being directed at other Pakistanis, not foreigners. And as noted above, the attempt to paper over this by means of the concept of ‘indirect occupation’ is *ad hoc* and unconvincing. Therefore, overall, we are forced to conclude that Pape’s arguments are a poor fit for these countries.

## Conclusion

I have argued in this chapter that three main factors explain why suicide attacks have been adopted by organisations in AfPak. Firstly, suicide attacks present compelling tactical and psychological advantages to those fighting an asymmetric conflict. While this is a common argument, this is one of the first studies to actually provide quantitative evidence for this proposition, as shown in my analysis of the relative media impacts of suicide attacks versus IEDs. Secondly, this chapter has shown how many of the insurgent organisations, or individuals within them, have been directly influenced by the beliefs of Al-Qaeda, whose

influence is associated with other organisations adopting suicide tactics. As I have detailed however, the mechanism underlying this regularity remains somewhat unclear. Finally, the organisations in AfPak also seem to be able to ignore the constituency costs which may otherwise prevent other organisations from adopting because their military success is not based upon the local population admiring them or sharing their goals. Fundamentally, this argument regarding constituency costs that is the most important, because it addresses the issue of feasibility, an important consideration because it helps explain why some insurgent or terrorist organisations are not able to adopt suicide attacks, even if they might desire to. This chapter has also shown that other popular explanations for adoption which focus on their effectiveness against hard targets, or the importance of occupation by democracies, lack applicability for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## **Chapter 6: How Suicide Attacks are used**

### **Introduction**

Having established *why* organisations in AfPak have adopted suicide attacks, we turn to the question of *how* suicide attacks function in the conflicts under consideration. This chapter begins by presenting descriptive statistics on the targets, victims and geography of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which provide a context for the theoretical arguments that follow. I also put suicide attacks in comparative perspective with other insurgent tactics, and show how this supports the argument of chapter three that insurgents face a ‘supply problem’ with respect to martyrs. The dominant perspective within the scholarly literature on suicide attacks has been that they are used by organisations as ‘signals’ that credibly communicate intentions and capabilities. The second section of this chapter analyses the suitability of this theory for AfPak. I argue that this perspective is broadly correct, but that previous accounts have left a number of issues unresolved. In particular, I argue that suicide attacks in AfPak are not ‘costly’ in the technical sense of signalling theory but they nonetheless reliably communicate information. Moreover, while the only detailed empirical study of the signalling theory produced negative results, using similar metrics and a superior data set, I demonstrate that this result is unfounded. Not only is the signalling theory supported by data from Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also in the case of Iraq. The third section of the chapter considers why suicide attacks have been often used against civilians, particularly in Pakistan, when it is typically claimed that insurgents need to rely upon civilian support. I argue that the data indicates that civilian targeting is a product of battlefield failure and that this result fits neatly with the signalling perspective.

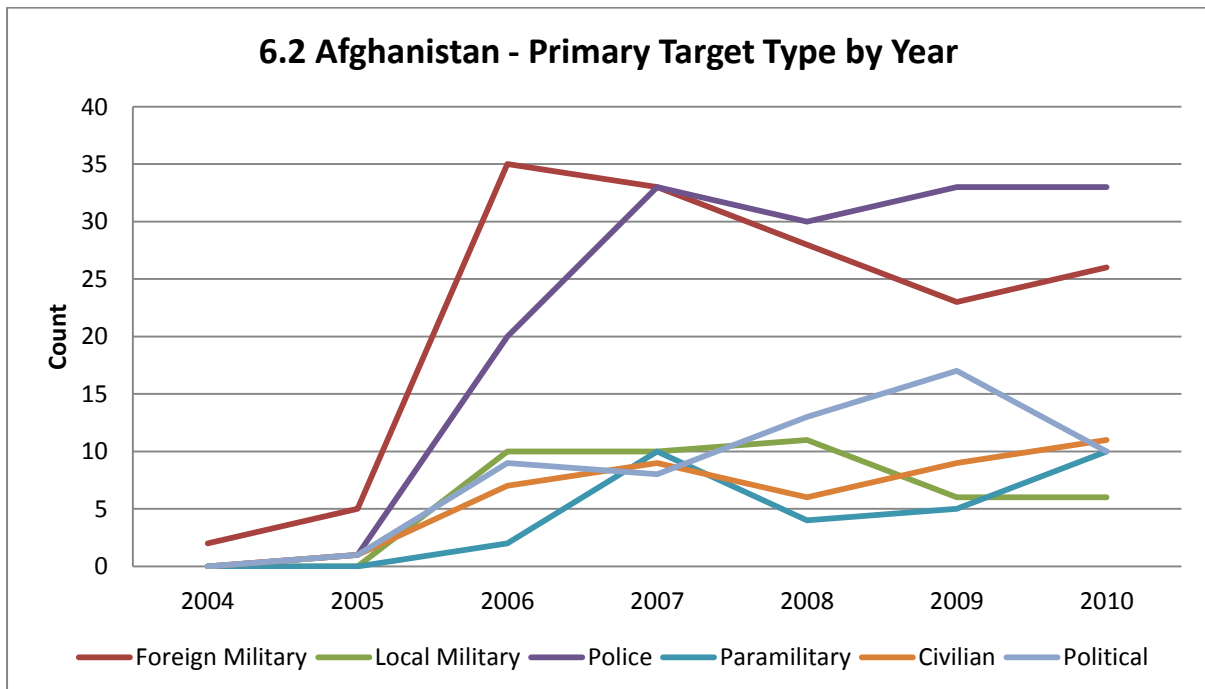
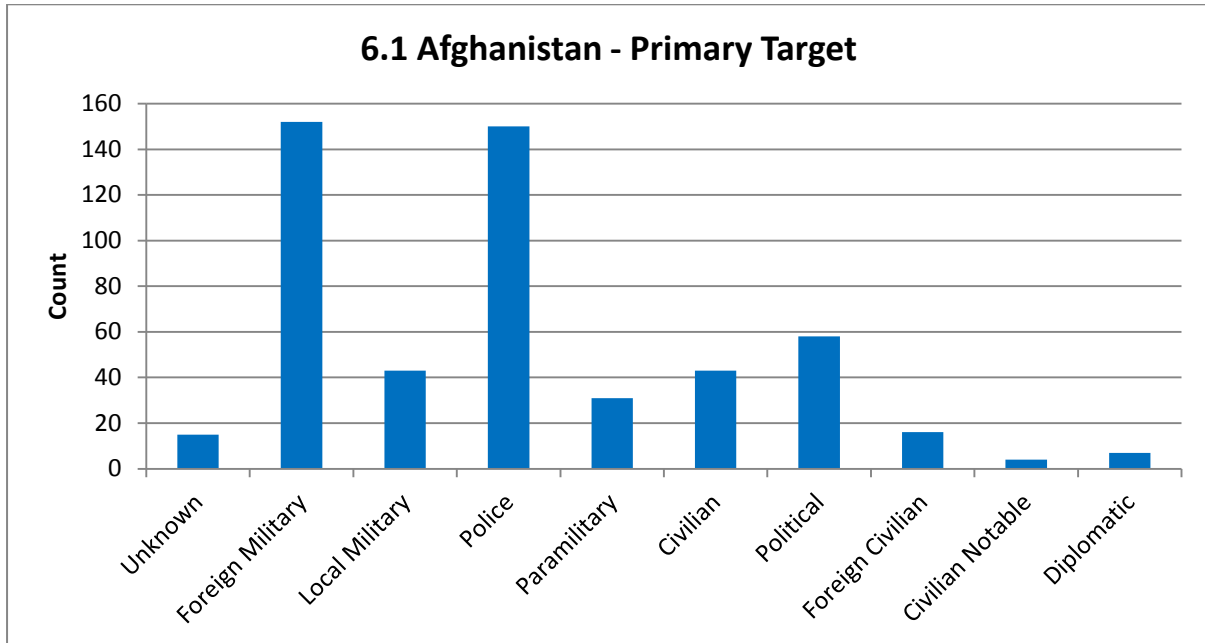
### **Descriptive Statistics**

Before turning to the analytical sections of this chapter, I begin by providing descriptive statistics on the suicide attack incidents in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The data again comes from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System database, 2004-2010, but has been re-coded in order to extract specific information for the analyses that follow.

### **Targeting**

Graphs 6.1 and 6.2 display the targeting patterns of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Insurgents have clearly focused on attacking two main targets: foreign troops and representatives of the Afghan government. While the former represent the largest single category of targets, if we combine attacks against police, local military and political targets, which all represent

attempts to target the Afghan state, it is clear that this is actually the largest group over time. There are also a significant number of attacks against civilians, and this trend has not noticeably diminished.

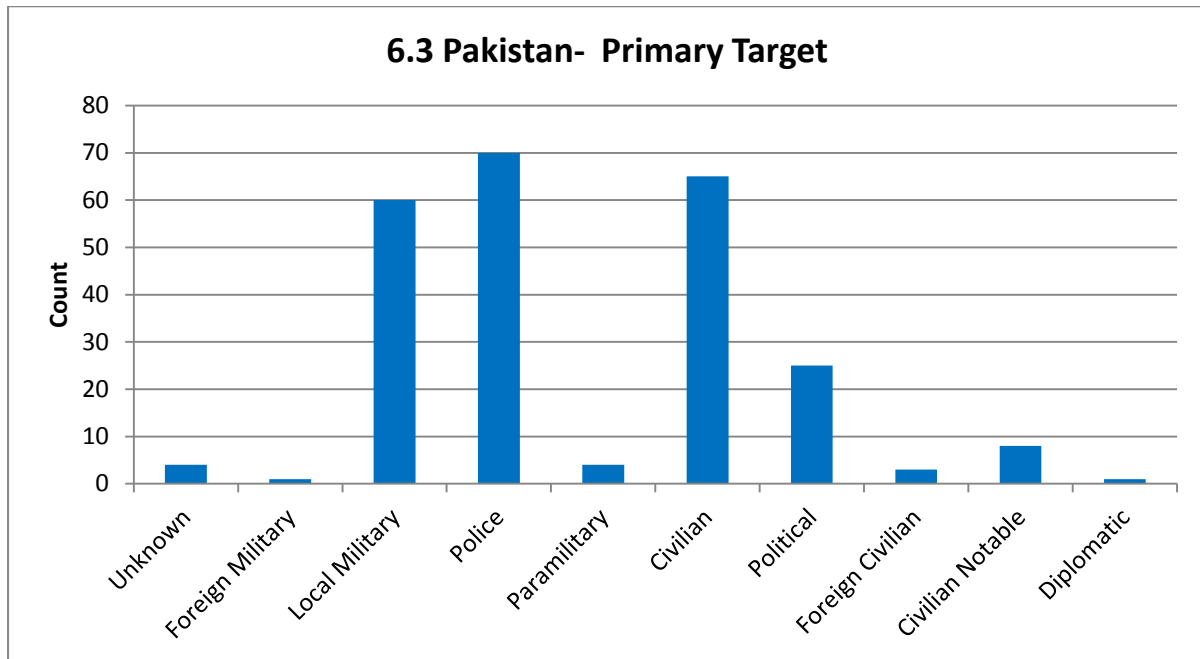


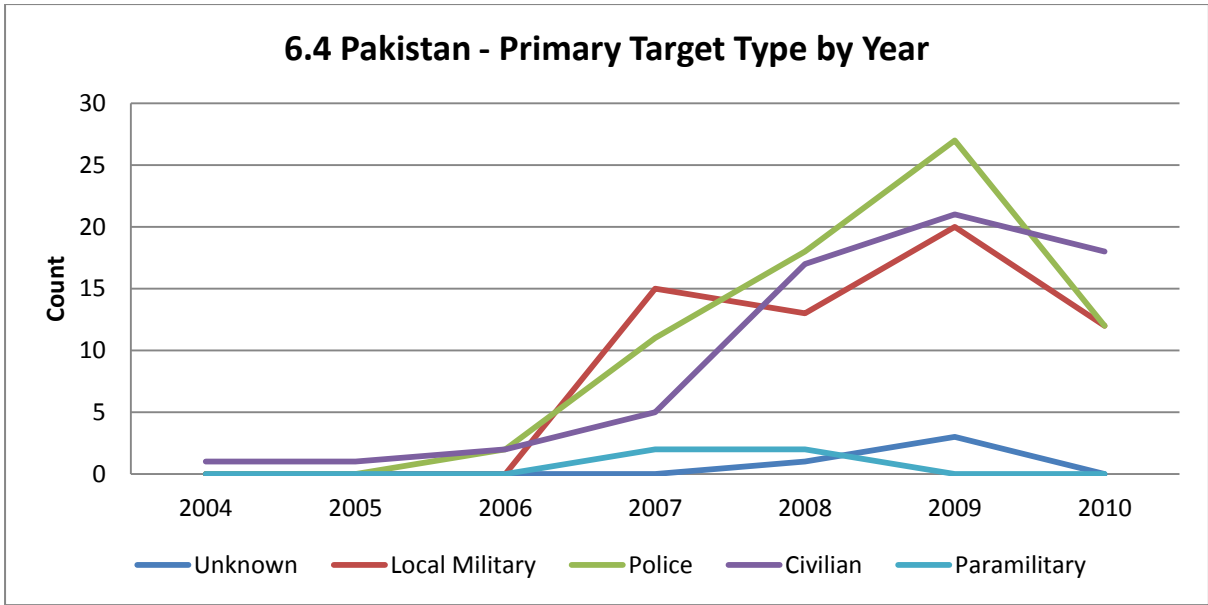
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<sup>508</sup> Target types with very low counts have been removed for legibility.



Graphs 6.3 and 6.4 expressing targeting data for Pakistan display quite similar targeting patterns and trends as Afghanistan, with one major exception. Again, military, police and political targets have been by far the most frequently attacked by insurgents. However, proportionally, suicide attacks targeted at civilians have been far more common in Pakistan than in Afghanistan. For Afghanistan, 2006 was when suicide attacks became a central part of the conflict, whereas for Pakistan it was clearly in the second half of 2007 following the siege of the Lal Masjid.

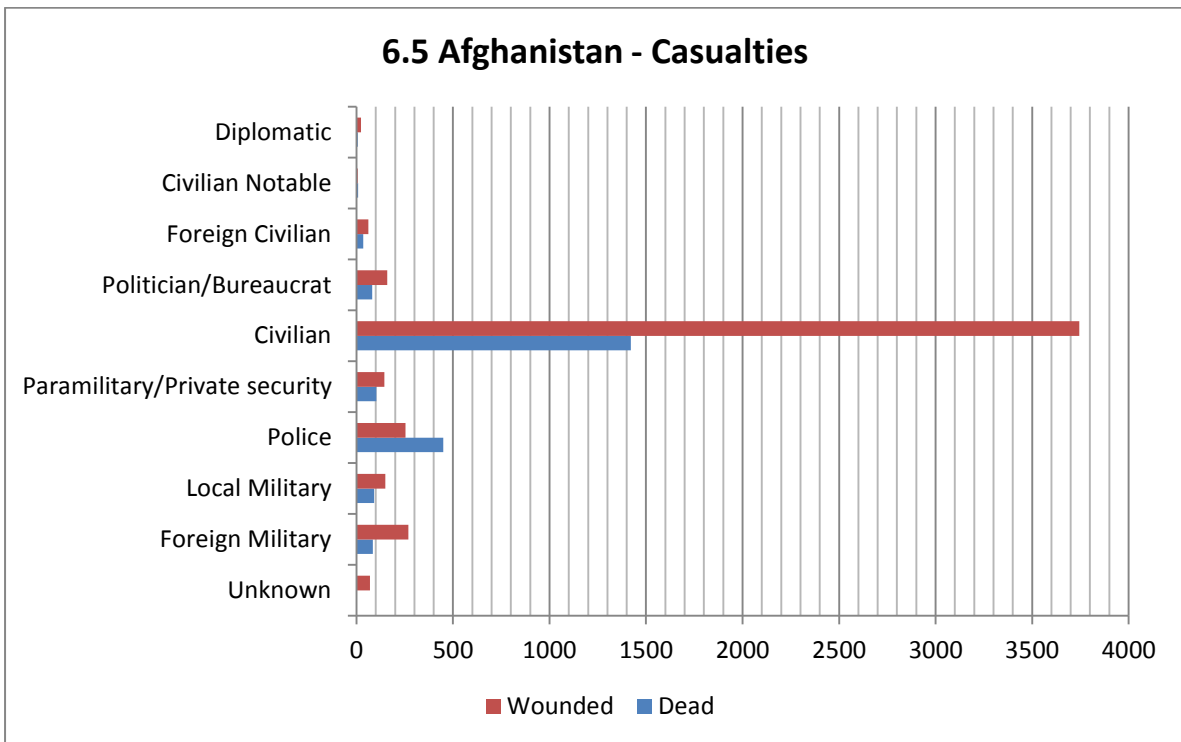




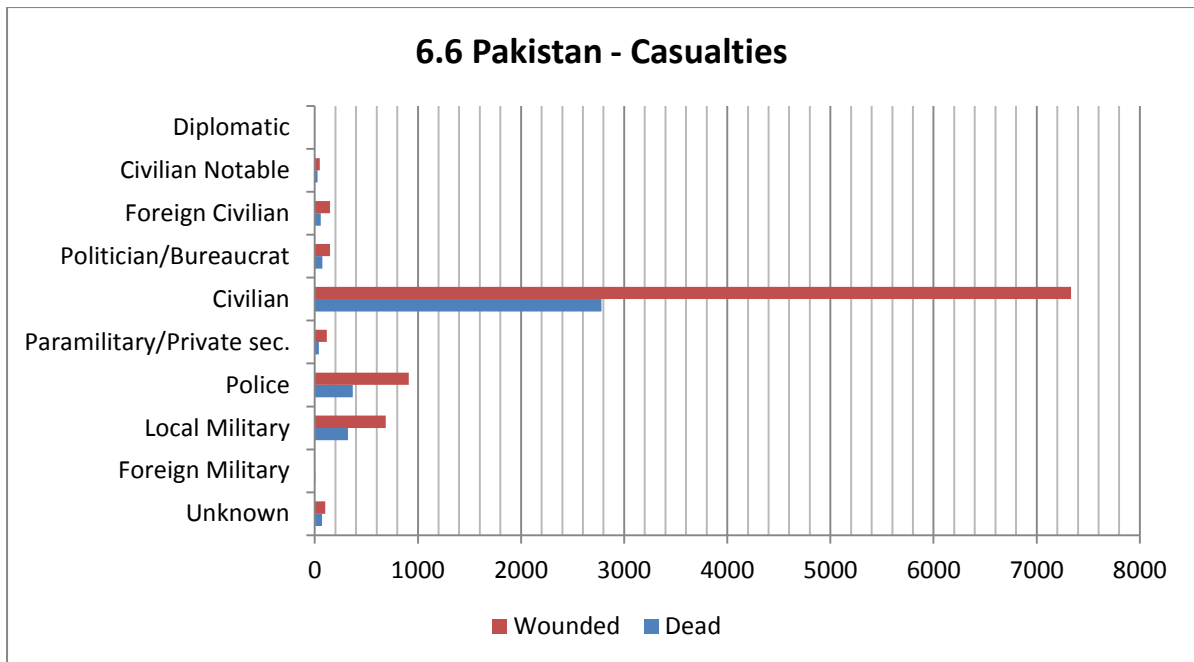
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### Victims

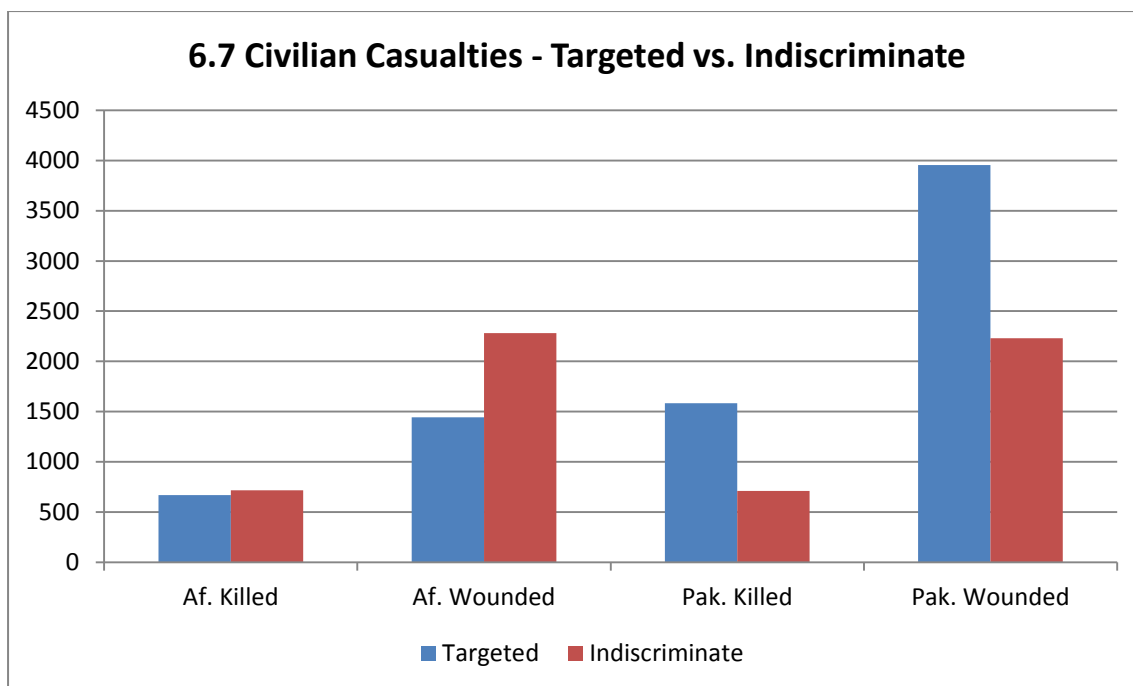
Whereas the data on targeting show that in both countries the primary targets of suicide attacks have been military and political, if we consider the evidence about casualties, it becomes clear that the primary *victims* in both countries have been civilians.



<sup>509</sup> Target types with very low counts have been removed for legibility.



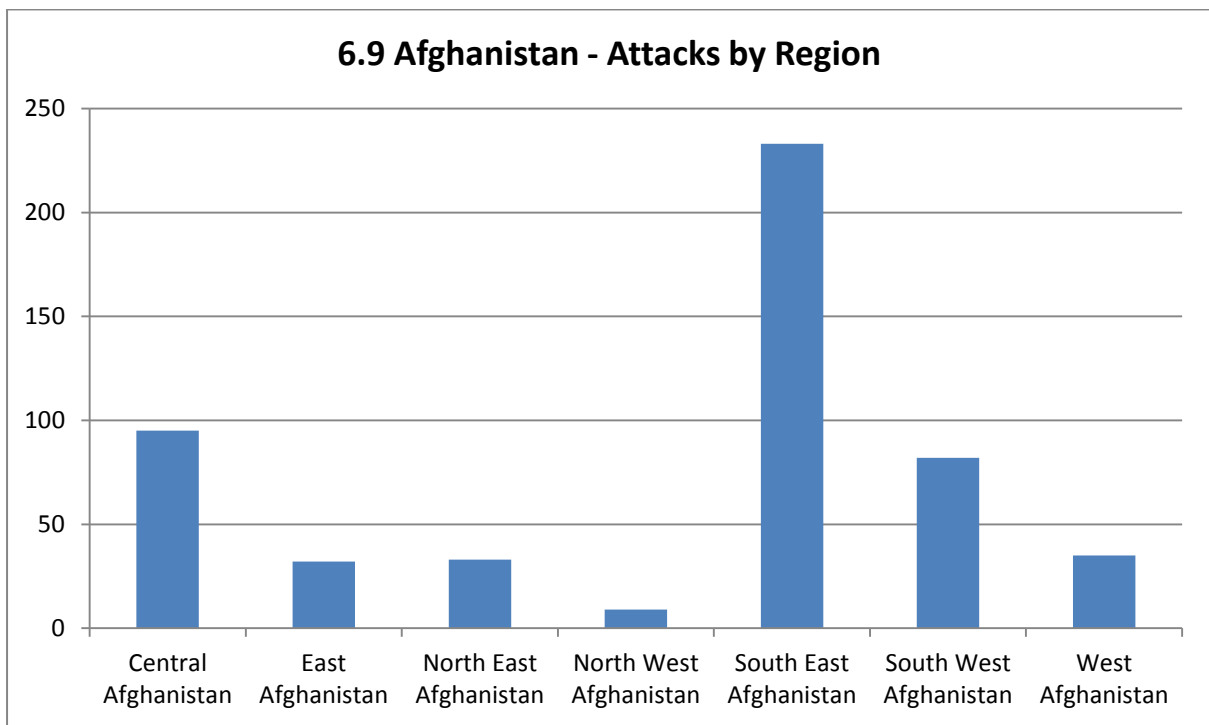
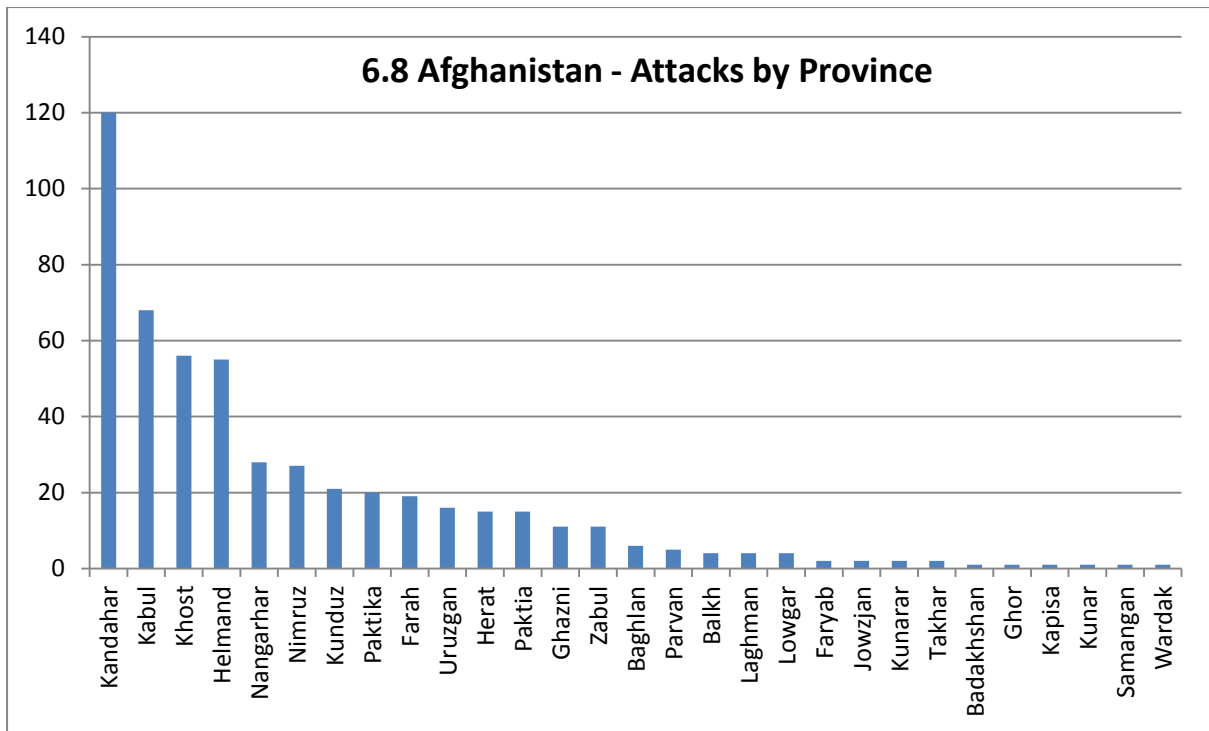
It is possible to extract from the WITS data whether or not all victims in a particular attack were judged targeted or not, and from this we can determine from all attacks the total number of targeted versus indiscriminate civilian casualties. This is displayed in graph 4.7 below. While the majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan are from indiscriminate attacks, the graph shows that when they *are* attacked, the casualty count is very high. Probably this is due to the tendency of civilians to congregate in large numbers and in unprotected areas. The graph also shows that most civilians who died in Pakistan as a result of suicide attacks did so because they were purposefully targeted.

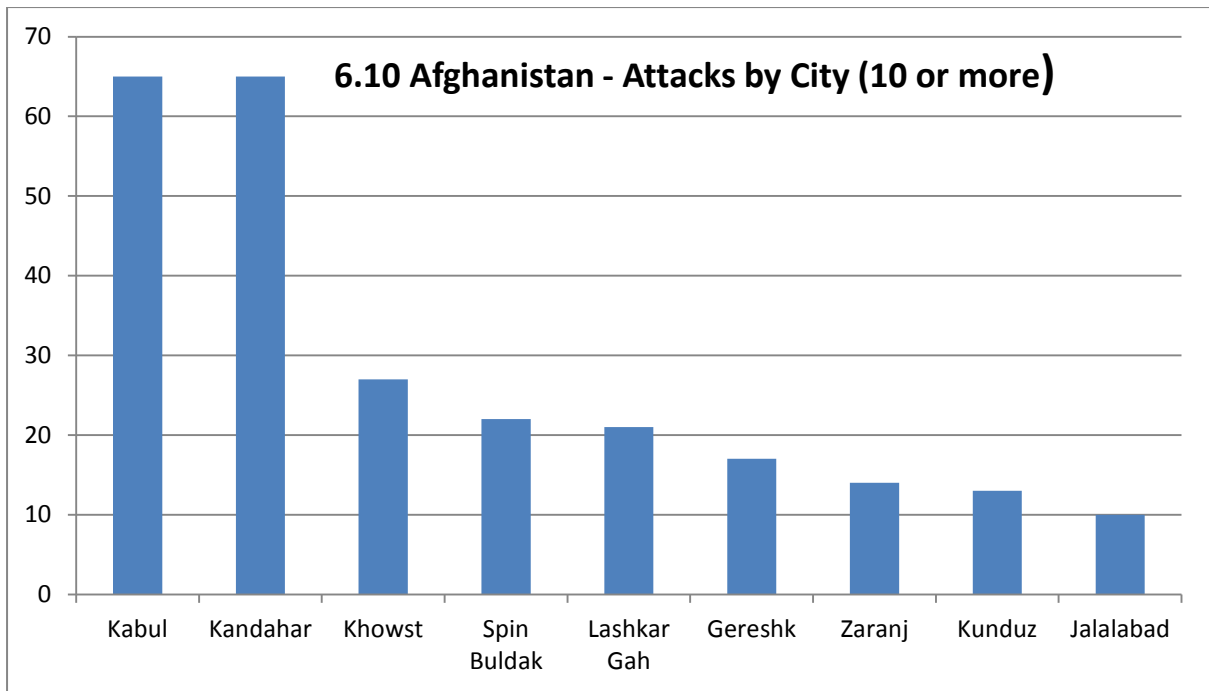


## Geography

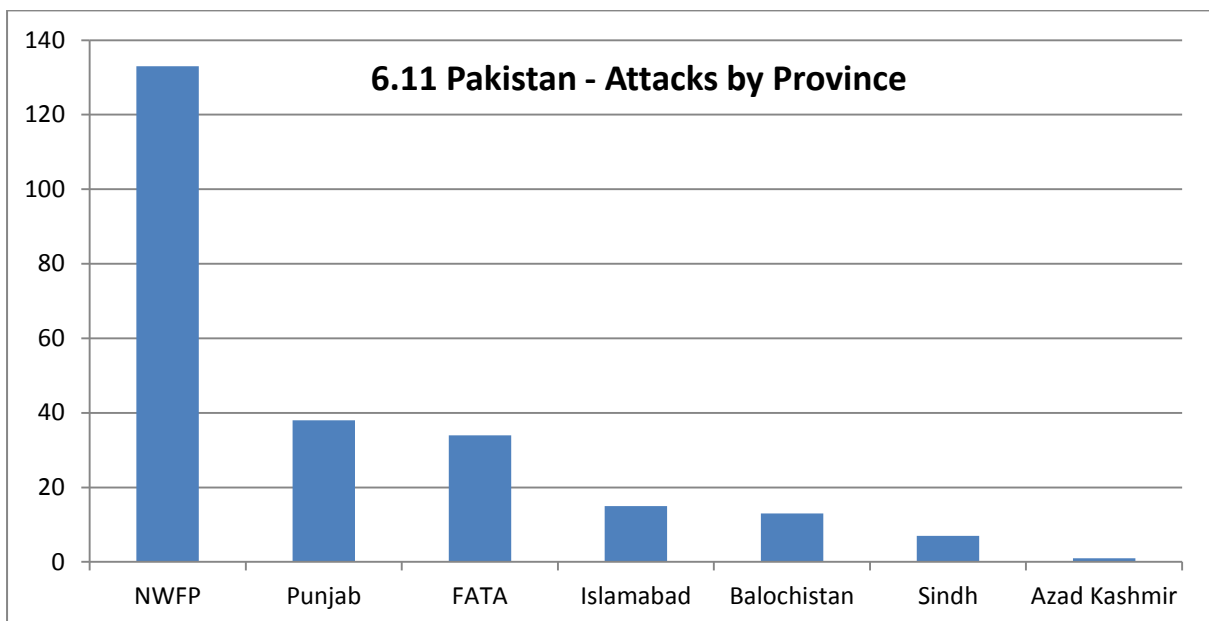
The final set of descriptive statistics we will consider is the geographical distribution of suicide attacks in AfPak. I begin by providing figures for attacks by province in Afghanistan. To aid comprehension I have then provided a breakdown of suicide attacks by region. These graphs show that suicide attacks in Afghanistan have been principally clustered in the Pashtun belt in South East of Afghanistan, the Taliban heartland and a region of primary importance in their campaign to retake Afghanistan, and in Kabul, which is also central to their goals.<sup>510</sup> Graph 6.10 considers attacks by city, where each city has experienced at least ten suicide attacks. Again, Kandahar and Kabul cities have borne the brunt of the suicide attack campaigns in Afghanistan, as has the Kandahari border town of Spin Boldak. Overall, attacks seem to fit very well within the Taliban and Haqqani Network's military campaigns. The North and West, where they have relatively little influence, have experienced few attacks.

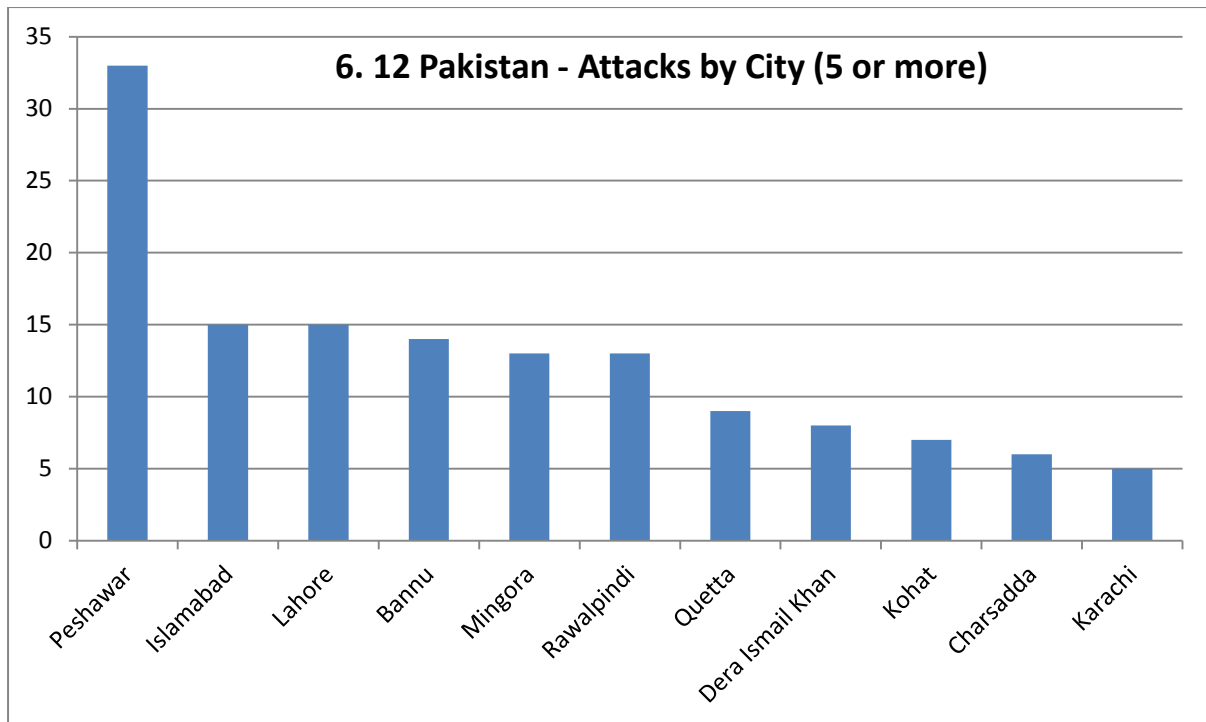
<sup>510</sup> Carl Forsberg, "The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar," *Afghanistan Report No. 3*. (Washington D.C.: Institute for the Study of War, December 2009), 6, accessed February 2, 2014, [http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The\\_Talibans\\_Campaign\\_For\\_Kandahar.pdf](http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/The_Talibans_Campaign_For_Kandahar.pdf).





In Pakistan, the data is quite similar in that suicide attacks are concentrated in the main areas of conflict, the North West Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In addition there have been a reasonable number of attacks in Punjab province and the capital territory of Islamabad. If we consider attacks by city where there have been at least five incidents, cities in the NWFP predominate, as well as the capital, Islamabad and the capital of Punjab, Lahore.





### Suicide Attacks in Comparative Perspective

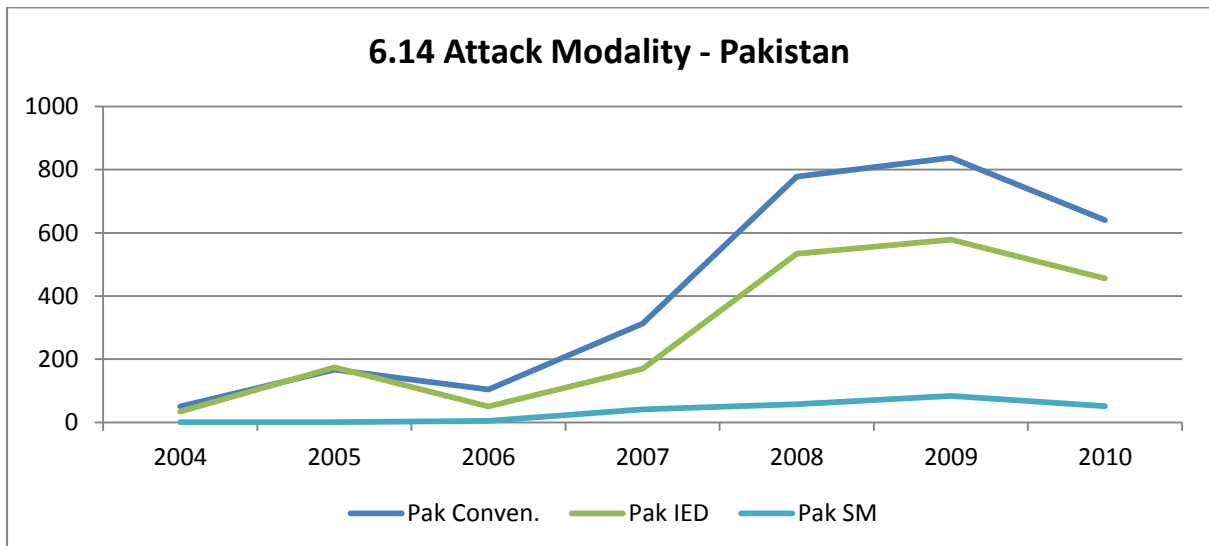
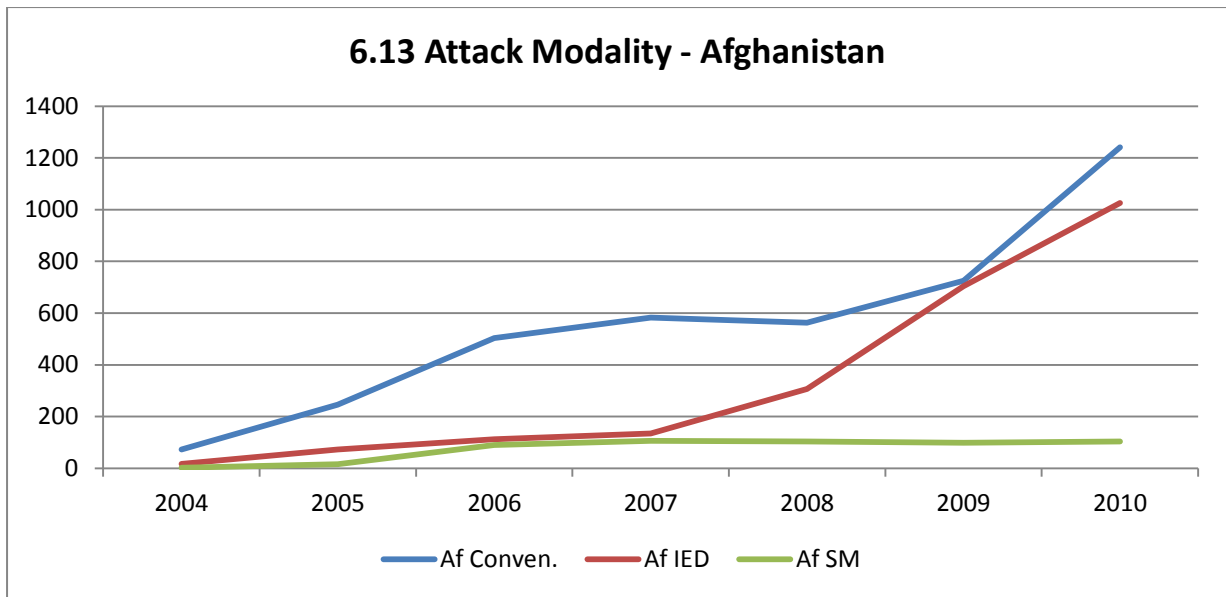
Both countries have experienced extremely high number of suicide attacks if we compare them to campaigns in other countries. Afghanistan in particular is second only to Iraq in the overall number of attacks it has experienced. However, suicide attacks are only part of the violence that is occurring in both countries.<sup>511</sup> In order to judge the role of suicide attacks in these conflicts, it is useful to compare them to other types of violence occurring in these countries.<sup>512</sup> Graphs 6.13 and 6.14 compare the numbers of suicide attacks, IEDs and ‘conventional attacks’, which are all non-suicide missions and non-IEDs in each country<sup>513</sup> These graphs show that although suicide attacks garner the most attention, over time they have become a minor part of these conflicts, at least in sheer numerical terms.<sup>514</sup>

<sup>511</sup> Mohammed Hafez similarly notes that in Iraq most attacks are non suicide attacks. Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, (Washington, D. C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007), 90.

<sup>512</sup> The main study that has done this previously was Piazza’s study of the predictors of suicide vs. non suicide terrorism; James A. Piazza, “A Supply-Side View of Suicide Terrorism: A Cross National Study,” *The Journal of Politics* 70, No. 1 (January, 2008): 28-39.

<sup>513</sup> It should be noted that IEDs are qualitatively different from suicide attacks and conventional attacks in that many, many more of them are planted than actually have any effect.

<sup>514</sup> Diego Gambetta argues that this is the typical pattern in regards to organizations that use suicide attacks. Diego Gambetta, “Can We Make Sense of Suicide Missions,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 260.



Of course the raw number of attacks does not completely capture the extent of different types of violence within the conflict. Table 1 shows the numbers killed and wounded by attack type for each country. These figures show several things. Firstly, Suicide Missions really *are* far more effective weapons than the others that are available to insurgents. In Afghanistan they cause approximately three times the number of casualties compared to other weapons, whereas in Pakistan the figure is closer to ten times the number of casualties. As this observation implies, the effects of suicide attacks are very different between the two countries. It is therefore possible that suicide attacks play a much larger role in the Pakistani conflict, despite their smaller absolute number than Afghanistan, because they are responsible for such a large proportion of casualties.



	<b>Table 1: Casualties by Attack Modality</b>		
	<b>Modality</b>		
<b>Afghanistan</b>	Conventional	IED	SM
Killed per attack	1.6	1.5	4.4
Wounded per attack	1.7	2.3	10.4
<b>Pakistan</b>	Conventional	IED	SM
Killed per attack	1.6	0.6	15.5
Wounded per attack	1.9	2.3	39.4

Given the fact that suicide attacks do so much damage, it is strange that there has not been an *increase* in the relative proportion of suicide attacks compared to other attack forms, assuming that doing the most damage possible to the enemy is a primary goal of the insurgents. Intuitively, there are two possible classes of explanations, demand side explanations and supply side explanations.

By demand side, I mean that there may be some reason that organisations *do not want* a greater proportion of suicide attacks than they are already deploying. It could be, for instance, that suicide attacks cause too much collateral damage and they are therefore used sparingly so they do not become counterproductive. In a similar vein, it may be that because suicide attacks are partly effective due to the media coverage that they garner, they are used sparingly so that their psychological effect does not become diluted.

Neither of these demand side explanations seems plausible. First, as I have argued in chapter five, the insurgents' overall strategy does not appear to be based upon avoiding civilian casualties. In fact a large proportion of suicide attacks are actually targeted at civilians. In Afghanistan, approximately 5-10 percent of attacks per year were intentionally targeted at civilians. This is even starker in Pakistan, with approximately 30 percent of attacks between 2006 and 2010 being targeted at civilians. In addition to the intentional targeting of civilians, suicide attacks have caused a great deal of damage through indiscriminate bombings. In Afghanistan, on average, 1.4 civilians are killed and 4.4 are wounded per attack where they were not targeted. In Pakistan, 3 civilians are killed and 9.3 wounded per attack. These figures add up: in Afghanistan 752 civilians have been killed and 2281 been wounded in the period 2004-2010 as collateral damage. During the same time period in Pakistan, 711 were killed and 2231 were wounded. These trends in suicide attacks are also consistent with the

broader trend that most of the civilian casualties in Afghanistan are caused by insurgents, despite their supposed greater concern with minimizing violence against civilians.<sup>515</sup> Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that whatever their public pronouncements, the insurgent groups in AfPak have not been particularly concerned with civilians accidentally killed by their attacks. It therefore seems unlikely that this factor is lowering their demand for suicide missions.

The other argument, that suicide attacks are ‘rationed’ to avoid them becoming routine and perhaps psychologically ineffective is also implausible. Evidence for this is the fact that suicide attacks have been used in ways that are not solely based upon their being spectacular. In particular, the large number of attacks the insurgents have conducted against extremely ‘rural’ and politically insignificant targets (from the point of view of high level policy) indicates that militants are not saving suicide attacks for big set piece spectacles. In Afghanistan for instance, 331 out of 519 attacks have been outside the main political centres of Kabul and Kandahar. In Pakistan, 133 out of 241 suicide attacks have occurred in the NWFP which has been the heart of the conflict, but only 33 or just fewer than 25 percent of attacks have occurred in the provincial capital of Peshawar. Therefore the rationing argument does not seem credible.

On the supply side, there are also a number of possible conjectures. One possibility is that the relative cost of different attack options has changed over time. In fact this seems quite plausible. Consider for instance the fact that as the insurgents gain ground, the effective cost of recruitment of regular fighters is likely to be lowered. There are two plausible reasons for this. Stathis Kalyvas has demonstrated that support for insurgents is often endogenous to the conduct of civil wars. As insurgents gain ground, they have a larger pool of potential recruits to draw from.<sup>516</sup> One could imagine, for instance, that relatively ‘neutral’ locals may relish the chance to avenge a family member killed in a NATO bombing. Secondly, as the insurgency grows, it will presumably have more to offer in the way of selective incentives to offer those who might be tempted to participate for this reason.

The first explanation appears more plausible for Afghanistan, whereas the second appears more likely for Pakistan. In Afghanistan, the success of the Taliban, despite their apparent

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<sup>515</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, “Taliban Cause Most Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan, U.N. Says,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2011, accessed September 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/world/asia/10afghanistan.html>.

<sup>516</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 124-132.

unpopularity, may have convinced a number of individuals that they are the ‘winning team’ and this may have lowered the effective cost of recruitment. In Pakistan, given the fact that the TTP has increasingly become intertwined with criminal networks, there will correspondingly be an ability to provide strong incentives to participation.<sup>517</sup> In fact, this mechanism is also likely to operate in Afghanistan, where the Taliban appear to have become increasingly ‘criminalized’ along with most other actors in the Afghan political economy.<sup>518</sup>

However, the most plausible explanation of the relative decline of the number of suicide attacks has to do with the labour economics of martyrdom discussed in chapter three. Specifically, there is a low level of willing martyrs in Afghanistan and Pakistan compared to the level of organisational demand. As a consequence, while the organisations may wish to use more attacks, they are simply unable to, because they cannot find enough individuals willing to sacrifice themselves. The great advantage of this explanation stems from its ability to tie together a variety of disparate facts: suicide attacks are a declining share of all attacks, yet account for a disproportionate amount of casualties; suicide attackers in AfPak are often young and coerced; rebel organisations, while quite effective as insurgents, are largely unloved by local populations.

### **Suicide Attacks as Signals**

In the analysis of the functional role of suicide attacks, one view has predominated, namely that suicide attacks are ‘costly signals’ used to communicate unobservable qualities such as capability and resolve to one’s enemies.<sup>519</sup> Even literature on suicide attacks that does not specifically frame the discussion in terms of the concept of signalling is often readily interpreted in these terms. Within the study of suicide attacks, little attention has been directed at the underlying theory however. Consideration of the finer details of signalling theory suggests an amendment to the way we think about suicide attacks as signals.

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<sup>517</sup> Gretchen Peters, “Crime and Insurgency in the Tribal Areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Harmony Project*, (West Point, New York: Combating Terrorism Centre, October, 2010), accessed January 26, 2014; Arabinda Acharyaa et al., “Making Money in the Mayhem: Funding Taliban Insurrection in the Tribal Areas of Pakistan,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32 No. 2 (2009): 95-108.

<sup>518</sup> International Crisis Group, “The Insurgency in Afghanistan’s Heartland,” *Asia Report No 207*, (Kabul: International Crisis Group, June 2011), 22-25, accessed January 22, 2014. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/207%20The%20Insurgency%20in%20Afghanistans%20Heartland.pdf>.

<sup>519</sup> Most obviously this includes the work of Pape, but also the work of Bruce Hoffman and Gordon McCormick: Bruce Hoffman, and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling and Suicide Attack”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (2004): 243-281. Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter provide an overall frame work interpreting terrorist attacks as costly signals: Andrew H. Kydd and Barbara F. Walter, “The Strategies of Terrorism,” *International Security* 31, No. 1 (August 2006): 49-80.

## Are Suicide Attacks ‘Costly’ Signals?

The clearest exposition of the theory that suicide attacks are signals comes from Robert Pape. Firstly, Pape argues that suicide attacks form a coercive strategy:

At its core, suicide terrorism is a strategy of coercion, a means to compel a target government to change policy. The central logic of this strategy is simple: suicide terrorism attempts to inflict enough pain on the opposing society to overwhelm its interest in resisting the terrorists’ demands, and so to induce the government to concede, or the population to revolt against the government.<sup>520</sup>

Secondly, they are costly signals:

...suicide attacks are an especially convincing way to signal the likelihood of more pain to come, because suicide itself is a costly signal, one that suggests that the attackers could not have been deterred by a threat of costly retaliation.<sup>521</sup>

Suicide attacks, despite the disproportionate damage they cause, are only part of the overall pattern of violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, so it seems odd to describe them as a strategy by themselves. The most sensible interpretation is that they are *part of* a strategy of punishment. Despite this inflation of a tactic to the status of a strategy, Pape’s conjecture is a sound starting point. What is problematic, I argue, is his assertion that suicide attacks are *costly* signals in the technical sense.

In order to understand what is wrong with this argument, it is necessary to understand the theory in somewhat more detail. Signalling theory was originally developed in both economics and evolutionary biology as a way of understanding how agents may be able to reliably communicate with each other in situations of asymmetric information.<sup>522</sup> That is, one agent has private information which is not directly observable by the other agent. It might be thought that the agent with private information can simply tell the other agent whatever this is. However, if the interests of the two agents are not identical, this may give the agent with private information the incentive to misrepresent the information; the other agent, knowing

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<sup>520</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 27-28.

<sup>521</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 28.

<sup>522</sup> For an account of signalling from the point of view of economics, see: Avinash Dixit and Susan Skeath, *Games of Strategy 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 272-294. For the perspective of evolutionary biology, see William A. Searcy and Stephen Nowiki, *The Evolution of Animal Communication: Reliability and Deception in Signaling Systems*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1-23.

this, then has incentive to ignore whatever the other agent tries to convey. It may then be impossible for the two to communicate effectively.

One explanation of how this problem can be overcome is that an agent may take some action which would be too costly to fake, that is, send a ‘costly signal’ such that the costliness of the signal underwrites its veracity. Simple and ubiquitous examples are provided in human society by so called ‘conspicuous consumption’. Wealth is not directly observable, so people reliably signal their wealth by purchasing useless but expensive baubles which would be too costly for the less wealthy to afford.<sup>523</sup> Particularly vivid examples can also be found among non-human animals where striking secondary sexual characteristics among males, such as vivid plumage, is thought to signal the bearers’ genetic quality through its qualities of colour, symmetry or other metabolically costly traits.

The costly signalling argument seems to fit intuitively with suicide attacks since the ‘cost’ that is underwriting the signal is the sacrifice of the individual’s life. However, as Diego Gambetta argues, it is possible that the martyrdom is not itself intended to be communicative.<sup>524</sup> Rather it may just be a cost that is paid to deliver a payload. This idea can be made a little clearer by noting that in the biological literature on signalling, costs are partitioned into ‘efficacy costs’ and ‘strategic costs’.<sup>525</sup> Efficacy costs are those necessary to deliver the message, whereas strategic costs are extra costs paid to underwrite the validity of the message. Therefore the question becomes whether the bomber is just an efficacy cost that allows the bomb to be delivered precisely, or whether the individual’s death actually adds to the communicative value of the signal.

With regards to suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan I argue that suicide attacks are typically *not* costly in the sense of the individual’s death underwriting the reliability of the signal. There are two reasons for this. The first is that suicide attackers are more likely to be perceived as costly signals to the extent that they are individuals with a lot to lose by killing themselves.<sup>526</sup> For instance, an individual with terminal cancer is likely to make a less convincing martyr than a healthy person in the prime of his life. In the formal language of the

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<sup>523</sup> Sundie, J. M., Kenrick, D. T., Griskevicius, V., Tybur, J. M., Tybur, J. M., Vohs, K., Beal, D. J., “Peacocks, Porches and Thorstein Veblen: Conspicuous Consumption as Sexual Signalling System,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 100, No. 4, 2010, pp. 664-665.

<sup>524</sup> Diego Gambetta, “Can We Make Sense of Suicide Missions,” in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, ed. Diego Gambetta, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 266-267

<sup>525</sup> William A. Searcy and Stephen Nowiki, *The Evolution of Animal Communication: Reliability and Deception in Signaling Systems*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 16,

<sup>526</sup> In economic terms, the higher the opportunity cost of killing oneself, the more powerful the signal.

theory, the sacrifice of a terminal cancer patient does not represent much of a strategic cost, whereas the latter does. As we have seen in chapter three, many, suicide bombers in AfPak appear to be young, ignorant and not participating on their own volition. Their sacrifice therefore does not seem plausible as a strategic cost. Their martyrdom is symbolically far less convincing than the relatively numerous highly educated individuals who have freely chosen to carry out suicide attacks in Palestine for instance. There are, it is true, a non-negligible number of individuals in AfPak who probably do represent ‘strategic costs’; they seem to be in the minority however.

The second reason is that the cost that underwrites the potentially strategic component of the attack is *not borne by the organisation itself* most of the time. This is because the bombers do not come from within the organisation; they are usually brought in from the outside.<sup>527</sup> Therefore the cost is actually borne by the individual themselves and their family. This can be contrasted with a classic example from the animal world where male barn swallows grow tails which are actually too long to be aerodynamically optimal; they effectively ‘handicap’ themselves to reliably signal their vigour.<sup>528</sup> But a rebel organisation carrying out suicide missions is not typically handicapped at all by the use of suicide attacks; on the contrary their fighting power is *enhanced*.<sup>529</sup>

Therefore, in order for suicide attacks to be perceived as *costly* signals, there also has to be a close identification between the rebel organisation and the community it claims to represent so that the attacks appear to be costly *for the community*. That is, the organisation and its martyrs need to be perceived as part of the ‘social organism’ that is sacrificing itself for the good of the community. As we saw in chapter five, in Pape’s theory individuals volunteer to become suicide bombers through the mechanism of Durkheimian altruistic suicide. While in that chapter I treated that argument with skepticism, in order for the signal to be perceived as costly in the strategic sense, something like the Durkheimian picture has to be perceived.

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<sup>527</sup> Again, this is not *always* the case. The higher quality bombers in Pakistan for instance, may be recruited from within the Punjabi Taliban network, rather than being procured just for that single task. According Pedahzur, it is actually more typical for either individuals brought in for the purpose, or ‘marginal’ individuals who are not particularly skilled to be used as suicide attacks. The main exceptions he argues, being the LTTE, Al-Qaeda and the Islamist Palestinian organizations ( Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad). Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 126.

<sup>528</sup> William A. Searcy and Stephen Nowiki, *The Evolution of Animal Communication: Reliability and Deception in Signaling Systems*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 123-131.

<sup>529</sup> One possible exception to this is that suicide attacks may be ‘morally costly’. That is, the sacrifice of life in order to obtain a benefit may be questionable. While this is plausible, it seems unlikely that this ‘cost’ has much effect from the point of view of the government that the rebels are opposing since the suicide attacks themselves typically cross moral boundaries already by victimising large numbers of civilians.

That is, suicide bombers have to be seen to be something akin to honey bees killing themselves to defend the hive.

For these reasons, I argue that suicide bombers in AfPak are primarily not ‘strategic costs’ but rather ‘efficacy costs’. In such cases it is intuitive that suicide bombers are more likely to be seen as cannon fodder than as martyrs, that is, ‘human bombs’ who are just another piece of materiel on the battlefield, with little special significance other than their ability to wreak great harm in places where other weapons will not work.<sup>530</sup> One piece of evidence for this is a survey of rural Pakistanis showing that most thought that suicide bombers were mentally disturbed.<sup>531</sup>

This argument may seem somewhat pedantic, but it is important for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that suicide attacks are not all alike; they are of a qualitatively different character in different times and places. Secondly it gives us an abstract way of characterising one of these differences. When strategic costs, in the signalling theory sense, are evident, suicide attacks take on the character of martyrdom. When they are absent, a suicide attacker is an efficient weapon, cheap and deadly effective. These distinctions seem to be related to broader differences in the nature of the organisations using them and the conflicts these organisations are involved in. The ability to generate strategic costs essentially means getting committed, highly valued members of a community to sacrifice themselves for a cause, and it also means getting that community to support your cause.

While suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan may not be *costly* signals in the technical sense they are still signals in the broader sense that they convey information about the capabilities and intentions of the insurgents. They communicate, both to their opponents as well as the local population, the ongoing potential costs of continuing to resist the insurgents’ demands and the insurgents’ resolve in carrying on the conflict. As Pape argues, it is the *future* costs of different courses of behaviour which are relevant, and suicide attacks, like any violence in conflict, primarily serve to demonstrate the consequences of various courses of

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<sup>530</sup> The UNAMA report on suicide attacks in Afghanistan suggests that this may be one of the reasons for a lack of ‘martyrdom videos’. That is, bombers lack the zeal and overall ‘presentability’ that martyrs in other campaigns have and therefore they are not put in front of a camera. UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), 113, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>.

<sup>531</sup> Shamsul Islam, “Most Rural Pakistanis think Suicide Bombers are Abnormal,” *Express Tribune*, May 30, 2011, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/178577/opinion-survey-most-rural-pakistanis-think-suicide-bombers-are-abnormal>.

action. That is, they are a means of attempting to compel some sets of behaviour and deter others. Given this general framework, we can also look more specifically at the finer grained goals that suicide attacks may serve in a conflict, and it is to this task that we now turn.

### **Evidence on Signalling**

The best and indeed almost the only attempt to derive empirical consequences from signalling arguments is Nick Ayers' 2008 paper which assessed signalling arguments with data on suicide attacks in Iraq.<sup>532</sup> Ayers assessed a number of arguments about how suicide attacks could be used to communicate with various audiences and provided quantitative evidence which could be used to distinguish between these arguments. Drawing upon the work of other authors, he argued that suicide attacks could be used to signal in three main ways. First, in line with Pape's argument, suicide attacks could be used by rebels to coerce the government into withdrawing from territory or otherwise conceding to their demands. Second, following Mia Bloom's 'outbidding' argument, suicide attacks could be used to gain support *within* the constituency the organisation was trying to represent by signalling capability and commitment to the community.<sup>533</sup> Third, suicide attacks could be used for recruiting purposes to draw more individuals to the cause.<sup>534</sup>

Ayers contrasted these signalling arguments with the hard targets hypothesis I discussed in chapter five. He ultimately argued that the evidence weighed against the signalling hypotheses, except, to an extent, the recruitment argument, and weighed in favour of the hard targets theory. As I argued in chapter three, however, the hard targets theory is not well supported in AfPak. I will also show in this section that Ayers' negative results about signalling in Iraq are not confirmed when replicated with a superior data set. More importantly I will demonstrate that the signalling hypothesis that suicide attacks are used to coerce the government opposing the insurgents is supported by the data from AfPak. A variation of hypothesis three, that suicide attacks are used to obtain resources, also has some

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<sup>532</sup> Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 856-878.

<sup>533</sup> Bloom, M. M., "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119 No. 1 2004, Bloom, M. M., *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 94-97, Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 859-860.

<sup>534</sup> Unlike the other two hypotheses, the third is not specifically tied to a specific author the way the other two have been. Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 860-61.



evidence in its favour. Bloom's outbidding argument, however, does not appear relevant to AfPak.

Ayers suggests a number of means of testing signalling hypotheses. Firstly, he argues that if rebel groups are using suicide attacks as signals they should *claim* their attacks so that the potential audience knows from whom the violence is originating. Whether they are demanding concessions from the government or attempting to garner recruits, the act has to be associated with the actor. Secondly Ayers argues signalling theories imply that suicide attacks should generally be 'spectacular'; they should cause a lot of fatalities and be highly visible so as to exert the maximum coercive pressure on the enemy, or otherwise present an impressive picture of the organisations' capabilities.<sup>535</sup> I begin my empirical analysis by examining the data from AfPak on the level of claims and the number of fatalities caused by attacks, and then turn to considerations that allow us to distinguish between more specific hypotheses about the uses of suicide attacks

### **Claims**

To determine the frequency with which suicide attacks are claimed, we need some standard of comparison. Ayers notes that because of the damaged media infrastructures of Iraq, the possibly rudimentary nature of insurgent technology and the need to maintain security, it may not be always possible to claim them.<sup>536</sup> Therefore he suggests that suicide attacks should be compared with non-suicide attacks in terms of the rate at which they are claimed. The results that Ayers gets from such a comparison are striking. He finds that suicide attacks are claimed only 7 percent of the time, and that non-suicide attacks are claimed 49 percent of the time, a seven-fold difference.<sup>537</sup> This suggests that, far from wanting to be associated with such attacks, Iraqi insurgents mainly disown them. The more frequently claimed non-suicide attacks are plausibly interpreted as signals that convey information about rebel groups.

While this seems like a clear refutation of the signalling perspective, matters appear quite different when we unpick exactly how Ayers got these figures. Ayers' results come from

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<sup>535</sup> Ayers' hypotheses are summarized at: Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 863. Ayers also adds the assertion that attacks aiming to coerce the government should be against soft targets, but does not justify it. I ignore this issue in the present section, and consider it in detail below.

<sup>536</sup> Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 868.

<sup>537</sup> Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 869.

selecting the time period 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006 to 1 February 2007 (8 months) and using materials from the US federal government Opensource.gov website which produce the figures cited above, 7 percent and 49 percent. While the result is strong, it is a very small slice of the overall conflict.<sup>538</sup>

The results I obtained from the WITS data for the proportions of claimed and unclaimed attacks show a very different result. For the period of 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2004 until 31<sup>st</sup> June 2011 (90 months), the WITS data showed that 21.44 percent of suicide attacks were claimed in Iraq, compared to 4.36 percent of non-suicide attacks. This means that *a suicide attack was nearly five times more likely to be claimed than a non-suicide attack*. Therefore, the first conclusion that we can draw is that even in Ayers' own case of Iraq, a wider band of data does not support his claims. It seems far more reasonable to give credence to 90 months of data compared to 8 months.

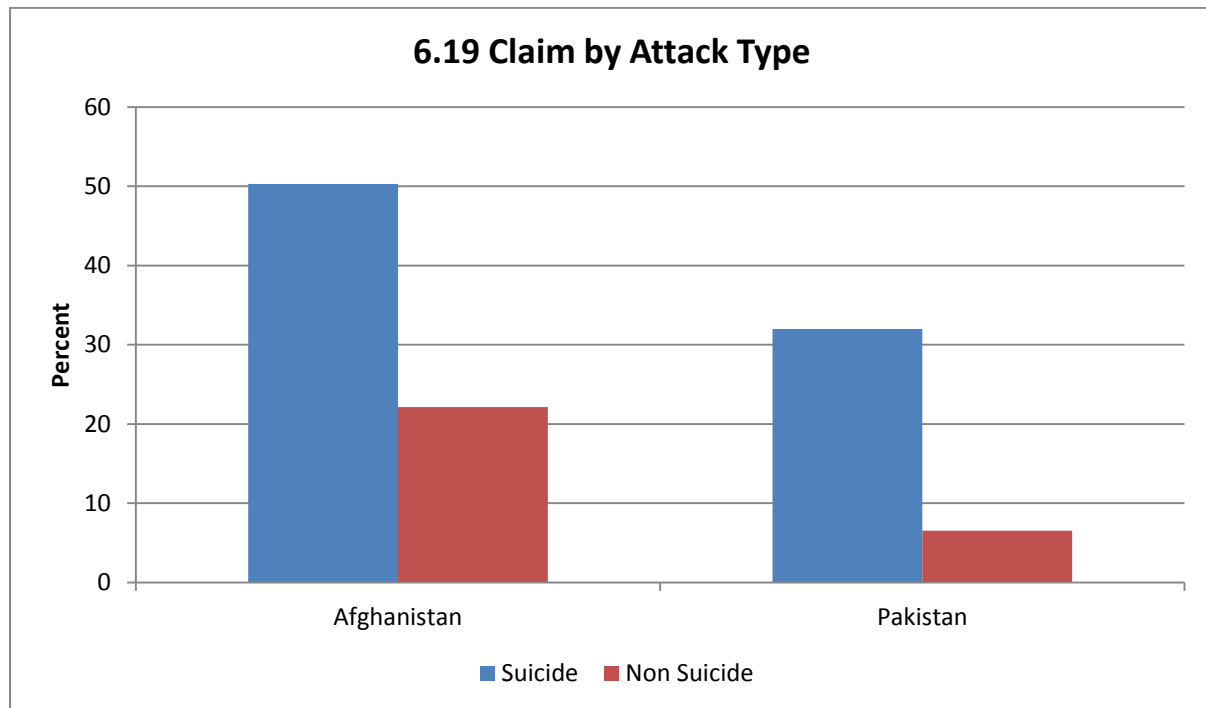
The results I obtained for Afghanistan and Pakistan also support the signalling perspective and undermine Ayers' argument against it. In both countries, suicide attacks are claimed far more often than non-suicide attacks. In Afghanistan, suicide attacks are claimed 50.3 percent of the time, while non-suicide attacks are claimed only 22.13 percent of the time. In Pakistan, suicide attacks are claimed 32 percent of the time, which does not seem like a particularly strong result, until we look at the claim rate for non-suicide attacks, which is only 6.54 percent. Therefore, if the ratio of claimed to unclaimed attacks is evidence for insurgents attempting to use suicide attacks as signals of capability, in both my cases, the facts seem to strongly support the signalling explanation. Graph 6.19 displays these figures below. We can also formalise this analysis by conducting a chi-square test of independence. The results are reported in table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Chi Square – Attack Modality versus Claim**

	$\chi^2$	df	Significance
Afghanistan	225.313	1	.001
Pakistan	417.135	1	.001

<sup>538</sup> Unfortunately this material is only open to US government employees.

Unsurprisingly, given the percentages we have observed, in both countries the interaction between attack type and claim was highly statistically significant. These figures indicate that we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between whether or not an attack was claimed and whether or not it was a suicide attack, strongly supporting my argument.



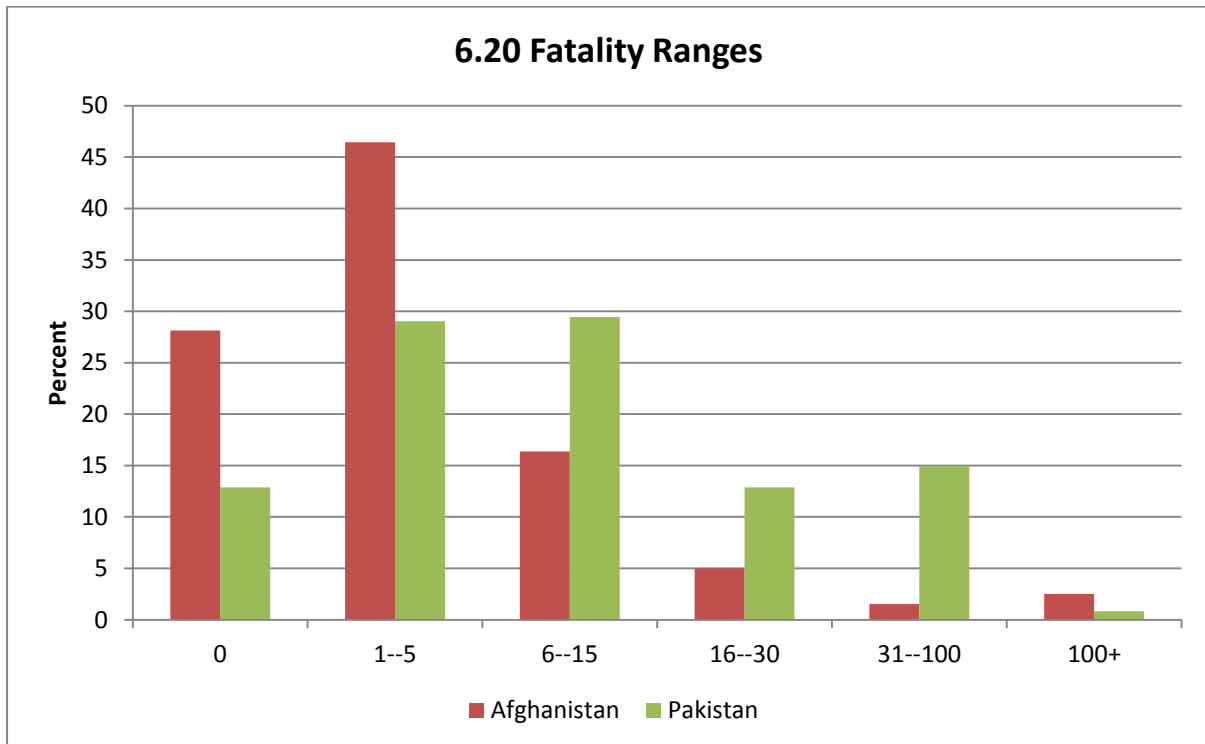
These results also mesh nicely with results I discussed in chapter three with regards to the ‘noticeability’ of suicide attacks. Suicide attacks are both claimed more often and also reported on more often, even when we take into consideration the greater damage they do. Therefore, the broad signalling perspective that rebels are trying to use these weapons to change the perceptions of various audiences is strongly supported by the evidence.

### **Casualties**

Ayers also argues that if the signalling argument is to make sense organisations should carry out suicide attacks which are spectacular and which inflict large numbers of fatalities in order to put maximum coercive leverage on the enemy.<sup>539</sup> While he acknowledges that suicide attacks on average kill more people than conventional attacks, he claims they mostly do not

<sup>539</sup> Nick Ayers, “Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 871-872. In addition to the empirical problems I have with Ayers’ argument, there is also a conceptual problem. This is the fact that it seems to confuse intentions with outcomes. The fact that insurgents are not able to always inflict huge numbers of casualties does not necessarily imply that they do not wish to do so; outcomes are the product of desires, and opportunities

cause the huge numbers of fatalities he regards as necessary for the signalling argument to be supported. From data on Iraq, he finds that from March 2003 to February 2007, 83 percent of attacks killed fifteen or fewer persons and asserts that this is far too few to be explained by the signalling argument.



Graph 6.20 shows suicide attacks from Afghanistan and Pakistan by fatality range, using the same categorizations as Ayers. As would be expected from the mean number of killed per attack in each country, the patterns of fatalities are quite different for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with Pakistan monopolizing most of the high fatality attacks, except the 100+ range. Both results are broadly consistent with Ayers' observations in Iraq: 90.9 percent of attacks in Afghanistan killed fifteen or fewer people and in Pakistan 71.4 percent of attacks killed fifteen or fewer people.

Before accepting Ayers' analysis, however, a number of counter arguments can be raised. First, as he notes in the case of Iraq, suicide attacks cause far more casualties than non-suicide attacks. Moreover, the thresholds he sets for 'spectacular' attacks are entirely arbitrary. Insurgent events do not have to cause scores of fatalities to have impacts upon decision makers. From the point of view of the Afghan insurgents for instance, killing and wounding relatively small numbers of NATO troops may be seen as an effective means of

hastening NATO withdrawal and consequently the collapse of the Karzai regime.<sup>540</sup> They may well believe that US and NATO publics feel they have little at stake in the campaign and have little tolerance for the death of their troops. Similarly, the Pakistani Taliban, whose attacks have tended to cause far more casualties on average, may still reasonably conclude that their attacks are having a punishing effect upon their enemies, even if some do not cause high levels of carnage.

In addition to these considerations, even relatively modest levels of casualties may be consistent with suicide attacks being powerful coercive tools. As noted in chapter five, they can be extremely effective tools of assassination. Clearly even attacks with a single victim, as in the assassination of Ahmed Shah Massoud, can therefore have large strategic consequences.

### **Which Audience?**

The evidence so far canvassed supports the signalling perspective. But there are multiple signalling hypotheses. Suicide attacks could be used to coerce the government the rebels are opposing, to outbid other organisations, or to secure new recruits. Given the plausibility of signalling strategies, which of these more specific arguments makes the most sense in AfPak? As we saw from the descriptive statistics at the start of this chapter, suicide attacks have been used against a variety of targets, and the mix of these targets differed with time and country. Therefore, it is safe to infer that suicide attacks are used in AfPak for a number of different purposes and that a single explanation is unlikely to account for all attacks.

Nonetheless, the argument that suicide attacks are used to coerce the opposing government seems to have a number of pieces of evidence in its favour. First, in addition to suicide attacks in general being claimed more often than non-suicide attacks, it is also the case that suicide attacks in major cities are claimed far more often. In Kabul for instance, 67.7 percent of suicide attacks are claimed. In Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province, 71.4 percent of attacks are claimed. In Pakistan, attacks in Peshawar, the capital of the NWFP and one of the main centres of conflict, 33.3 percent of suicide attacks are claimed, which is admittedly only slightly more than the average. In Lahore, 40 percent of suicide attacks are claimed, which is highly consistent with the argument and this same figure holds for Karachi. In both countries there are some surprisingly low claims figures however. For instance, in Kandahar and Khost,

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<sup>540</sup> Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 445; Giles Dorransoro, "The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan," (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 7, accessed January 22, 2014, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban\\_winning\\_strategy.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf).

both major sites of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, claims rates are slightly lower than the national average, being 46.2 percent and 44.4 percent respectively. In Pakistan, the main statistic which does not conform to expectations is that only 20 percent of attacks in Islamabad are claimed; in addition to being the capital, it has also experienced the second largest number of suicide attacks, behind Peshawar.

Bloom's variation of the signalling argument, that suicide attacks are used in inter-organisational competition between groups, seems empirically irrelevant to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Groups using suicide attacks in AfPak, as has been demonstrated in chapters one and two, are those cooperating with each other against common enemies. In fact, the use of suicide attacks seems to support a logic of 'bandwagoning' rather than outbidding.<sup>541</sup> This is not to suggest that there are no conflicts between militant groups or within them; both are most certainly true. In fact, the adoption of suicide attacks has been a symptom of the splits within the mainland Pakistani Jihadi groups, which have led to some of their factions finding common cause with the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>542</sup> Nonetheless, it seems highly difficult to reconcile the organisations' use of suicide attacks as attempts to outbid each other because adoption of the tactic has been associated with mutual support, not competition.<sup>543</sup>

The other alternative Ayers considers is the argument that suicide attacks are used as recruitment tools. He argues that in addition to attacks being claimed and being 'spectacular', this hypothesis implies that the iconography and biographies of martyrs should be distributed widely in order to provide role models for future martyrs and fighters.<sup>544</sup> This has occurred widely in Palestine and Sri Lanka and Ayers argues that it is also plausible for Iraq, where organisations were seeking to recruit from abroad.<sup>545</sup> Generally, the consensus amongst

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<sup>541</sup> In International Relations theory, states are termed to be 'bandwagoning' when they ally themselves with a strong or rising state, rather than 'balancing' by joining a coalition against the rising or strong state. Although, the analogy is not exact, the similarities are nonetheless clear. On Bandwagoning, see: Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Brining the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994): 72-72.

<sup>542</sup> Ben Brandt, "The Punjabi Taliban: Causes and Consequences of Turning Against the State," *CTC Sentinel* 3, No. 7 (July 2010): 8, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/CTCSentinel-Vol3Iss7-art3.pdf>.

<sup>543</sup> In the case of the Afghan insurgents, Dorronsoro has argued that the idea that commanders could easily be split off from the main leadership was wishful thinking: Giles Dorronsoro, "The Taliban's Winning Strategy in Afghanistan," (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), 10, accessed January 22, 2014, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban\\_winning\\_strategy.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/taliban_winning_strategy.pdf).

<sup>544</sup> Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 860-861.

<sup>545</sup> Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg provide extensive documentation of the cultural representations of suicide bombers in Palestine: Anne Marie Oliver, and Paul Steinberg, *Road to Martyrs' Square: A Journey into the World of the Suicide Bomber*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); In Sri Lanka, graves of past 'Black Tigers' (suicide commandos) often became shrines: Michael Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs':

analysts is that these features are relatively absent from the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While videos of suicide attacks have occurred, including footage of bombers preparing for a mission, there has simply not been the same creation of a cult of the martyr as has occurred in some campaigns.<sup>546</sup>

Given that the available videos all seem to emphasise the attack itself, rather than the specific identity of the bombers, and since these videos are typically distributed on the internet, there is another audience for this imagery: foreign donors, particularly from the wealthy Gulf states. Considerable funding continues to flow to Afghan and Pakistani militants from wealthy Gulf donors, so it may be that the militants wish to demonstrate their continuing viability to this important audience. This is true for potential or actual domestic supporters as well; clandestine organisations must be seen to be acting to remain relevant, and suicide attacks provide a very clear message of the group's continued viability.<sup>547</sup>

So far then we can conclude that there is strong evidence that insurgents are using suicide attacks in an attempt to coerce the incumbent government forces arrayed against them (in the case of Afghanistan, this includes US and other NATO forces supporting the government). It also seems plausible that suicide attacks are used to gain support from donors and others who provide support. However, at least one question remains. What about the attacks that are *not* claimed? Even though suicide attacks are claimed far more often than other attacks, and are therefore clearly seemed to be aimed at influencing perceptions about their capabilities, there are still around 50 percent of attacks in Afghanistan and roughly 65 percent in Pakistan that are not claimed.

A closer look at the data at least partially explains this finding. To begin with, note that suicide attacks are quite often failures and that nobody likes to draw attention to their failures. Therefore suicide attacks producing no or few casualties are unlikely to be claimed. The data bear this out. In Afghanistan for instance, 47 suicide attacks in my data (~27 percent) caused no casualties, unsurprisingly only five of these attacks were claimed. In Pakistan, 11 attacks

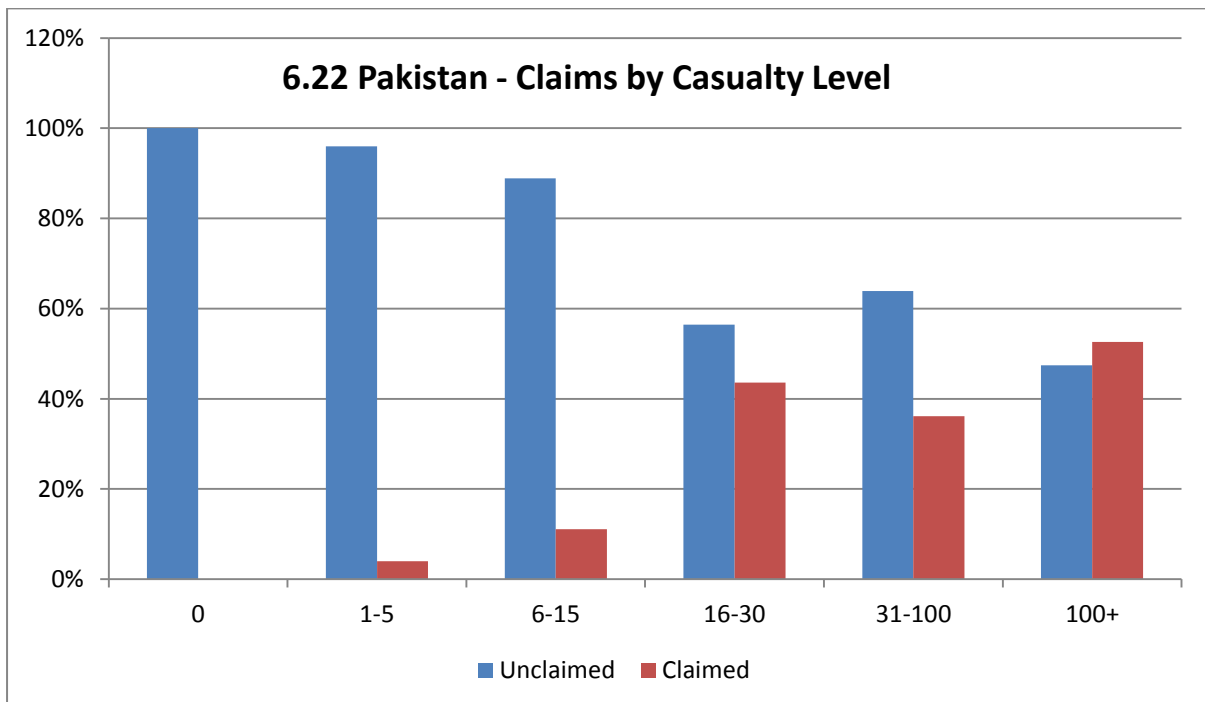
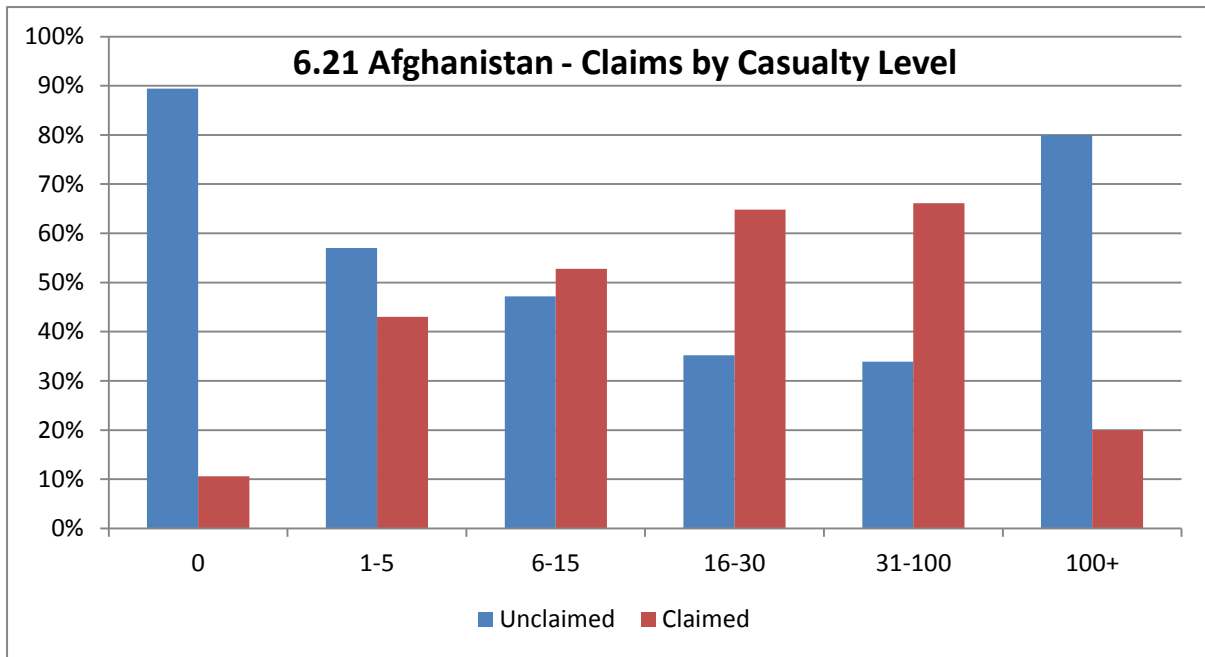
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Regenerating Divine Potency?," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, No. 6 (2005): 504-505; Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 9 (September 2008): 870.

<sup>546</sup> For instance, see: Bill Ardolino and Bill Roggio, "Taliban release video of Haqqani Network suicide assault on FOB Salerno" *Long War Journal*, July 23, 2012, accessed October 5, 2012; [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/taliban\\_release\\_vid\\_2.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/taliban_release_vid_2.php), AFP News Agency, "Taliban Release New Video of Suicide Bombers" (Video), accessed October 5, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bel7Trt49hE>.

<sup>547</sup> On the need to act: Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Reviews of Political Science* 6, (June 2003): 496.

(~13 percent) caused no casualties and none of these was claimed. Again, this shows strongly that insurgents are trying to shape the public perception of their capabilities. Graphs 6.21 and 6.22 display claim rates by the number of casualties caused. This is similar to the results reported above, but I have included both killed and wounded since both presumably have an effect upon the ‘impact’ of the attack. Both show clearly that not only do insurgents avoid reporting failed attacks, but larger attacks are preferentially reported.





The one aspect of the data that does not quite seem to fit this pattern is the fact that extremely large attacks with over one hundred casualties are actually *less likely to be claimed* in Afghanistan. There were in fact only five such attacks, which allows us to look a bit more closely at them and see what this anomaly might indicate. The first of these attacks was targeted at politicians visiting a sugar factory in Baghlan.<sup>548</sup> Seventy civilians were killed and 96 were wounded. The second appeared to target a local police chief who opposed the Taliban in Kandahar who was visiting a dog fight; 96 civilians were killed and 24 were injured.<sup>549</sup> The third was the widely reported attack against the Indian Embassy in Kabul resulting in a huge number of civilian casualties.<sup>550</sup> The fourth and final unclaimed attack was a particularly brutal one, a bomber no older than 13 detonating his bomb at a wedding in rural Kandahar.<sup>551</sup> What this set of attacks indicates is that the insurgents do at times wish to disassociate themselves with egregious, attention grabbing violence against civilians, despite their apparent lack of concern over civilian casualties overall. In addition, the attack against the Indian embassy, widely thought to have been carried out by the Haqqani Network with assistance by the ISI, was presumably not claimed simply because of the political ramifications of doing so. The message nonetheless, was clear. Therefore while we cannot fully explain why all suicide attacks are not claimed, it is clear that insurgents in AfPak attempt to signal their capabilities by associating themselves with the most powerful and destructive attacks.

The claim that insurgents will be more likely to claim an attack the more casualties it causes can be formally assessed through the use of logistic regression, which models the relationship between binary dependent variables and continuous independent variables. In this case, it is a test of whether or not an attack is claimed and the number of casualties caused by an attack, respectively. Results of the logistic regressions are reported below in table 6.2. In both cases, the result is statistically significant at well beyond the standard level of .05, so a relationship clearly seems to be present. The coefficients in a logistic regression are slightly more difficult to interpret than in a standard linear regression. The coefficient values represent the amount

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<sup>548</sup> Bill Roggio, "Suicide Bombers Kill over 90 in Afghan North," *Long War Journal*, November 6, 2007, accessed October 8, 2012, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/suicide\\_bombers\\_kill.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/11/suicide_bombers_kill.php).

<sup>549</sup> "Afghan Bomb Toll Rises to 100", BBC News, February 18, 2008, accessed October 8, 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7250193.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7250193.stm).

<sup>550</sup> Mark Mazzetti, and Eric Schmitt, "Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, August 1, 2008, accessed October 12, 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/asia/01pstan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/01/world/asia/01pstan.html?_r=0).

<sup>551</sup> Alex Rodriguez, "Young Afghan Suicide Bomber Approached Wedding Guests", *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2010, accessed October 8, 2012, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jun/11/world/la-fg-afghan-wedding-20100611>.

of change of the log odds of being in one category of the dependent variable rather than the other.<sup>552</sup> Therefore the results show that, for each additional causality, there is a small increase in the probability of the attack being claimed, as we would predict from the descriptive statistics.

**Table 6.2: Logistic Regression - Casualties per attack versus claim**

	Coefficient	Significance
Afghanistan	.0144	.003
Pakistan	.0061	.002

### Targeting Civilians

Attacks against civilians comprise a considerable proportion of attacks in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly the latter.<sup>553</sup> In contrast to many prior studies of suicide attacks, I consider this to be an important problem since I am considering suicide attacks in the context of insurgency, rather than terrorism, which is usually partly *defined* by the targeting of civilians. Typically in arguments about insurgency and counter-insurgency the *sine qua non* of success is winning the support of the local population and therefore attacking them with suicide attacks would seem to be counter-productive.<sup>554</sup>

<sup>552</sup> For a more detailed explanation of logistic regression, see: Razia Azen and Cindy M. Walker, *Categorical Data Analysis for the Behavioral and Social Sciences*, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 181-188.

<sup>553</sup> There is at least one difficulty with interpreting my data in regards to the propensity to attack various targets. This is the fact that each attack may have multiple victim types and the WITS data in fact records whether or not *each* victim category was judged to be targeted or not. I discuss this issue further in the statistical appendix, but for the time being, it is worth noting that this only appears to create a problem for the Afghan data on civilians. Typically, I have attempted to judge from the description of the incident the main target of each attack and coded that as the primary victim. Moreover, typically the primary victim is unsurprisingly coded as ‘targeted’ rather than ‘indiscriminate/collateral’. However in Afghanistan, around a quarter of cases where the primary target is civilian, the attack is actually coded indiscriminate. This appears to be largely due to a considerable number of ‘premature explosions’ where the intended target is completely unknown. As a consequence, the actual number of attacks targeted against civilians in Afghanistan is probably considerably higher, because if one considers the secondary victim categories of many attacks, they are often civilians who have been coded as ‘targeted’.

<sup>554</sup> On the centrality of popular support in insurgency: Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, (McLean, Virginia: Brassey’s, 1990), 70-71.

## **Sectarian Violence**

Before examining general explanations of the targeting of civilians, it is important to discuss one aspect of civilian victimisation that differs significantly between the two countries. The sectarian aspect of the conflict in Pakistan has featured a number of incredibly vicious suicide bombings of Shias.<sup>555</sup> As noted in chapter two, some of the Punjabi Taliban who have found common cause with the TTP originated in sectarian organisations, particularly Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. Given this important difference it is possible that the relatively large number of attacks against civilians in Pakistan is explained by the anti-Shia bombings.

However, it is clear when examining the data that while sectarian attacks have been particularly bloody, causing on average 25.7 deaths and wounding 78.6 people per attack, they still do not account for the majority of either attacks targeted against civilians or civilian victimisation in Pakistan. In fact in the time period of my data, only 14 attacks in Pakistan could be coded as sectarian, with 360 killed and 1100 wounded in total, compared to the total of 2278 civilians killed and 7333 wounded in total. If we restrict our analysis to only those attacks where civilians were targeted, rather than attacked indiscriminately, there were still 1585 killed and 3955 wounded who were not sectarian victims.<sup>556</sup> Therefore, the targeting of civilians in Pakistan cannot be wholly explained by the use of suicide attacks in the anti-Shia campaign.

## **Selective vs. Indiscriminate Violence**

The literature on suicide attacks has had little to say about the targeting of different categories of victims. While it has typically been a contention of both theoreticians and practitioners of insurgency that winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local populace is the primary path to victory, insurgencies have in practice tended to feature the large scale killing of civilians by both rebels and incumbents. Recently a number of scholars have advanced theories to account for the victimisation of civilians in insurgencies, despite the apparent contradiction with standard notions of the effective conduct of such wars. Therefore in order to illuminate the

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<sup>555</sup> There has of course been a sectarian aspect to the conflict in Afghanistan, particularly the victimisation of the Shia Hazara. However, this does not appear to have played such an obvious part of the suicide attack campaign in Afghanistan as it has in Pakistan. The notable counter example was the twin suicide attacks against Shia processions in Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif in December 2011. It appears that this attack was, in fact, carried out by the LeJ. See: Anand Gopal, “From Bad to Worse,” *AfPak Channel*, December 6, 2011, accessed September 29, 2012, [http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/06/from\\_bad\\_to\\_worse](http://AfPak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/12/06/from_bad_to_worse).

<sup>556</sup> It is important to note that the figures I am quoting here regarding targeted civilians are not the same as where the civilians were the primary target. As per my footnote above, it is possible to extract all of the victims of various types that were targeted, irrespective of whether they were the *primary* victim.

pattern of civilian victimisation in Afghanistan and Pakistan I have turned to this literature and attempted to operationalize and test several of its hypotheses.

The first of these hypotheses comes from the highly influential work of Stathis Kalyvas, who has written at length about the killing of civilians in civil wars. In contrast to a number of other authors, Kalyvas argues that it is essentially *control*, not support, that is crucial to achieving success in civil wars because support is so dependent upon control. In this context, violence by both the rebels/insurgents can be used to coerce civilians into compliance, and in particular to deter them from defecting to the other side of the conflict. In Kalyvas' analysis violence against civilians can be categorized as either *selective* or *unselective*.<sup>557</sup> This is because in order for violence to be effective at creating deterrence, it needs to be selective, or at least appear to be selective, so that there is a link between behaviour and outcome. With unselective violence, it becomes impossible for civilians to avoid it through compliance and therefore there is no incentive for being compliant. Despite the great advantages of selective violence, unselective violence is often observed in civil wars and other insurgencies. Kalyvas provides a number of mechanisms intended to bring this about, but generally speaking Kalyvas argues that over time belligerents should learn the value of selective violence and switch from unselective to selective violence.<sup>558</sup>

This argument suggests that we should be able to make predictions about the trajectory of suicide attacks over the course of a conflict. The central question is how we should think about the issue of 'selective' violence. Kalyvas himself suggests suicide attacks against civilians are typically unselective.<sup>559</sup> Therefore, the most appropriate measure of unselective or indiscriminate violence against civilians in my dataset an attack which has civilians as the primary victim category and where they are actually targeted.

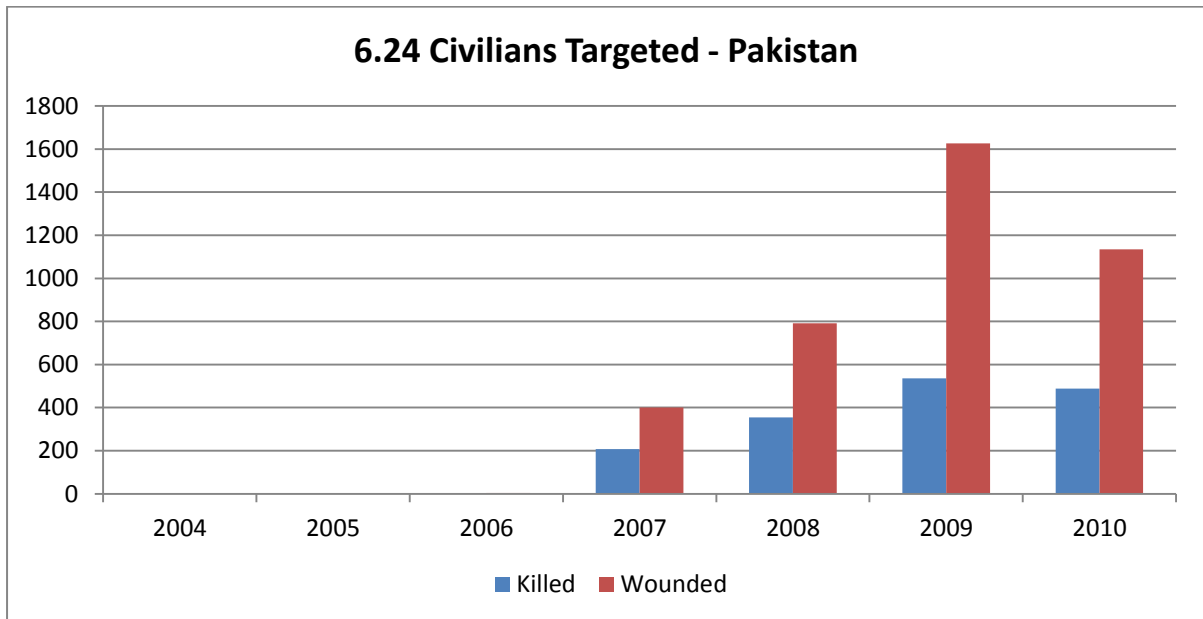
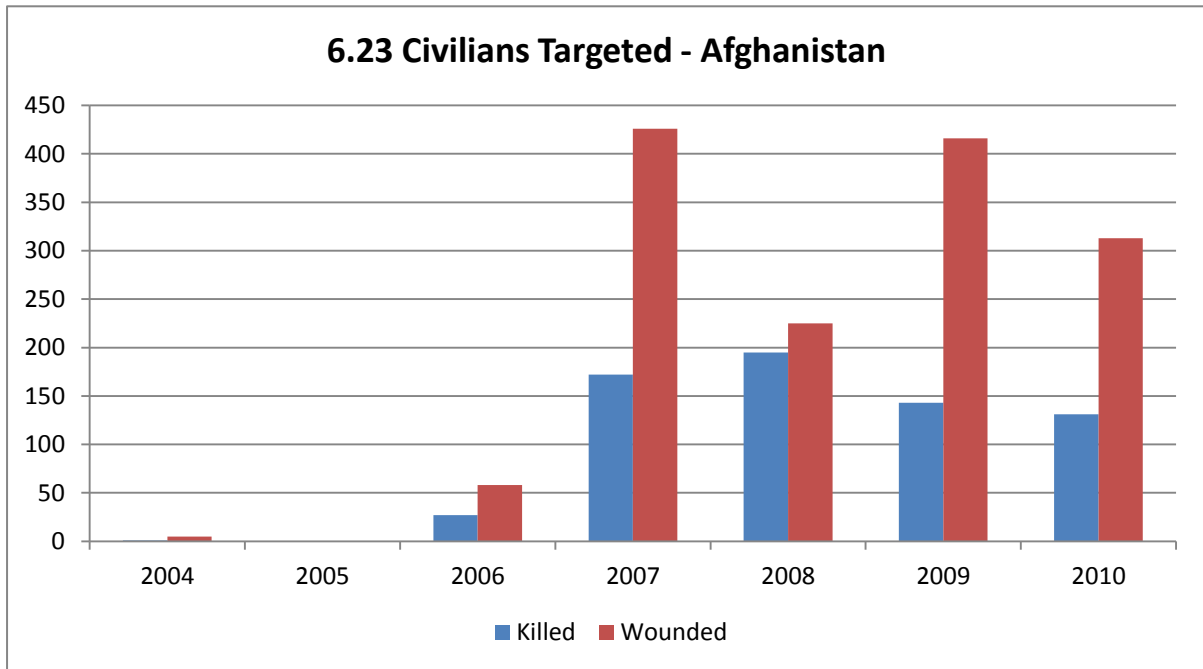
Below I produce graphs for both Afghanistan and Pakistan showing attacks against civilians over time where they were specifically targeted. For the Pakistan figures, I have removed the sectarian casualties, following my discussion above, because the Pakistani Taliban and its affiliates are *not* interested in gaining Shiite support and therefore we should not expect them to learn the value of selective violence against this target type.

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<sup>557</sup>Kalyvas refers to 'indiscriminate' versus 'discriminant' violence, but because of the role these terms play in my own data analysis, they will be avoided; Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 141-145.

<sup>558</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 169.

<sup>559</sup> Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 170.



Based upon the above graphs, Kalyvas' hypothesis appears to be largely unsupported in my cases. Civilian victimisation has mostly grown over time and it therefore appears that either the Taliban in both countries are slow learners, or there is some other mechanism that is making attacks against civilians an attractive prospect. However in both graphs, 2010 shows a decline in such attacks, so it may be possible that further data points would begin to vindicate Kalyvas' perspective.

This continued targeting of civilians is especially surprising in Afghanistan where it is typically argued that the Taliban have good knowledge of the communities they are attempting to control; Kalyvas argues that poor information is one of several mechanisms which can underlie indiscriminate violence.<sup>560</sup> My data is also consistent with data on civilian victimisation in Afghanistan in general (i.e. for all violence, not just suicide missions), which shows that the great majority of civilian casualties are caused by the insurgents.<sup>561</sup>

### **Targeting Civilians as a Signal of Resolve**

Another theory of civilian victimisation has been put forward by Lisa Hultman. She argues that a rebel group that is engaged in an asymmetric conflict where its ability to directly hurt the government is low will attempt to avoid direct confrontation where possible but still impose costs on the government.<sup>562</sup> Attacking civilians achieves this goal because it is the government's responsibility to protect civilians from violence. Successful attacks against civilians therefore impose an indirect punishment on the government. Moreover, she argues that attacks against civilians create fear and disorder, which make the tasks of government more difficult. Hultman also argues that while attacking civilians may have little effect upon the military fortunes of the rebels, it is an easy and cheap way of trying to raise the government's costs for maintaining resistance to the rebels' demands. Clearly this contention is strongly consistent with my overall model of suicide attacks as signals in a coercive bargaining situation. The empirical implication of this argument is that the more unsuccessful the rebels are on the battlefield, the more civilians they are likely to kill.

She argues that, empirically, this has two separate implications. The more rebels killed, the more civilians they are likely to kill. A corollary is that the fewer government troops the rebels are able to kill, the more civilians will be killed. In her empirical work she finds strong support for both hypotheses.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>560</sup> The Taliban's local knowledge and connections are described in: Christopher J. Chivers, "In Eastern Afghanistan, at War with the Taliban's Shadowy Rule," *New York Times*, February 6, 2011, accessed January 20, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/asia/07taliban.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/asia/07taliban.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

<sup>561</sup> Alissa J. Rubin, "Taliban Cause most Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan, U.N. Says," *New York Times*, March 9, 2011, accessed September 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/world/asia/10afghanistan.html>.

<sup>562</sup> Lisa Hultman, "Battle Losses and Rebel Violence: Raising the Costs for Fighting", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, No. 2(2007): 205-210.

<sup>563</sup> Lisa Hultman, "Battle Losses and Rebel Violence: Raising the Costs for Fighting", *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, (2007): 213-217.

In order to test hypotheses derived from the theory, I used the following data. For Afghanistan, data from the Wikileaks war logs was used for the numbers of NATO and Afghan security forces killed and the number of Taliban killed; the observations are monthly from January 2004 to December 2009. For Pakistan, data from the South Asia Terrorism portal provided evidence on the number of Pakistani security forces and Pakistani Taliban killed, with monthly observations from January 2004 to December 2010. The civilian deaths from suicide attacks come from monthly observations I compiled from the WITS data. For Pakistan, the South Asia Terrorism Portal provided data on both Pakistani security forces and Taliban deaths; these were monthly observations from January 2004 to December 2010. For Pakistani civilian deaths I again used WITS data, but removed the sectarian deaths for, as I argued above, I believe these are product of a fairly separate conflict. In both cases, I lagged the dependent variable by one month, in order to capture the fact that the effect should come noticeably after the cause. I also only used civilian deaths, which were a consequence of attacks targeted at civilians, not just civilian deaths in general.

Because I lack data on all the variables Hultman used in her analysis, I was unable to replicate her procedure exactly. Hultman used a statistical analysis known as Zero Inflated Negative Binomial Regression (ZINB). Like all forms of regression, ZINB attempts to model the relationship between independent variables and a dependent variable. It belongs to a family of analyses especially suited for modelling count data, which is characterised by non-normality. That is, the histogram of count data does not describe the so called ‘bell curve’ characteristic of normally distributed data. Ordinary linear regression relies upon the assumption of normality and will tend to produce biased results when used on count data. The data in question call for a statistical analysis suitable for count data, but I lacked the variables Hultman used in her analysis. As a consequence ‘zero inflation’ was unnecessary and I instead employed conventional negative binomial regression.

One other change was made to Hultman’s analysis. Instead of using the number of security forces killed and the number of Taliban killed as separate independent variables in the regression, a ratio of the two was taken and used as the predictor. My reasoning overall for using the ratio rather than the separate figures was that it was an attempt to capture more clearly the relative status of the conflict. A large number of Taliban being killed may not necessarily imply that they were losing, or being impressed that they were losing, whereas a large number of Taliban being killed without significantly inflicting corresponding damage to the enemy clearly suggests a poor battlefield result. The results are reported in table 6.3.

**Table 6.3: Negative Binominal Regression - Battle field outcomes \* civilian victimisation**

	Coefficient	Significance
Afghanistan	-.0313969	.872
Pakistan	.25151	.000

The results for Afghanistan were not significant at the conventional level of .05, so we are unable to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between battlefield outcomes and civilian killing. In Pakistan however, the results are highly statistically significant, indicating there is a relationship between the variables. This result is not only statistically significant, but is also highly practically significant. The implication of the regression coefficient is that each time the ratio increases, that is, the number of Taliban compared to incumbent forces killed increases by one, the number of civilian victims increases by 25 percent.

The question arising from these results is what explains the discrepancy? One tempting argument is to suggest that the apparent contradiction, that is, that the model seems not to work for Afghanistan, is that the Afghan Taliban simply do not believe that they are losing. On the basis of the information that we have, it appears that the Pakistani Taliban have been far more heavily pressured than their Afghan counterparts, particularly after the Pakistani state's strong response to the taking of Swat. Therefore, if the strategy of targeting civilians is only selected once an insurgency or rebel group believes it is losing, the Afghan Taliban may not have reached this point. The problem with this is that the battlefield outcome ratio that I have used as the independent variable in my regression was supposed to be measuring how well the insurgency was doing and therefore presumably how it perceived its chances.

Given what we know about the two conflicts, it seems the simplest explanation is that the Afghan Taliban care, or feel they need to care, far more about their reputation amongst the population than the Pakistani Taliban. Therefore they have not reacted to battlefield defeat by attacking civilians. As we have seen, their public statements make it clear that they *wish* to be perceived as protectors of the populace, despite their depredations against them. It is less clear that the Pakistani Taliban and the associated organisations such as the LeJ, JeM and so on have the same level of concern. Data regarding attack claims support this view. In



Afghanistan, only 16.3 percent of attacks against civilians are claimed compared to the overall rate of 48.9 percent. In Pakistan on the other hand, 24.6 percent of attacks against civilians are claimed, which is less than the overall rate of 30.3 percent, although not appreciably so.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has conducted an empirical investigation of the use of suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This analysis has produced a number of important results. Firstly, the data revealed a surprising empirical finding; suicide attacks, despite being the most effective weapons in the insurgents' arsenal, comprise a declining share of all attacks they carry out. The most plausible explanation for this fact supports one of the overall arguments of this thesis. That is, insurgents in both countries face a problem in procuring an adequate supply of martyrs. Secondly, I have shown that previous studies arguing that suicide attacks are 'costly signals' have used the concept too loosely. I nonetheless argue that suicide attacks can still be plausibly conceived as signals in a broader sense. My detailed quantitative analysis of suicide attacks has demonstrated these signalling effects. This analysis clearly suggests their use by insurgents to coerce compliance, expose government failure to secure civilian populations, and encourage foreign funding. This analysis has also demonstrated how earlier studies which seeking to undermine the signalling effects were empirically flawed. Finally, it has shown that the targeting of civilians, while counter-intuitive from the point of view of typical thinking about insurgency, is also understandable as part of the insurgents' campaign of punishment against the governments that oppose them. This would seem to be especially true in the case of Pakistani insurgents.

## Chapter 7: Conclusions

The study of suicide attacks has typically utilised a tripartite division of its subject matter. Theoretical and empirical approaches have addressed the individual level analysis of those actually involved in suicide attacks; the strategic or organisational level of analysis of the groups deploying the attacks; and the societal or cultural level that forms the background context for the other levels.<sup>564</sup> This work has not employed this division and has instead focused on particular questions that arise from considering the particular characteristics of suicide attacks in AfPak. In order to clarify and synthesize the findings of the thesis, however, I will turn to the conventional three-part analytical structure to contrast my findings with earlier studies. Despite its convenience here, it is important to emphasise artificiality of these divisions. An important example, for instance, is that the motivations of individuals and social context in which they operate are ultimately not neatly separable.<sup>565</sup>

### Individual Level

The most puzzling aspect of suicide missions remains the willingness of suicide bombers to kill themselves in this manner; this is reflected in the large number of works which have dealt specifically with this topic.<sup>566</sup> As noted in chapter three, much of the scholarly literature has nevertheless agreed upon some general characteristics of suicide bombers. Specifically that the individuals involved are not ‘crazy, sex-starved and brainwashed’ but instead tend to be

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<sup>564</sup> Paul Gill, “A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing,” *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 1, No. 7, (2007): 144-145, accessed January 29, 2014, <http://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/12/12>.

<sup>565</sup> This is apparent from the fact, for instance, that Mohammed Hafez’s book on Palestinian suicide attacks begins its discussion of ‘Individual Motives’ with a historical excursion on the rise of Islamism in the Muslim world and how this has provided cultural tropes for suicide attack deploying organizations to draw on. See: Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*, (Washington D. C.: The United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006), 34-37.

<sup>566</sup> For instance: Daphne Burdman, “Education, Indoctrination, and Incitement: Palestinian Children on Their Way to Martyrdom,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 96-123; Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur and Daphna Canetti-Nisim, “The Social and Religious Characteristics of Suicide Bombers and their Victims,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, No. 3 (Autumn 2003): 139-153; Shaul Kimhi and Shemuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, No. 4 (Winter 2004): 815-840; Mario Ferrero, “Martyrdom Contracts,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, No. 6 (December 2006): 855-877; Nicole Argo, “Human Bombs: Rethinking Religion and Terror,” *MIT Centre for International Studies: Audit of the Conventional Wisdom*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT, April 2006), 1-5, accessed January 29, 2014, [http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/argo\\_audit\\_4.06.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/argo_audit_4.06.pdf); Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor, “Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reasons?,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, Vol. 4 (2008): 304-326; Anne Speckhard, “The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, No. 11 (2008): 995-1023; Lindsey A. O’Rourke, “What’s Special About Female Suicide Terrorism,” *Security Studies* 18, No. 4 (2009): 681-718; Robert J. Brym and Cynthia Hamlin, “Suicide Bombers: Beyond Cultural Dopes and Rational Fools,” in *Raymond Boudon: A Life in Sociology*, Vol. 2, ed. Mohamed Cherkaoui and Peter Hamilton, (Oxford: Bardwell Press, 2009), 83-96 ; Domenico Tosini, “Calculated, Passionate, Pious Extremism: Beyond a Rational Choice Theory of Suicide Terrorism,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38, (2010): 394-415.

either be from a normal range of individuals or are in many cases intelligent, well-educated and affluent. Consequently, explanations for the participation of suicide bombers have focused on trying to understand why individuals who are *not* suffering from psychopathology, who have good chances in life and have not been misled or coerced, are willing to become martyrs.

One of the first contributions of this thesis is to draw attention to the fact that two of the largest campaigns of suicide attacks in history have included vast numbers of individuals who are very different from the picture presented by most scholars. That is, as we have seen, many of AfPak's martyrs are young, vulnerable, poor and poorly educated and have suffered from coercive practices in their recruitment and training.

This finding has two further consequences. Firstly, existing explanations are problematic when applied to Afghanistan and Pakistan because they rest on generalizations at odds with the experience of suicide attacks in these countries. Since many theories assume that suicide bombers are typically competent, educated individuals and that they are never or rarely coerced, the facts at hand simply do not support those assumptions. Secondly, the large differences apparent between the average suicide bomber in AfPak and those in other cases show that we need to be careful not to overgeneralize from particular instances to the universe of suicide attacks.

Palestine is particularly important in this regard since in the study of suicide attacks there has become something like a convenience sample.<sup>567</sup> Evidence regarding all aspects of suicide missions, but particularly with respect to suicide bombers, is deeper and broader for Palestine than elsewhere and much more readily available to scholars.<sup>568</sup> While Palestine is no doubt a vitally important case, in recent years suicide attacks there have become numerically comparatively small compared to other countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Therefore, given the surprising variation in the nature of suicide bombers that my thesis has uncovered, it seems unwise to make broad generalizations from what may well be one end of a wide spectrum of variation.

Scholarship has apparently not caught up with the particular characteristics of suicide bombers in AfPak, admittedly a recent and dangerous zone of conflict. The coercive way in

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<sup>567</sup> Convenience sampling occurs when we include data that is readily available or convenient. It can obviously lead to bias, since those cases which are conveniently collected are not necessarily representative. Richard D. De Veaux, Paul F. Velleman and David E. Bock, *Intro Stats*, 2nd Edition, (Boston: Pearson, 2006), 276-277.

<sup>568</sup> Note the large number of works focused on Palestinian suicide bombers in footnote 554.

which they are recruited and the diverse and often inaccessible locales in which they are trained has consequently been a challenge for gathering and analysing the facts. One of the particularly novel contributions of chapter four therefore is to provide an account of how the particular characteristics of AfPak martyrs help explain their participation and the likely mechanisms underlying the coercive recruitment and training of the individuals involved. While my explanations here are based largely upon well-established conceptual systems and empirical findings from psychology, the discussion of individual differences is more or less unique in this field, since despite some calls to do so, few researchers have actually drawn on individual differences as a source of explanations. That is, individuals with weaker system 2 or ‘analytical’ resources are likely to be much easier to indoctrinate, but they are also likely to make less-effective suicide bombers.

Since suicide bombers in AfPak are young, ill-educated and appear to be often chosen for their malleability, this argument seems plausible. In other countries where more able individuals are involved, they are unlikely to be coerced since they would be the most resistant to such attempts, but having chosen to become bombers, they likely perform better in this role due to their higher levels of self-control, as was suggested by Benmelech and Berrebi’s evidence.<sup>569</sup>

A notable aspect of chapter four therefore is the use of a wide range of well-established findings in cognitive science. A considerable amount of traditional scholarship on suicide attacks either tends to rely on common-sense folk psychological categories or, when it does draw on psychological theory, uses out-dated material.<sup>570</sup> Relying on folk psychological thinking is not, in general, fatally flawed as a research strategy. Human beings in general have quite reasonable success to explaining and predicating each other’s’ behaviour armed only with this intuitive theory.<sup>571</sup> However, in the case of participation in suicide attacks, where our ability to explain is stretched to the limit, it is necessary to be more precise and theoretically rigorous in approaching the topic. Therefore, I have argued the most appropriate way of grounding the analysis of suicide attacks is in terms of evolutionary thinking, which provides a general and widely confirmed range of theories of human motivations from a

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<sup>569</sup> Efraim Benmelech and Claude Berrebi, “Human Capital and the Productivity of Suicide Bombers,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, No. 3 (Summer 2007): 232-236.

<sup>570</sup> “Folk-Psychology” is a philosophical term of art referring to humans’ propensity to spontaneously attribute beliefs and desires to others in order to explain their behaviour.

<sup>571</sup> For a lucid account of the role and usefulness of folk psychology in everyday life, see: Simon Baron-Cohen, *Mindblindness: An Essay on Autism and Theory of Mind*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 21-30.

biological and psychological perspective. I have also drawn upon concepts and findings drawn from cognitive psychology, neuroscience and social psychology to construct a synthetic account of the training and motivations of suicide bombers in AfPak.

Drawing on dubious psychological theory is perhaps a more serious problem than reliance upon folk psychology. An egregious example of out-dated psychology within the study of suicide attacks appears in the work of Ariel Merrari which I cited in chapter four. Although I used Merari's data to lend support to my own arguments, Merari's research seems to represent a missed opportunity. As Merari rightly notes, his work was more or less unprecedented in that he and his co-workers were able to interview in depth a relatively large number of failed suicide bombers and then compare them with both organizers of suicide attacks and others involved in non-suicidal political violence. Despite this ideal data source, the manner in which it was utilised was far from optimal. In particular, a number of the tests which Merari and his co-workers employed are no longer regarded as valid psychometric instruments by experts in psychological measurement. Given that Merari himself is a psychologist, his use of dubious psychological tests is surprising. Although much of value has come from Merari's work, more robust and informative results could have been obtained if well validated psychometric instruments had been used.

A similar problem is the reliance of a number of authors, most notably Pape, on Durkheim's account of suicide.<sup>572</sup> While resolutely non-psychological, Durkheim's theory of suicide seems unsatisfactory, as demonstrated in chapter four. The phenomena that Durkheim's theory of altruistic suicide were meant to explain seem much more plausibly dealt with by the theory of evolutionary heroism advanced in the same chapter. This tendency of appealing to weak behavioural science seems related to a broader problem in the study of terrorism. While psychological speculation about the motives of terrorists seems to be irresistible, as Jeff Victoroff suggests, these studies have regularly been based upon outdated theory.<sup>573</sup>

## **Societal Level**

The most common arguments advanced about the way society has been implicated in suicide attacks are in terms of society's potential to create and sustain martyrs. In the nomenclature of this thesis, this refers to the social forces involved in the supply of suicide bomber

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<sup>572</sup> Pedahzur et. al. also argue that Palestinian suicide bombers are a hybrid of Durkheim's 'fatalistic' and 'altruistic' categories of suicides; see: Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg, "Altruism and Fatalism: the Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists," *Deviant Behaviour* 24, No.4, (2003): 405-423.

<sup>573</sup> Jeff Victoroff, "The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, No. 1 (February 2005): 3-42.

‘labour’. This is not the way in which the authors of the work in question have presented their ideas, of course, but does seem to most simply capture their analytical consequences.

The most influential author in the field of suicide attacks, Robert Pape, argues that suicide attacks are components of nationalist rebellions against democracies occupying foreign nations of different religions than their own.<sup>574</sup> A particular consequence of this is widespread cultural support for suicide attacks, and is one of the primary causes of individuals being willing to sacrifice themselves for the goal of national liberation. Other authors, such as Assaf Moghadam and Mohammed Hafez, suggest that social or cultural factors are important for providing narratives that either morally legitimate suicide attacks or serve to encourage approbation for the tactic which make individuals willing to participate.<sup>575</sup> In simple terms, social and cultural norms may remove constraints on participation and provide incentives for martyrdom. As noted in chapter three, many scholars agree that campaigns of suicide attacks cannot in fact occur without widespread cultural support.

A problem with here is the tendency to be descriptive rather than analytical or explanatory. While Pape cannot be accused of this, others have put forward works which sift through the statements and justificatory literature of sponsoring organisations and the supporters of suicide attacks, in order to discern the patterns of belief or rhetoric used to produce willingness to participate in suicide attacks.<sup>576</sup> From a theoretical point of view, this effort is limited by its lack of an analytical focus. Merely thematically characterising texts in terms of their tropes does little to explain what makes them capable of producing martyrs.

Theories about the role of socio-cultural factors in producing martyrs tend to mirror problems which exist in individual-level theories. The nature of suicide bombers and their recruitment and training in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which as I have discussed above, is very different

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<sup>574</sup> Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, (New York: Random House, 2005), 96-101.

<sup>575</sup> Mohammed M. Hafez, “Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, No. 1 (2007): 11-112; Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 254-55.

<sup>576</sup> For instance: Mohammed M. Hafez, “Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, No. 1 (2007): 95-115; Mohammed M. Hafez, “The Alchemy of Martyrdom: Jihadi Salafism and Debates over Suicide Bombings in the Muslim World,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 38, No. 3 (May 2010): 364-378; Perhaps the best example of this is Assaf Moghadam’s book which although putting forward useful propositions about suicide attacks, spends several hundred pages recounting the evolution of strands of Sunni Islam to the current Takfiri, suicide-attack-justifying ideology espoused by Al-Qaeda and their ilk. Most of this material, while interesting, in my opinion does little to advance our understanding of the topic: Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al-Qaeda, Salafi Jihad and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)

from elsewhere, suggests that the common arguments about the role of society and culture are also inapplicable to my cases. To repeat an earlier point, Pakistan is *not* experiencing an occupation, yet it is producing many suicide bombers. Therefore as we saw in chapter three, Pape's contention that occupation is a necessary condition for suicide attack campaigns is plainly not valid in all cases. More generally, arguments which suggest that widespread support for the tactic is *necessary* to produce a supply of martyrs are also false. As we have seen, suicide attacks appear to be extremely unpopular in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is particularly notable to remember that in Pakistan there was a reasonable level of public support for the tactic directly after 2001, but this support plummeted simultaneously with an enormous increase in the use of the tactic.

One of the most fundamental contributions of my thesis has been to develop an alternative theory which is able to account for these phenomena by considering the production of suicide bombers as a sort of labour market. Although there have been prior market models of suicide attacks, they relied upon the flawed assumptions about suicide bombers and their recruitment. The relevance of the model I have developed also has explanatory power beyond the cases of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

To understand the importance of the labour market model to the scholarly field more broadly, we begin by noting a simple fact, often overlooked: not all suicide bombers are alike. This may seem obvious, but earlier scholars have either suggested that suicide bombers are 'normal' and had no particular characteristics in common or, if anything singled them out it was their tendency to be intelligent and socially above average. Both of these perspectives do not helpfully characterise the type of variation that exists both within and between countries where suicide attacks occur.

On the one hand, existing scholarly characterisations of suicide bombers are flatly inconsistent with the picture which emerges from Afghanistan and Pakistan, where most recruits are young, ignorant and coerced individuals. On the other hand, the fact that suicide bombers in AfPak have the characteristics they do does not imply that suicide bombers elsewhere *are* coerced and ignorant. It is demonstrably the case that many remarkably accomplished individuals have been willing to offer themselves as martyrs in Palestine. And it is not even the case that all suicide bombers within AfPak are young and coerced.

What I mean by asserting the seemingly obvious proposition that suicide bombers are not all alike, is that there is clearly significant variation between and within countries with regards to

the types of individuals involved in suicide attacks and that this variation occurs both cross-sectionally and longitudinally. Existing theories of recruitment, even those that take a market perspective, seem to lack an analytical purchase on this variation. The model I have presented, in contrast, is able to provide a coherent framework for thinking about variation among those involved in suicide attacks and the relationship of this variation to the features of the organisations deploying them and of the conflicts and societies of which they are a part.

These variations are explained in terms the relationship between the levels of supply and demand. The level of supply, which is determined by the prestige of the sponsoring organisation and of the suicide missions themselves, determines the quantity and quality of martyrs that will tend to be available. Demand is determined by the goals and needs of the organization. The theory predicts that when the tactic and sponsoring organisations are popular, ‘more and better’ suicide bombers will be available and recruitment will tend to voluntarism. Conversely, where suicide attacks and suicide attack sponsoring organisations are unpopular, volunteers will be rare and the average quality of bombers will be much lower. In those cases, it is also more likely that coercion will emerge as a recruitment tactic. This problem will be exacerbated if, as in Afghanistan, the organisation wishes to employ suicide bombers on what amounts to an industrial scale, that is, where demand is high, relative to supply.

It is important to note that the actual determinants of the popularity of organisations and of suicide attacks are complex and multiple. Prior cultural attitudes about suicide and suicide attacks, the nature of the enemy and their behaviour, among other factors, may all help explain variations in the ability of organisations to find recruits. Moreover, changes over time, such as increasing repression or violence by the opposition, may serve to change attitudes, as may the observed cumulative effects of suicide attacks; this appears to be the case in Pakistan. By avoiding a single cause like ‘foreign occupation’ or ‘psychological trauma’, the market approach makes clear that there are multiple paths to martyrdom for individuals, and that a variety of ‘inputs’, which themselves naturally tend to vary, will produce different pools of individuals who are willing to die for a cause in different times and places.

In addition, the market approach allows us to see the deep interconnection between the broader socio-cultural level of explanation and the individual level of explanation. While this



relationship has been more or less implicit in the works of other authors, the labour market model makes this link explicit. That is, we can see that a wide variety of social issues will be implicated in an individual's decision to offer themselves (or not) as a martyr, just as would be the case in any other labour market. Despite the charge of 'hyper-individualism' often made against economics, any economic agent can always be expected to consider the various options available, and these will be determined by broader social and cultural factors. As I discuss below, the market approach also gives us more of a grip on the relationship between the socio-cultural, individual *and* organisational levels of analysis; or in terms of this thesis, the supply and demand side of the market for martyrs.

### **Organisational Level**

Chapters five and six, dealing with material which would typically be covered at the organisational level of analysis, are less radical in their break from typical approaches to their subject matter than those dealing with the individuals involved and the societal background to suicide attacks. Nonetheless they make a number of important contributions, many of which are also relevant beyond Afghanistan and Pakistan.

To begin with the clear logical separation of *the decision to carry out suicide attacks* from *decisions about how to use* them is an important conceptual contribution. Many prior studies have effectively asked, "What causes suicide attacks?," as a general question, without separating these distinct decisions. However, in thinking about the adoption of new tactics or new technology by organisations in general it seems useful to be able to ask both these questions since the appropriate answer to one may be very different to the other. Moreover, although others have clearly discussed the importance of the question of adoption, none of the studies addressing this question have also conducted an investigation of the tactical patterns of the *use* of suicide attacks.

Another important conceptual contribution of chapter six was the clarification of the commonly employed concept of 'costly signalling'. A number of different approaches to analysing the use of suicide attacks can be subsumed within this approach, but the way in which many authors have used the concept has been overly loose and not in keeping with the meaning of concept as it was originally developed in other fields. This is not a minor point. As noted in chapter six, by thinking about the concept of signalling more clearly we can begin to formulate a coherent connection between the qualities of the supply side and demand side of the market for martyrs.

Where the organisations and the tactic are popular and the organisation is able to select from ‘quality applicants’, it will be able to send truly costly signals; these individuals, due to their high human capital, will be viewed as actual martyrs, rather than just cannon fodder. Conversely, as in AfPak, where the sponsoring organisations and the tactic are unpopular, the pool of potential recruits will be both narrow and shallow; consequently suicide bombers will mostly be simply ‘human bombs’. Therefore the way in which suicide attacks are used and the communicative effect that they have is tied to broader features of both the organisations using them and the environment from which they are drawn.

These interacting supply and demand factors are integral to the arguments I have advanced about the decision to adopt the tactic. In chapter five, I argued for three main factors explaining the decision to use suicide attacks: expected operational advantages, the spread of the Jihadi Salafi ideas of Al-Qaeda to groups in AfPak and the low constituency costs faced by AfPak groups in using suicide attacks. This latter explanation, due to Stathis Kalyvas and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca, to some extent takes priority over the other two, since it is best able to account for variation in adoption.

This argument also has the advantage that it links rather neatly with the supply and demand framework. According to the Kalyvas and Sanchez-Cuenca, suicide attacks will typically be adopted where organisations are either heavily embedded in a society or when they are largely separated from the society. In Afghanistan and Pakistan I have suggested a slightly different version of this argument. While many of these groups, particularly the Afghan Taliban, are heavily embedded in their communities, this has not led to the communities sharing their preferences or indeed supporting the use of suicide attacks. Instead, organisations rely upon passive acquiescence, coercion, crime and support from the Pakistani state and other foreign donors to prosecute their insurgencies.

Thus we can see links between many disparate elements of the picture of suicide attacks in both countries. Suicide bombers in AfPak are typically young and coerced; the organisations employing them are not particularly popular, nor is the tactic; but they are effective, and well supplied. Finally, suicide bombings themselves, rather than being symbolic acts of martyrdom, are more akin to a production line of human artillery shells. To summarize, the balance between supply and demand determines the quality of martyrs available, the type of signal being sent relates to the quality of martyrs and the relationship of suicide attack organisations to sources of support, and this in turn determines the supply of bombers.

These theoretical innovations are useful in clarifying connections between different parts of the phenomenon and in allowing a broader theoretical approach that allows for many different types of suicide attack campaigns to be understood on their own terms and related to each other in a coherent way. The most important contributions of this portion of the thesis come from subjecting existing theoretical approaches to empirical scrutiny at a more fine grained level than has typically been the case. In some cases, influential claims have been advanced and apparently accepted without any attempt at empirical testing, even when data to do so was readily available.

In chapter five, I agreed with scholars who have argued that suicide attacks were adopted because they were perceived as being more attention grabbing than other tactics, but I was able to provide a mechanism to underpin this argument in the form of ‘availability cascades’. I also used analyses of Google search terms to demonstrate that this theoretical conjecture does have considerable empirical backing, even controlling for the fact that suicide attacks tend to cause more casualties on average. This data source, though long readily available, had not been previously exploited.

Also in chapter five, by using a superior data source compared to those previously used, I also demonstrated that the ‘hard targets’ theory of suicide attacks, which effectively merges the questions of adoption and tactics, was not supported in AfPak. Similarly, I demonstrated that Robert Pape’s highly influential occupation thesis is implausible for the cases investigated in this thesis, particularly Pakistan, which is not experiencing an occupation, despite Pape’s *ad hoc* theoretical revision.

Another notable empirical contribution of the thesis is the empirical analysis of propositions derived from the signalling framework. Particularly important was the otherwise largely ignored work of Nick Ayers. Ayers’ work deserves consideration, since it is essentially the only attempt to empirically assess this common theoretical framework. In particular, as noted in chapter six, Ayers’ operationalization of the theory in terms of measuring the proportion of claimed suicide attacks is insightful.<sup>577</sup> Nonetheless, the actual findings resulting from my data analysis were seriously at variance with Ayers’ results which had suggested that the signalling theory was inaccurate; in fact. However, the signalling theory was strongly supported by my statistical results. Moreover, even in Ayers’ own case of Iraq, the more

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<sup>577</sup> As I noted in chapter six, Ayers use of claims as a way of measuring whether rebels are trying to convey information about their capabilities and intentions is not without fault.

comprehensive data set I obtained disconfirmed Ayers' conclusions, demonstrating that suicide attacks were far more likely to be claimed than non-suicide attacks.

## The Future

Methodological difficulties arising from existing studies of suicide attacks have already been raised by several scholars in preliminary and rather abstract form.<sup>578</sup> I would therefore suggest two practical means for improving the broader field which arise from the research in this thesis and offer a valuable practical dimension given the endemic problem of far less than ideal conditions for research in this field. Firstly, for the field to progress there needs to be a more methodical and sophisticated use of data that is available, rather than relying upon conjecture. The examples enumerated above demonstrate some possibilities which are available for the creative use of existing data. In light of this, it is particularly disheartening that the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System is no longer maintained by the United States State Department. Nonetheless, there are doubtless many useful data sources that remain unexploited.

The second way the field can progress and which I have commenced developing in this thesis is by embedding the study of suicide attacks in the broader study of political violence, and in particular, the study of civil wars and other 'irregular' conflicts.<sup>579</sup> There are several reasons why this is a promising approach to improving the study of suicide attacks. Firstly, both theoretically and empirically, this field has blossomed over the last ten years.<sup>580</sup> This field seems to stand in relative contrast to the study of terrorism, which does not seem to have experienced the same sort of intellectual renaissance. I have hoped to demonstrate the potential of this approach with my application of Hultman's theory of civilian victimisation. It is interesting to note here that by simply quantitatively comparing suicide attacks with other types of violent conflict I was able to uncover an interesting puzzle: that suicide attacks,

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<sup>578</sup> Alex Mintz and David Brule, "Methodological Issues in Studying Suicide Terrorism", *Political Psychology* 30, No.3 (June 2009): 365-371; Scott Ashworth et al., "Design, Inference and the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 102, No. 2 (May 2008): 269-273.

<sup>579</sup> Martha Crenshaw made a similar call for the study of terrorism to be integrated with the broader study of political violence as far back as 1992; arguably the envisaged integration has hardly proceeded at all; see Martha Crenshaw, "Current Research on Terrorism: The Academic Perspective," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 15, No. 1 (1992): 1-11.

<sup>580</sup> For instance: James Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 1 (February 2003): 75-90; Stathis Kalyvas, "Civil Wars," in *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, ed. Charles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 416-434; Barbara F. Walter, "Bargaining Failures and Civil War," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, (June 2009): 243-261; Nicholas Sambanis, "Using Case Studies to Expand Economic Models of Civil War", *Perspectives on Politics* 2, No. 2 (June 2004): 259-279; Jason Lyall, "Does Indiscriminate Violence Incite Insurgent Attacks?: Evidence from Chechnya," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, No. 3 (June 2009): 331-362.

despite increasing in absolute terms, were actually declining as shares of the overall volume of violence in both countries. This counter-intuitive and previously unnoticed finding actually served to strengthen the overall arguments of my thesis by buttressing my argument that there is a supply bottleneck with regard to suicide bomber labour. Secondly, suicide attacks have often been included as part of the study of terrorism, yet many suicide attacks fit somewhat awkwardly within the traditional realm of terrorism, and are instead most logically thought of in the context of civil war or guerrilla conflict. Finally, as I suggested above, despite the intense scholarly interest in individual participation in suicide attacks, the lack of evidence in this aspect of the phenomenon means that it is unlikely that we will be able to resolve fundamental disputes about this in the near future.

Therefore it makes sense to focus scholarly energy where it is most likely to bear fruit, namely at the organisational and socio-cultural levels where systematic data is available. By employing this data to subject theoretical claims to empirical analysis on a systematic basis and placing suicide attacks theoretically within the broader spectrum of political violence, the field stands to gain much. Finally, other scholars could consider adopting the economic analysis as introduced in this thesis. Despite a tendency to resist 'economic imperialism', a modest application of economic thinking can serve as a highly useful heuristic device which can enable us to more easily relate the various aspects of suicide attacks together in an integrated manner. In the end, the analyses contained in my thesis are offered as an argument for these general propositions, pointing towards a more productive model for the field in general.

## **Data and Coding Appendix**

This appendix describes the data sources and coding methods employed to test quantitative claims in the body of thesis. In some cases, such as the age of bombers data at the end of chapter three, this has already been exhaustively discussed and therefore will not be repeated. Data sets are available upon request, including the original WITS data files. All statistical analyses were performed on the software package SPSS version 17, except the negative binomial regressions employed on the civilian victimisation data, for which I used STATA SE version 12.

### **Coding Method for the WITS Data**

The data provided by the now defunct WITS database were extremely rich and allowed me to test a number of hypotheses which would have been not been possible with other data sets. However the format in which they originally appeared was not well suited to the analyses that I wanted to perform. Therefore the information from the WITS data set was recorded by hand in a number of ways in order to facilitate producing the statistical work contained in the thesis. The two issues that need to be discussed in terms of explaining the coding schema are target hardness and targeting. Coding the data for these categories involved coding judgments, the accuracy of which could substantively affect the analysis.

#### **Target Hardness**

The coding for target hardness was done using the following schema. All incidents were coded as 'soft', 'hard' or 'very hard'. The goal throughout was to give the hard targets hypothesis the maximum possibility of success. This coding for hardness was done on the basis of those victimised by the attack. In all cases, I attempted to determine the primary victim of the attack, based on the description provided by the WITS database. This was used to get a sense of the goal of the attack. However, the hardness of target was not determined by the primary target but by considering all those victimised by the attack (or rather, all those who were potentially victimised by the attack). For instance, NATO-ISAF forces were always coded as a very hard. However, even if they were not the primary victim, the attack was coded as very hard, since I assumed that their presence in an area made any other target in the vicinity effectively very hard.

More generally, the following scheme was used. All US/NATO forces were coded as hard targets. Afghan and Pakistani military forces were coded as hard targets as were attacks against NDS and ISI (the Afghan and Pakistani intelligence services respectively). Attacks

against military installations/bases whether in Afghanistan or Pakistan were coded as very hard. Similarly diplomatic targets were coded as very hard. Paramilitary/private contractors I have coded as soft targets, except where they are foreign, and I have coded them as hard targets. Other than these, police, civilians, government workers, and politicians have all been coded as soft targets, unless, as noted above, harder targets were amongst the victims, in which case the incident is recorded as being against that level of ‘hardness’.

Probably the most controversial question regarding the appropriate coding of hardness surrounds both the Afghan and Pakistani police forces which are so often the targets of suicide missions. In both countries, attacks apparently primarily directed against the police account for just under 30% of attacks, so whether they are considered hard targets or not will have a considerable bearing on the way the data overall is interpreted. In the UN assistance mission report on suicide missions published in 2007, the authors argued that up until that time suicide attacks had primarily been directed at ‘hard targets’, amongst which they included the Afghan National Police.<sup>581</sup> While it is true that both the Afghan and Pakistani police are far more militarized than equivalent Western forces, and are regularly involved in military operations, the information we have regarding their level of capabilities and equipment suggest that without the support of actual military forces, they are unlikely to present a great challenge to insurgent forces, at least in their current incarnation.

The Afghan National Police, apart from anything else, are effectively a brand new instrument of the state and as Seth Jones details at length, the process of their creation has been a series of failures.<sup>582</sup> The police lack adequate training and equipment and appear to be endemically corrupt. This, in part appears to have stemmed from the fact the creation of a police force, despite being a vital part of nation-building, was seen as very low priority amongst the nations participating in the reconstruction effort.<sup>583</sup> In fact, according to Jones’ account, it appears the Police have had difficulty in some cases facing down the well-armed and organized drug cartels, let alone the insurgents, against whom they are often “overmatched”.<sup>584</sup> Moreover, the police force is particularly ineffective in comparison to the

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<sup>581</sup> UNAMA, “Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 2001-2007,” (Kabul: UNAMA, September 2007), 16, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf>, 19.

<sup>582</sup> Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America’s War in Afghanistan*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2009), 170-176.

<sup>583</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The US and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, (London: Penguin, 2009), 203-204.

<sup>584</sup> Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 173.

Afghan National Army (ANA), which while still beset with considerable problems, has been far better prepared and far more effective.<sup>585</sup> This contrast therefore also seems to make my distinction between the police as soft targets and the local military forces as hard targets seem reasonable.

The situation of Pakistani police also seems poor enough to justify them being considered soft targets. One report on counterinsurgency in Pakistan, for instance, argued that the Pakistani police force has long been an afterthought of both civilian and military regimes in Pakistan and that they suffered from low levels of morale and competence.<sup>586</sup> Similarly, a recent report on reform of the Pakistani police says that: “There is a broad consensus in Pakistan that after decades of abuse and neglect, its police force is failing to combat crime effectively, uphold the law, provide basic security to citizens, and fight growing militancy.”<sup>587</sup> Despite the poor overall record of the Pakistani police in combating militancy or suicide attacks, it should be acknowledged that Pakistani police have often done their best to deal with suicide attacks, but that unfortunately, As Anatol Lieven has remarked, this has often amounted to little more than “...die[ing] bravely – which the poor devils have done often enough, usually unremarked by the Western media.”<sup>588</sup>

## Targeting

In coding the WITS data I created nine separate target types. These are Unknown, Foreign Military, Local Military, Police, Paramilitary/Private Security, Local Civilian, Local Politician/Bureaucrat, Foreign Civilian, Civilian Notable, Diplomat. Many of these victim types are fairly self-explanatory, but some of them require a little explanation. ‘Paramilitary/Private security’ corresponds closely to a category of victims within the WITS database itself and covers armed individuals not belonging to any state apparatus; given the wide number of private armed groups in Af-Pak, this is particularly disparate group, but they are typically are relatively small proportion of those targeted. ‘Foreign Civilians’ are also a disparate group, but typically they are involved in foreign Aid/development projects. Finally, the category ‘Civilian notable’ are those individuals targeted who are important enough to be mentioned in the WITS data as having a particular occupation, but who are not Politicians or part of the bureaucracy.

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<sup>585</sup> Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, 176-180.

<sup>586</sup> Seth G. Jones and C. Chris Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan*, (Santa Monica: RAND, 2010), 82, 92-97.

<sup>587</sup> Abbas Hassan “Reforming Pakistan’s Police and Law Enforcement Infrastructure: Is it Too Flawed to Fix?,” *Special Report 266*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, February 2011), 6-12, accessed January 31, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/sr266.pdf>.

<sup>588</sup> Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan – A Hard Country*, (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 375.



In order to interpret the targeting and casualty data, several other points need to be borne in mind. Firstly, each attack may have multiple types of victims. While my version of the WITS data does include information on every victim of an attack, dealing with all of this information with regards to targeting is basically unmanageable. The reason why can be seen if we consider trying to break down attacks into proportions. If we use all of the victim types from all attacks, then the number of victims will be greater than the number of attacks, and is not clear what denominator we should use instead. As a consequence, when I coded the data, I inferred from each individual report description what the *primary* victim type of each attack was so that it is possible to get a sense of who is being attacked most, at the loss of some resolution in the data.

In addition, the WITS database also reports whether or not each victim type was targeted or whether they were victimised indiscriminately.<sup>589</sup> There are two points that need to be made regarding this. Firstly, this allows us to determine the numbers and proportions of victims who were intentionally targeted compared to those who are ‘collateral damage.’ Secondly, as would be expected, most primary victim types were also targeted. However, a non-negligible proportion of attacks feature a primary victim type who were *not* also targeted, particularly in Afghanistan. I do not believe this substantively affects my analysis, but it is worth noting.

### **Civilian Victimisation**

While most of the data on the use of suicide attacks came from the WITS database, in order to test Hultman’s theory of civilian victimisation, I had to compile data from a number of online sources.

For Afghanistan, the number of Taliban killed 2004-2010 are a mean of the figures reported on Wikipedia or just the single figure reported if no range was reported.<sup>590</sup> The numbers of NATO forces killed are from the iCasualties website.<sup>591</sup> The number of civilians killed per year by suicide attacks came from the WITS data. For Pakistan, the casualty figures for both the Taliban and Pakistani security forces were taken from the South Asia Terrorism Portal.<sup>592</sup> While the Civilians killed per year again came from WITS. Data used in the analysis of

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<sup>589</sup> Actually, the original WITS data makes a distinction between those who were attacked indiscriminately and those who were collateral damage. As the latter were a vanishingly small proportion of all attacks, I have collapsed the two categories.

<sup>590</sup> “War in Afghanistan (2001 – Present),” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia*, accessed June 13, 2012, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_\(2001%E2%80%93present\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001%E2%80%93present)).

<sup>591</sup> “Operation Enduring Freedom,” iCasualties.org, accessed June 14, 2012, <http://icasualties.org/oef/>.

<sup>592</sup> “Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2012,” *South Asian Terrorism Portal*, accessed June 13, 2012, <http://www.satp.org/satporctp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>.

civilian victimisation in Afghanistan came from figures which have been extracted from the ‘Afghanistan War Logs’ released by the Wikileaks website. Extracted data was then published on the website of The Guardian newspaper.<sup>593</sup>

### **Google News Archive Search**

In Chapter five, I reported ‘hits’ gathered from Google’s News Archive searches.<sup>594</sup> For suicide attacks, I entered the ‘suicide bombings’ in the ‘all these words’ text box and ‘Afghanistan Pakistan’ in the ‘at least one of these words’ text box. I selected ‘specified dates’ in ‘Date added to Google News’ pull down menu and selected the dates 01/01/2004 and 31/12/2010 (the menu is in American date format). For improvised explosive devices, I performed a similar procedure, except I substituted ‘IED’ for ‘suicide bombings’.

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<sup>593</sup> Simon Rogers, “Afghanistan war: every death mapped,” *Guardian*, June 23, 2011, accessed June 13, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/interactive/2011/jun/23/afghanistan-deaths-mapped>.

<sup>594</sup> “Google News Archive Search,” Google.com, accessed September 17, 2012, [https://news.google.com/news/advanced\\_news\\_search?as\\_drrb=a](https://news.google.com/news/advanced_news_search?as_drrb=a).

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