THESIS

AGENCY AND STRUCTURE AS DETERMINANTS OF FEMALE SUICIDE TERRORISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THREE CONFLICT REGIONS

By Matthew P. Dearing
Naval Postgraduate School

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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

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Matthew P. Dearing

December 2009

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This thesis addresses the question, why do some insurgent groups use female suicide bombers while others avoid this tactic? Afghanistan is an example of a conflict zone where the propensity for female suicide terrorism is lower than other conflict regions, such as Iraq and Sri Lanka. Strategic calculations and materialist gains play a unique role in influencing organizational behavior, but deeper structural considerations such as norms, institutional barriers, and the dynamics of conflict also influence the agency of actors. Realist approaches provide limited explanatory power in addressing the variation in the use of female suicide terrorism; constructivism provides a better model toward addressing individual, organizational and societal acceptance of this tactic, particularly as it relates to women. The case of the Taliban insurgency and its limited use of female suicide bombers suggest that factors other than materialist imperatives are at play. The comparative study of female suicide bombings has immediate policy and counterterrorism implications, but it can also shed light on the debate between materialist and constructivist approaches in international relations theory and in the formulation of military doctrine.

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requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses the question, why do some insurgent groups use female suicide bombers while others avoid this tactic? Afghanistan is an example of a conflict zone where the propensity for female suicide terrorism is lower than other conflict regions, such as Iraq and Sri Lanka. Strategic calculations and materialist gains play a unique role in influencing organizational behavior, but deeper structural considerations, such as norms, institutional barriers, and the dynamics of conflict also influence the agency of actors. Realist approaches provide limited explanatory power in addressing the variation in the use of female suicide terrorism; constructivism provides a better model toward addressing individual, organizational and societal acceptance of this tactic, particularly as it relates to women. The case of the Taliban insurgency and its limited use of female suicide bombers suggest that factors other than materialist imperatives are at play. The comparative study of female suicide bombings has immediate policy and counterterrorism implications, but it can also shed light on the debate between materialist and constructivist approaches in international relations theory and in the formulation of military doctrine.

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I. RESEARCH QUESTION AND APPROACH

A. INTRODUCTION

The incidence of suicide terrorism, with its associated global implications, has increased exponentially since the 1980s.[1] Since 1981, there have been over 1,944 suicide attacks globally,[2] most emanating from Islamic fundamentalist organizations.[3] Suicide terrorism attempts to achieve its objective through its brutish nature, widespread physical and psychological impacts, and the socio-political ramifications it generates. While male suicide missions tend to represent the norm of these kinds of attacks, female suicide missions bring much stronger reverberations on the psyche of societies. Suicide attacks involving women have been organized by groups such as Hamas and Fatah in Israel, Chechen separatists in Russia, Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Kurdistan Workers Party in Turkey, Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party in Lebanon, and many others. Many of the most recent female suicide missions have been organized with the assistance of Al Qaeda, particularly in Iraq and Somalia. There are a variety of motives, influences and drivers behind the organizational use of female suicide bombers to include shock-and-awe publicity, shaming the enemy, enhancing the recruitment pool, adaptive tactics, changing the profile set of attackers, and other intentions that will be closely analyzed in this thesis.

---

1. This thesis will use the terms suicide attack, suicide mission and suicide terrorism in order to represent insurgents, militants, criminals and terrorists who conduct suicide operations. This thesis includes operatives who may have unknowingly become suicide bombers (e.g., children or the handicapped), since post-attack analysis of bombings is limited and must assume the assailants were aware of their actions. Suicide attacks are, as Robert Pape defines, a mission in which "the method of attack … requires his or her death in order to succeed." See: Robert Pape, Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (New York: Random House, 2005), 10.

2. Dataset records from 1981 to June 30, 2008, were compiled by Assaf Moghadam using the National Counterterrorism Center Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (NCTC) and data from the University of Haifa Suicide Terrorism Database. Unless otherwise stated, all suicide attack data in this thesis is derived from this source.

3. Assaf Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008); Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2008/09): 46–78.

There have been over 320 suicide bombings in Afghanistan since 2001.[4] This phenomenon was unmentioned during the Soviet invasion and occupation of the 1980s, an era in Afghanistan that did not experience a single suicide bombing.[5] In comparison, there have been over 1,200 suicide attacks in Iraq since 2003, over 50 of which were conducted by women.[6] In Sri Lanka, at least 21 percent of suicide attacks have involved women.[7] As some contend, female participation in suicide attacks is expanding "ideologically, logistically and regionally" across the world.[8] However, to date in Afghanistan, 100 percent of suicide attacks have been planned and orchestrated by men. What explains the absence of female suicide bombers in Afghanistan? Why have we seen female suicide bombers in Sri Lanka and several Middle Eastern countries but not in this conflict region? Most studies of suicide terrorism analyze the factors that explain the occurrence of this phenomenon. This thesis takes a unique approach by pinpointing and analyzing the components that tend to inhibit the use of female suicide bombers in Afghanistan. Particularly, why has Afghanistan, a country plagued with over 30 years of conflict, not experienced a similar path of martyrdom that other Islamic and some non-Islamic nations have faced when embroiled with insurgency and terrorism? While this

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4. From 2004 to end of 2008, there were 323 suicide bombings in Afghanistan. Data available from Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), National Counterterrorism Center Database, http://wits.nctc.gov/Main.do.

5. The first suicide attack in Afghanistan was an attack on the famous mujahideen commander Ahmed Shah Massoud at Khwaja Bahauddin on September 9, 2001, by Arab al-Qaeda members. See: Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 582–584.

6. From 2004 to end of 2008, there were 1211 suicide attacks in Iraq, according to WITS. Since 2003, there have been over 50 female suicide bombers in Iraq, according to the Iraqi Internal Ministry. See: Al Shabah Al-Jadid, "Number of Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq Increased," in *Middle East Media Research Institute*, May 20, 2009, http://www.thememriblog.org/blog_personal/en/16552.htm.

7. From 1987 to May 2009, there have been 109 suicide attacks involving the Tamil Tigers, 23 of which were done by women. See: the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), "Suicide attacks by the LTTE," http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/data_suicide_killings.htm.

8. Karla J. Cunningham, "Cross Regional Trends in Female Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26 (2003): 171–195.

study does not deny that women in Afghanistan could carry out attacks in the future, these are likely to be few and would reflect idiosyncratic motivations as opposed to an emerging pattern.

The utility of suicide bombing as a tactic is not unique to any particular movement; it has been utilized as a prime method by nearly every organization choosing to implement women as suicide bombers. However, behind every tactic an organization uses, larger societal issues are at stake. The purpose of this thesis is to understand why this tactic has largely been absent among insurgents in Afghanistan. It will identify and analyze antecedent conditions; specifically social elements of agency and structure present in Afghanistan that affects the propensity of individuals and organizations to implement a female suicide bomber campaign.[9]

B. APPROACH

This thesis uses the conceptualizations and assumptions of the constructivist approach to understand the causes of the dependent variables. The relationship between the individual and the social structure is viewed differently between rationalists and constructivists.[10] Rationalists view structure as a "function of competition and the distribution of material capabilities" and view rational acts as those that produce outcomes that maximize the interests of the state.[11] Constructivists recognize the utility of material factors in the process of agency, but they focus more on "norms and shared understandings of legitimate behavior." Rather than being driven purely by self-interest, actors make choices based on what is considered legitimate within the structure of

9. Agency refers to the role of individuals (or organizations) and their actions, beliefs and interests. Structure refers to the systems or institutions a society and its agents construct, such as religion, politics, or economies (all with various identities and interests), which affect an agent's norms and behavior. It is assumed that structure and agency are inherently intertwined. While structure on agency is "constitutive and causal," actor's interests and beliefs also play a significant role in influencing structure. See: Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 184–189, and Wendt, "Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425; Jeffrey Ian Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism: Toward a Causal Model," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, no. 3 (1993): 317–329.

10. K.M. Fierke, "Constructivism," *in International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, ed. Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith (Oxford University Press, 2007), 166–184.

11. Ibid., 171.

society's values, norms and other institutions. Structures or institutions restrict and also compose the identity of individuals, organizations and states. Relationships and norms form around political, social and cultural factors thus developing an evolving structure, one that creates space for agency, or the ability of individuals to influence the environment they live in.[12]

A central proposition of this thesis is that the presence of certain structural inhibitors in the society may affect insurgent decisions to use female suicide bombers. These structures may also affect women's agency and thus their propensity to embrace martyrdom. Structural factors are not universal across cultures and may involve institutions that are unique to only one society, such as the social code ethnic Pashtuns in Afghanistan abide by—Pashtunwali. The presence or absence of structural factors and women's agency evolving from these factors could pinpoint an increased or decreased propensity of insurgent groups to utilize female suicide bombers in their range of strategic or operational tactics. This paper does not seek to discount rational material objectives behind organizations implementing suicide attacks; these are certainly prevalent and part of the overall military strategy. However, it is the primary argument of this thesis that a constructivist approach, as opposed to a realist approach, provides a more comprehensive explanation behind the potential emergence of female suicide terrorism in Afghanistan. That the Taliban have yet to implement a female suicide campaign reflects larger considerations at hand than mere materialist imperatives.

This study can help analysts understand the structural characteristics that lead societies in conflict toward accepting the use of female suicide bombers. While realist strategies and tactics play a unique role in influencing organizational behavior, deeper structural considerations such as norms, institutional barriers, the role of conflict and how they influence ideological and normative considerations of individuals and society are important. Indeed societies value certain behaviors over others and suicide terrorism is a paradigm that should not last longer than the conflict it's associated with. Ultimately, this study helps us understand the conflict in Afghanistan. It enables us better to

12. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425.

understand the causes of a dangerous terrorist phenomenon and how to effectively combat it.[13] It can also shed light on the debate between materialist and constructivist approaches in international relations theory, particularly as they apply to the formulation of military doctrine.

C. COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY OF THREE CONFLICT REGIONS

This thesis, in part, represents a comparative analysis of three conflict regions: Sri Lanka (1987–08), Iraq (2003–08), and Afghanistan (1979–89 and 2002–2008).[14] The primary question these case studies address is why do some conflict regions experience female suicide bombers while Afghanistan has not? These case studies are chosen primarily for their diversity in ethnic and religious makeup, levels of development, variety in geographical regions, political and operational nature of insurgent organizations, and the variety of time spans. While there are valuable similarities to each case study, each also brings unique conditions to the overall comparative analysis of women's agency in conflict.

The Tamil Tigers of Sri Lanka began a suicide bombing campaign in 1987 and continued until their defeat in 2009. They are a secular, "equal opportunity organization," employing nearly as many female bombers as they do men. There have been at least 23 female suicide operations in Sri Lanka versus 86 male suicide operations since 1987.[15]

---

13. While there has not been a female suicide attack in Afghanistan to date, the Taliban has threatened (but not proven) that a "significant number of women have joined the ranks of the Taliban." See: "Taliban Vows Suicide Attacks by Women," *MEMRI*, October 14, 2008, http://www.thememriblog.org/urdupashtu/blog_personal/en/10497.htm.

14. One of the weaknesses of this thesis is the absence of first-person interviews of women in each conflict region. One gains a much more nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in warfare and how individuals are affected by it through personal interviews. A combination of constraints including time, resources and the reality of strictly conservative societies makes first-person interviews impractical for this endeavour. The author anticipates that an understanding of scholarly literature, events in the region and a review of interviews by other researchers will provide sufficient background toward the thesis argument.

15. The number of suicide attacks varies depending on which database one uses. These particular numbers were derived from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), "Suicide attacks by the LTTE," http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/data_suicide_killings.htm; the National Counterterrorism Center places the count at 108, while Hoffman and McCormick place the number at least 200. See: "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (2004): 256. How one distinguishes a suicide mission can affect the numbers. For example, if three bombers detonate in one location, that could be counted as one suicide mission or three.

Insurgent groups in Iraq began using female suicide bombers only a few months after the U.S. invasion in 2003. In 2008, the country experienced an enormous increase of female volunteers, with 32 killing themselves by year's end.[16] Afghanistan, under the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) along with its Soviet occupying patron experienced a bloody insurgency from 1979–1989. Many of the cultural and structural factors present in Afghanistan today were evident then. Prior to 2001, there were no recorded male or female suicide bombers in Afghanistan.[17]

Each case study will be analyzed under three propositions with supportive indicators serving as research parameters to develop correlation and determine how structure affects the propensity of sub-state actors to implement female suicide bombers. These propositions are based on Jeffrey Ian Ross' Model of Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism, which outlines ten structural variables that lead to political terrorism.[18]

D. PROPOSITIONS

Each proposition has the same dependent variable and will be measured in the same way as shown below. The first proposition is concerned with structural conditions insurgent organizations face, specifically, are insurgent groups supported by society and other organizations that provide consistent resources, refuge and freedom of movement.

P.1: Generally, the less an insurgent organization finds the operational environment permissible, the more likely it will rely upon female suicide bombers as a tactic.

Dependent Variable: Insurgent organizations' use of female suicide bombers.

Indicators:

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16. Iraqi Interior Ministry Data, Al-Sabah Al-Jadid, May 20, 2009, published on *The Memri Blog*, http://www.thememriblog.org/blog_personal/en/16552.htm.

17. Waliullah Rahmani, "Combating the Ideology of Suicide Terrorism in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor* 4, No. 21 (November 2, 2006). For background on the first recorded suicide bombing in Afghanistan, see: Steve Coll, 582–584.

18. Jeffrey Ian Ross, "Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism: Toward a Causal Model," *Journal of Peace Research* 30, No. 3 (1993): 317–329.

- Use of female suicide bombers
- Social support of female suicide bombers

Independent Variable: A non-permissive security environment for insurgents

Indicators

- A geographic environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions
- A social environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions
- External support provided to insurgent organizations is high
- Success of counter-terrorist / insurgency organizations is high

The doctrine of security dilemma argues that perceived external threats on a group's security will generate a successive buildup of hostility that provokes further action by external groups, thus provoking another reaction by the former, and so on.[19] This argument is frequently addressed to explain the escalating relationships between states, but the idea also applies to the relationship between individuals, clans, tribes and political organizations. This question looks at whether a significant security dilemma exists within the conflict region, which may escalate or alter insurgent group tactics to include the implementation of female suicide bombers. The proposition focuses on the level of physical pressure emanating from the state security apparatus,[20] such as containment of resources (weapons, recruits and funding) from external suppliers, constraints placed on mobility and amount of offensive attacks carried out on the organization. This question will be answered by analyzing the body of literature related to the insurgency, assessing the frequency of attacks carried out by insurgent groups and

19. Philop G. Cerny, "Terrorism and the new security dilemma," *Naval War College Review* (Winter, 2005): 11-33 and John Herz, "Idealist Internalism and the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 2, No. 2 (January 1950): 157–80.

20. The state's security apparatus could also include any support it receives from international military organizations (NATO) or peacekeeping troops.

whether their tactics have changed from complex to simple.[21] As studies have shown, insurgent groups conduct thorough cost-benefit analyses of operations, thus one would expect that a more complex attack would require a higher quality militant, more in-depth planning and training, and greater freedom of movement than simple attacks require.[22]

This proposition also seeks to address what level of support insurgent organizations hold within the society in which they operate. A primary indicator of this level of support will come from survey data and empirical analysis of conflict literature. Do insurgent groups have a relative level of freedom from counterinsurgent forces? Are areas cut off from counterinsurgent mobility that gives insurgents a place of refuge?

Jeffrey Record argues there has not been a successful insurgency where foreign support was absent.[23] Support to insurgencies is generally referred to (though not exclusively) as financial, logistical or ideological in nature. It is assumed that groups receiving assistance from foreign organizations endorsing female suicide bombers may also participate in female suicide operations.[24] In some areas the demographics of female suicide bomber participants tend to differ from their male counterparts particularly in terms of country of origin. Among radical Islamist groups like Al Qaeda in Iraq the trend is that more female suicide operatives participate in martyrdom within their host country, whereas male suicide bombers tend to be foreign.[25] Therefore, foreign influence would likely need to extend to some form of leverage on local women in order to facilitate

---

21. It will be assumed that more complex attacks (asymmetric ambushes, high explosive IEDs, etc.) suggest greater freedom of operation for insurgent groups, while simpler attacks (grenade throwing) suggest less freedom of action.

22. Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, "The Quality of Terror," *American Journal of Political Science* 49, No. 3 (July 2005): 515-530; C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 3 (November/December 2004): 489-504 and C. Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: A New Look at the Militancy-Madrasah Connection," *Asia Policy*, no. 4 (July 2007): 107–134.

23. Jeffrey Record, *Beating Goliath Why Insurgencies Win* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2007), 23.

24. The endorsement of female suicide bombers is defined here as some form of legal or scholarly affirmation by religious or other legitimating authorities even if tacitly, which the insurgent group abides by.

25. This trend has been the case for groups in Palestine, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Uzbekistan. As Chapter II will show, it has also been a trend among Al Qaeda-affiliated groups operating in Iraq, Pakistan, Chechnya and Somalia. There are a few incidents in which European women have participated in martyrdom operations outside their home country under the auspice of Al Qaeda.

female suicide bombers. This will be assessed by a review of relevant literature addressing foreign organizations in the conflict regions.

The second proposition is concerned with the structural foundation of the state and women's involvement within that structure:

P.2: Generally, if structural conditions inhibit female participation in the state and encourage participation in sub-state insurgent organizations, the insurgency is more likely to produce female suicide bombers.

Independent Variable: Structural processes that inhibit female participation in the state but further sub-state insurgent involvement

Indicators

- High level of societal grievances focused on structural conditions
- Structures that fail to provide employment and economic opportunities for women
- Structure of government fails to further political participation of women
- Structural processes increase female support or participation in insurgent organizations
- Insurgent organizations are recruiting women

This proposition assesses the level of structural support afforded women in the governing system, such as economic and political opportunities. One study has shown that female participants in national parliaments play a strong role in strengthening the position of women.[26] This proposition will assess women's position in society and whether rights have been established affording women greater opportunities and participation in the central government. This information will be collected by qualitatively assessing the status of women in each case.

26. Lena Wangnerud, "Women in Parliaments: Descriptive and Substantive Representation," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (June 2009): 51–69.

This proposition also looks at what role women are given within insurgent groups—organizational, combat or operational roles, logistical or other support capacity. It will assess whether access to these roles are decreasing or increasing compared with women's roles provided by the state bureaucracy. This will be examined through the empirical analysis of women's roles within insurgent groups, analysis of insurgent statements in regards to women's roles and existing relevant literature. The level of violent participation by women will be analyzed to determine whether incidents are sporadic, localized or systemic within a nation. While systemic violence may show hostilities are an acceptable alternative, sporadic and localized events could also indicate the same if the events provoke significant follow-on actions by other women.

The third proposition is concerned with the identity of martyrdom and women's participation in it.

P.3: Generally, if a sub-culture of martyrdom incorporates women, then there will be a higher propensity for women to engage in suicide missions.

Independent Variable: A sub-culture of martyrdom with involvement of women.

Indicators

- Cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerate women as martyrs
- Individual women or women's organizations openly endorsing martyrdom
- Traditional rules defining the role of women are temporarily relaxed or adjusted
- Legitimate leaders endorse female participation in martyrdom operations

This proposition looks broadly at historical traditions, narratives, symbols and other cultural tools that are used to create a sub-culture of martyrdom in a society. It will assess the expanse of what it means to be a martyr and who is given the right to participate. What constitutes a female hero? Do organizations endorse the concept? Does society embrace it? Society may honor female martyrs, but insurgent organizations may not, and vice versa. This question will be answered by looking at the historical context of martyrdom in each society and whether women play a substantial role in these traditions. Obvious signs of this will be whether women who participate in combat

operations are characterized, endorsed and emulated; the existence of women's battalions, women's networks or other sub-organizations exist to promote the insurgency; and the recruitment of female martyrs via insurgent propaganda. Assuming that women have not always been granted social consent to martyr themselves, this question looks at traditionally male-dominated spaces in society (i.e., insurgent leadership, operations and organizations) to assess whether these have relaxed to allow for female involvement. Has society reframed traditional rhetoric to endorse female participation in conflict? If historical traditions speak of heroic female martyrs, have present cultural barriers continued to restrict women from participation? Has religious and cultural language exposed new openings for women in society that makes their involvement socially acceptable?

In the following chapters, these propositions and their corresponding indicators will serve as a roadmap to assess each case study. The propositions will represent questions to be answered for each conflict region with the indicators serving as a framework to guide the analysis. The indicators will be assessed with a simple Boolean Yes (Y) / No (N) rating system (see Table 1) which will be incorporated in Chapter VI. The following values apply:

(Y) Yes / True.

(N) No / False.

(--) Maybe / Inconclusive.

Table 1. Comparative Case Study Questions

Propositions	Variable		Indicators	Iraq	Sri Lanka	PDPA	GIRoA
Generally, the less an insurgent organization finds the operational environment permissible, the more likely it will rely upon female suicide bombers as a tactic.	Dependent	Insurgent organizations use of female suicide bombers.	Use of female suicide bombers				
			Societal support of female suicide bombers				
	Independent	A non-permissive security environment for insurgents	A geographic environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions				
			A social environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions				
			External support provided to insurgent organizations is high				
			Success of counter-terrorist / insurgent organizations is high				
Generally, if structural conditions inhibit female participation in the state and further participation in sub-state insurgent organizations, the insurgency is more likely to produce female suicide bombers.	Dependent Variable and Indicators same as above						
	Independent	Structural processes that inhibit female participation in the state and further sub-state insurgent involvement	High level of societal grievances focused on structural conditions				
			Structure that fails to provide employment and economic opportunities for women				
			Structure of government fails to further political participation of women				
			Structural processes increase female support or participation in insurgent organizations				
			Insurgent organizations are recruiting women				
Generally, if a sub-culture of martyrdom incorporates women, then there will be a higher propensity for women to engage in suicide missions.	Dependent Variable and Indicators same as above						
	Independent	A sub-culture of martyrdom with involvement of women.	Cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerates women as martyrs				
			Individual women or women's organizations openly endorse martyrdom				
			Traditional rules defining the role of women are temporarily relaxed or adjusted				
			Legitimate leaders endorse female participation in martyrdom operations				

E. CONCLUSION

This thesis utilizes a comparative case study of three conflict regions. Chapter II establishes the thesis argument with a detailed assessment of relevant literature on suicide terrorism. Chapter III embarks on the case study analysis, starting with the separatist Tamil movement in Sri Lanka from 1987–2009. Chapter IV looks at the Iraq insurgency from 2003–2008. Chapter V looks at the period covering the Afghan Mujahedeen against Soviet occupation (1979–1989) as well as the Taliban insurgency from 2002–2009. A brief historical overview will be presented of each country and its conflict, and then followed by a detailed analysis of structural factors and the agency of actors in each case study. Chapter VI provides a comparative analysis and findings of the three conflict regions using a constructivist model assessing structural factors leading to political terrorism, before concluding with a section on implications and policy recommendations.

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. INTRODUCTION

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, much has been written on suicide missions; however, few analysts focus specifically on the role of women.[27] This review of literature will address three levels of theoretical consensus among scholars on the causes of suicide missions and how these theories are relevant to female involvement. The three levels of analysis are: (1) motivations on the individual level; (2) community and political concerns at the societal level; and (3) strategic and tactical imperatives at the organizational level. Each of these levels provides relevance to this thesis, which will be discussed in the following sections.

While many theories have evolved to explain the rise of suicide operations,[28] most tend to focus on a single level of analysis. Mohammed Hafez and Assaf Moghadam, influenced by scholars before them, have developed a similar framework for understanding suicide operations.[29] In attempting to deconstruct the Palestinian suicide phenomenon, Hafez developed a theoretical framework that analyzed the role of suicide attacks from multiple, interdependent levels of analyses.[30] Moghadam furthered this contribution by applying multiple levels of analysis to the global rise of suicide

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27. Karen Jacques and Paul J. Taylor "Male and Female Suicide Bombers: Different Sexes, Different Reaons?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 4 (April 2008): 304–326.

28. Pape believes that in understanding suicide operations as an organizational tactic we must look at it through the lens of a strategic "protracted suicide terrorist campaign." A suicide campaign could be limited to one target at one time, while others could be spread out at multiple targets over an extended period of time. In Pape's study, and for the purpose of this research, any organized suicide operation with a network of foot soldiers, trainers and leaders will constitute a suicide campaign. Robert Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Random House Trade, 2005), 20.

29. Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (July 1981): 379–399; Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorist Decision Making," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (June 2003): 473–507.

30. Operating dependent of each other, he dissected suicide operations onto individual, societal and organizational levels of analysis. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationalisty, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29 (2006): 165-185; Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The making of Palestinian suicide bombers* (Washington: US Institute of Peace, 2006).

terrorism.[31] These authors understood that individuals and organizations coordinating and conducting suicide operations do not operate independent of each other, but require involvement on both levels and must be understood within the context of the structural and cultural surroundings of society. Any attempt to explain suicide missions should be filtered through these interdependent levels of analysis. The following sections introduce these in the context of female involvement.

B. INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATIONS

There are a variety of individual reasons women join groups and conduct suicide operations. They may not join an organization planning to become suicide bombers; many are reluctant volunteers, pressured by peers or driven by personal crisis, such as the death of a family member.[32] Many are compelled for altruistic reasons,[33] and conduct a rational, cost-benefit analysis toward their final sacrificial act.[34] While others claim rationale cannot be easily assessed in terms of one sacrificing their life.[35] Some argue suicide attacks are motivated by a personal commitment to a larger ideological cause.[36] Among women, nationalist or religious ideologies play less of a motivating role, according to Jacques and Taylor.[37] They argue that women tend to be less influenced by ideology and more by personal issues (i.e., broken social codes, family disagreements or a desire to end their life). In addition, the authors argue that measures of recruiting women into suicide cells are driven less by religious and nationalist factors and more by

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31. Assaf Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach," in Pedahzur, ed., *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 81–107; Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*.

32. Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2006).

33. Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg, "Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists," *Deviant Behavior* 24, No. 4 (July 2003): 405–423.

34. Hoffman and McCormick (2004); Assaf Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26, No. 2 (March 2003): 65–92; Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 83–85.

35. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationalisty, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29 (2006): 165–185.

36. Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (London: Polity, 2005), 126–134.

37. Jacques and Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers," 321.

women proactively seeking a way to end their lives, pressured to follow a loved-one into the afterlife, or simply exploited by an organization.[38] In many cases women first support the cause by encouraging their husbands and family and only volunteer for suicide operations when extreme personal loss occurs. The case of Chechnya is a good example. When the nation was under threat, women were pressured to embrace historical collective identities, as front-line participants in the affairs of their nation.[39]

It is generally assumed that all suicide attacks have a greater personal meaning then the mere violent event portrays. Establishing this meaning and the context around it can help in determining the ideology influencing individuals to embrace suicide missions.[40] Adrian Mirvish argues that suicide bombers, as individuals, represent a shell around an empty mind – the "product of absolute, authoritarian" manipulation.[41] Others write of the sense of despair, humiliation, and defeat many suicide bombers experience and the mere ability to choose life or death for themselves and other innocents provides a sense of power and control where none otherwise exists.[42] Therefore, psychological responses to traumatic events, such as rape or death in the family, can have a powerful impact on a woman's choice to end her life. It could also be the factor that organizations

38. Jacques and Taylor, "Male and Female Suicide Bombers," 314–315.

39. Speckhard and Akhedova interviewed numerous family members of female suicide bombers in Chechnya and found most of the perpetrators were distraught over the loss of a loved one, were seeking revenge, and to rid their homeland of occupation. These underlying issues were wrapped in a moral narrative of *fard 'ayn* (the individual obligation to *jihad*) that has been conceptualized by Al Qaeda leadership and legitimized by legal scholars. The lack of a viable resistance force in Chechnya compelled many to accept *fard 'ayn* endorsed by the Salafi Jihad movement. Women took on the Islamic identity offered by militant jihadists in Chechnya and the roles that defined them – wearing of the *hijab*, piety, and the rejection of secular values helped merge religious and nationalist intentions with personal trauma. See: Anne Speckhard and Khapta Akhmedova, "Black Widows and beyond: Understanding the motivations and life trajectories of Chechen female terrorists," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organization*, ed. Cindy D. Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 100–121.

40. However, one scholar theorizes that suicide attacks could be the ultimate in existential warfare—to kill as many innocent humans as possible. See: Israel W. Charny, *Fighting Suicide Bombing* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2007), 93.

41 Adrian Mirvish, "Suicide bombers, authoritarian minds, and the denial of others," *Judaism* 50, no. 4, (Fall 2001): 387–397.

42. Anne Speckhard, "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 11 (November 2008): 1023–1051; Speckhard and Akhmedova (2008), 100–122; Interview with Dr. Eyad Sarraj, Gaza Psychiatric Centre, shown on *Suicide Killers*, Peirre Rehov (City Lights Pictures, 2007).

exploit in order to recruit a woman. This was the case for many female recruits serving in *Al Nitaqayn* (the women's battalion in Al Qaeda in Iraq).[43]

Others argue that agency is not even a factor for individuals, as Ohnuki-Tierney exemplifies in her work on Japanese Kamikaze pilots in WWII.[44] She argues that many were forced into becoming "martyrs" for the nation and would be executed if they backed out of it. The absence of rationale behind their destiny to become martyrs forced many pilots to turn toward Nihilism for their inspiration. Like Kamikaze pilots, the oppression many women live through compels them to reconstruct "the normative ideals of the society," which often involves a reinterpretation of one's values and judgments.[45] The act of a suicide attack is often considered a means to regain one's control over fate.[46] While these features provide insight into individual drivers for suicide operations, their real asset is establishing contextual markers that organizations attempt to exploit within the suicide evolutionary chain.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL IMPERATIVES

A second level of analysis focuses on material incentives at the organizational level. Suicide attacks are a logical tactic or strategy for a weaker organization to employ, particularly since most suicide operations create more casualties and damage than direct assaults, ambushes or any other type of insurgent attack. Outside of attacks such as those on September 11, 2001, suicide missions generally require little in terms of resources, manpower and military training but they inflict more physical and psychological damage than other attacks. They are often an extension of an organization's larger political strategy and survival.[47] A suicide attack is coordinated days or weeks in advance,

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43. Many were pressured into choosing service as suicide bombers or recruiters of future bombers, such as Samira Ahmed Jassim, captured in January 2009 for attempting to persuade women into joining the cell. Tuty Raihanah Mostarom, "Al Qaeda's Female Jihadists: The Islamist Ideological View," *RSIS Commentary*, no. 15 (February 2009), http://www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/RSIS0142009.pdf.

44. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze Diaries: Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

45. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 147.

46. Rosemarie Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006), 33.

47. Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 27; Hafez, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*.

planned with detail, and often implemented with precision accuracy. Large attacks at popular foreign resorts or institutions of prestige may seek to target the sentiment of foreign political bodies.[48] Smaller attacks may seek to undermine the semblance of stability and normalcy, thus undermining the confidence in that nation's government.

While men coordinate most suicide operations, recent trends show that global terrorist groups are becoming more dependent upon women in their strategic efforts.[49] Organizations take into account the myriad of risks and vulnerabilities involved with implementing a suicide campaign. Due to individual, societal and ideological constraints, organizations must assess the strategic versus the tactical value in conducting a male or female suicide operation. Pedahzur suggests three stages organizations go through prior to going forward with a suicide attack. First, elites make a rational decision to use suicide terrorism with the clear risk of losing public support. The second stage involves recruitment of individuals motivated on an ideological basis. The third stage represents the training of the individual, bringing him/her to a mental state of "fully reconciled with the purpose."[50] This stage may appear similar to a cult, sequestering an individual until they are completely brainwashed;[51] others suggest this stage brings legitimate social benefits to the individual—of belonging to a community—and is likely a feature organizations will exploit in their information campaign.[52] Female suicide bombers are a growing advantage for insurgent and terrorist organizations as they can strike at larger military units, influence international public perceptions, and employ immediate, cost-effective, tactical successes. However, they can also have long-term strategic implications that states can easily address through information operations—the controversial exploitation of women carried out by insurgents.

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48. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 9; Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Atlantic Monthly* 291, no. 5 (June 2003): 1–10.

49. Debra Zedalis, "Beyond the Bombings: Analyzing female suicide bombers," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organization*, ed. Cindy D. Ness, (New York: Routledge, 2008), 49–68.

50. Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, 26.

51. Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terorrism," 3.

52. Mario Ferrero, "Martyrdom Contracts," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (December 2006): 855–877.

Models of organizational imperatives often revolve around realist objectives such as signaling to the enemy the extent of future attacks;[53] coercive bargaining or negotiation through violence;[54] competitive outbidding—where insurgent groups compete amongst each other for primacy;[55] and internal recruiting.[56] Nick Ayers studied organizations in Iraq and found that most suicide attacks did not follow these objectives; instead suicide operations were used for short-term tactical payoffs.[57] While some organizations may use female suicide bombers for the mentioned strategic payoffs they also realize the more immediate tactical benefits: delivering mass casualties and structural damages by utilizing the "smart bomb" precision a female suicide agent can provide; generating intense psychological effects on civilian population; acquiring access to areas direct assaults cannot provide; and minimizing material and human risks offensive operations require.[58]

Ideology can act as a bridge, linking individual with organizational and societal concerns. Authors tend to disagree on the level of influence any particular ideology plays in suicide terrorism. Robert Pape focuses upon nationalist concerns and discounts the primacy of Islamic fundamentalism, while Assaf Moghadam argues that along with the spread of Al Qaeda, their particular ideology—Salafi Jihad—has played an essential role in the recent increase of global attacks.[59] Pape argues that suicide terror campaigns are aimed directly at democratic nations occupying a terrorist group's perceived homeland.[60]

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53. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 30; Bruce Hoffman and GH McCormick, "Terrorism, signaling and suicide attack," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 4 (2004): 243–281.

54. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 20–24.

55. Mia M. Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 61–88.

56. Jon Elster, "Motivations and Beliefs in Suicide Missions," in Diego Gambetta, ed., *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (New York: Oxford Press, 2005), 234–258.

57. Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no. 9 (September 2008): 856–882.

58. For more on tactical utility of suicide attacks see Luis de la Corte and Andrea Gilmenez-Salinas, "Suicide Terrorism as a Tool of Insurgency Campaigns: Functions, Risk Factors, and Countermeasures," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, no. 1 (April 2009): 11–19.

59. Moghadam, "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks," *International Security* 33, no. 3 (Winter 2008/09): 46–78.

60. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 23.

For example, the 1983 U.S. Embassy car bombing in Lebanon was directed at the United States for its alliance with Israel, a democratic nation occupying areas of Lebanon. However, this explanation fails to explain the use of suicide terrorism by non-state and transnational actors such as Al Qaeda. Moghadam agrees that localized, traditional conflicts represent a fight against occupation, but global patterns of suicide operations like Al Qaeda, embody the contemporary tactical and strategic utility of martyrdom.[61] Partly as a necessity, partly for strategic value, global Salafi Jihad[62] organizations have modeled themselves on past nationalist groups like Fatah and Hezbollah and even embraced some of their nationalist aims. Al Qaeda's spread encompasses suicide bomber technology, instruction, and facilitators in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Chechnya. Whether conducted by secular nationalists or the Global Jihadi Movement (GJM), these are rational acts often perceived as desperate, but highly coordinated by weaker organizations, assuming a "strategy of necessity" against much stronger states.[63] As the Egyptian scholar Sheik Yusuf al Qaradawi admits in response to condoning suicide terrorism, "I cannot confront the enemy's point of strength, only it's weakness."[64]

Due to strategic imperatives such as limited resources and the inability to fight conventionally against state security forces, organizations such as Al Qaeda are compelled to recruit and train female operatives. In order to do so, social approval and cultural legitimacy are required. These social and cultural pressures are what instrumentalist leaders and organizations must come to grips with when harnessing and controlling social movements.[65] Just as women are members of the organization, they also belong to a family and social sphere facing extreme violence. Therefore, the choice to engage women in violent jihad will test the viability of an organization's ideology as well as that of the social movement behind it. However, organizations and societies have

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61. Assaf Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of Dying to Win," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, no. 8 (December 2006): 707–729.

62. Salafi Jihad is a radical Islamic ideology embraced by Al Qaeda that endorses strict interpretations of jihad and the Quran.

63. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 13; Record, *Beating Goliath*, 132.

64. Ilan Ziv and Serge Gordey, *Human Weapon* (First Run / Icarus Films, 2002).

65. Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28 (2005): 353–373.

a mutual relationship of exploitation. A society in peril needs the organization to facilitate martyrdom operations and the organization needs society's approval to carry them out. The following will explain how society influences the process of female suicide terrorism. Society delivers physical and moral support, grants legitimacy, and provides essential context of the conflict requiring extreme measures.

D. SOCIETAL MOTIVATIONS

A third theory that arises from the literature on suicide operations involves community and political concerns at the societal level. The radical organizations and individuals involved in female suicide operations are initially products of social movements. Social movements are structures that provide pathways for organizations to indulge in violent acts such as martyrdom operations that would otherwise be considered outside the boundaries of acceptable behavior.[66] Legitimate authorities, under intense pressure from the shifting pattern of societal norms, tend to promote or celebrate the violent events.[67] Hamas and Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade are examples of groups implementing suicidal violence partly in response to extreme social pressures placed on them by society faced with occupation and the external threat from Israel.[68] From marketing campaigns that employ multimedia technology to clever rhetorical strategies, the cult of martyrdom becomes ingrained in children and adults. Martyrs are made national heroes in Palestine and Lebanon, with institutions built to provide services for family members left behind.[69] Religious and legal statements by prominent figures including martyrs themselves provide the legitimacy society needs to accept female suicide operations. This is important, since prior to the first female martyr in Palestine in 2002, women played very minor roles in terrorism. Approval is granted by society in a

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66. Ami Pedahzur, "Toward an analytical model of suicide terrorism—a comment." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16 (2004): 841–844.

67. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29 (2006): 165–185.

68. Mohammed M. Hafez, *Manufactoring Human Bombs: The Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 53.

69. *The Living Martyr: Inside the Hezbollah* (Princeton: Films for the Humanities & Sciences, 2001).

variety of ways to include religious consent, temporary justification, access to willing recruits, construction of networks and cells, and most importantly—the societal logic that supports suicide terrorism.[70]

Social movements such as these can be characterized by three foundational principles: identity, opposition, and totality.[71] Similar to labor movements, religious and nationalist aims take on a mythic ideal of historical oppression that become larger collective identities. Islamic fundamentalist movements have characteristics that often parallel those seen in Europe, such as the French Revolution, which had liberation ideology on top of traditional Catholic principles; they had saints, heroes and "martyrs of liberty."[72] The principal of opposition is a way for anger, discontent and frustration realized in all facets of society to be redirected at the other side. Opposition fuels a cult of paranoia in which social groups perceive everyone else as a potential enemy. Palestinians frequently cite that all Israelis are soldiers, including women and children, and thus worthy of targeting.[73] The principle of totality is the idea that every facet of life must be directed at overthrowing the opposition. The purpose of life becomes resistance, and every means available is legitimate, including suicide bombings. Even civilian targets become publicly acceptable in cultures suffering extreme repression.[74] Religious ideology helps society embrace the totality of struggle, as if it were a cosmic undertaking that requires any means necessary.[75] Social movements can easily become totalitarian when language and actions commit to using extreme violence to eliminate the opposition.

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70. David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?" (2005); Cindy Ness, "In the Name of the Cause" (2005); Debra Zedalis, *Female Suicide Bombers* (International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), June 2004); Susan McKay, "Girls as 'weapons of terror' in Northern Uganda and Sierra Leonean rebel fighting forces," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 385–397; Carolyn Nordstrom, "Gendered War," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 399–411.

71. Michel Wieviorka, *The Making of Terrorism*, trans., David Gordon White (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5.

72. Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 155.

73. Ziv and Gordev, *Human Weapon* (2002).

74. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 68, 81, 90.

75. Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

As previously mentioned, Al Qaeda and Salafi Jihadist groups modeled their operations off of the successes in Lebanon and Palestine. These groups observed the success female suicide bombers had tactically, as well as in motivating others to join the movement. In Palestine, most female operations were done by secular groups like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during the first and second *Intifada*. Prior to 2002, society was unclear of the role women should have in violent resistance movements against Israel. When Wafa Idris (sent by the Fatah military wing, Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade) detonated her explosives in 2002, perceptions changed dramatically. She was immediately hailed as a national hero:

> It is a woman who teaches you today a lesson in heroism, who teaches you the meaning of Jihad, and the way to die a martyr's death. It is a woman who has shocked the enemy, with her thin, meager, and weak body… It is a woman who blew herself up, and with her exploded all the myths about women's weakness, submissiveness, and enslavement. … It is a woman who has now proven that the meaning of (women's) liberation is the liberations of the body from the trials and tribulations of this world … and the acceptance of death with a powerful, courageous embrace.[76]

While official reactions were reluctant, pressure from society compelled organizations like Hamas to embrace female suicide bombing. In the weeks after the bombing, hundreds of women volunteered to become martyrs: "We have 200 young women from the Bethlehem area alone ready to sacrifice themselves for the homeland," said one leader of Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.[77] Religious organizations like Hamas were far behind secular groups like Fatah in organizing female bombers. Part of the problem was that religious organizations were slow to realize society's demands calling for greater violence. Once realized, organizations needed to ensure legitimate authorities vetted the process, and then groups could harness the momentum of society.

76. Al-Sha'ab (Egypt: February 1, 2002) as quoted in Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 148.

77. Graham Usher, "At 18, Bomber Became a Martyr and Murderer," *The Guardian*, March 30, 2002.

Since the mid-1990s, a rise in Palestinian public support for terrorist activities against Israel had gone up from one-third in 1994–1999 to over two-thirds after the start of the Second Intifada in 2001.[78] That year, the Saudi High Islamic Council gave the legal justification for female suicide attacks against Israel.[79] Some scholars even promoted official preparation for the inevitable inclusion of women on the front lines of war, such as Muhammad Khayr Haykal when the conditions were subject to *fard 'ayn*:

> From this we believe it is incumbent upon the Islamic state to prepare training centers for women so that they can learn the use of arms and methods of fighting in them.[80]

Prior to the Second Intifada, most religious scholars asserted that women were ineligible for martyrdom operations.[81] Suicide attacks did not fit the traditional role of women, who were generally restricted to the home. After the first suicide attack, Hamas was faced with hundreds of female volunteers seeking to become martyrs. By 2007, six fatawas had been identified allowing women to conduct martyrdom operations.[82] From these official pronouncements came the need for a structured language, history and collective memory devoted to explaining female martyrdom to the Islamic world. Narratives were woven to remind society of the direct role women previously held in supporting jihad, such as inspiring men through rituals and chants and leading them into battle. Names such as Salaym Bint Malhand, Umm Omara, and the youngest wife of the Prophet Muhammad—Ayesha, who led troops at the Battle of the Camel in 656—decorate the history of female heroines and continue to inspire many.[83] One jihadi magazine makes a direct link to the past:

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78. Pape, *Dying to Win*, 82.

79. Some argue that it is mainly because of religious sanctions such as these that "permit the use of violence as an act of defense and preserve the will of God in Islamic communities." Amritha Venkatraman, "Religious Basis for Islamic Terrorism: The Quran and Its Interpretations," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30, no. 3 (2007): 229–248.

80. Haykal, al-Jihad wa-l-qital fi al-siyasa al-shara'iyya, as quoted in David Cook (2008): 41–42.

81. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," (2008): 25.

82. Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 405.

83. David E. Jones, *Women Warriors: A History* (Dulles: Potomac Books Inc., 1997), 18–19.

> My sister you might hear these stories and think that they have been fabricated … but once you will learn that even today there are women similar to those of the past, you will believe the stories about the past.[84]

These stories provide valuable information and personal connection to the collective memory and help organizations develop contemporary frames and ideologies. But as one author writes, these collective histories are a social construction.[85] While these events may have occurred, consensus is that most tales of female participation in jihad are examples of uncommon valor in uncommon circumstances. The importance is not in the truth of the stories, but how organizations exploit them and what compels society to perceive them as real. These stories provide a framework for individuals to link their current struggles with those of the past. Namely, organizations sought to exploit the role of religious symbolism and terminology in the context of women's virtue.[86] They introduced a narrative of "the sacred" in order to redefine the roles of women in society.[87] In Lebanon, an elderly woman supportive of Hezbollah stated:

> We are the daughters of Zena and the daughters of Fatima; we are advancing with weapons behind the sons of Hussein and the followers of Khomeini, behind every holy warrior.[88]

Instrumentalists emphasized "mothering and sacrifice" in the same manner as secular groups have done in Nicaragua and Colombia.[89] Ness argues that secular and religious terrorism, both seeking to create different worlds, one modern, and the other

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84. Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 407.

85. Cindy D. Ness, "The Rise in Female Violence," *Daedalus* 136, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 86.

86. Karla J. Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation of Muslim Women in Palestine, Chechnya, and the Global Jihadi Movement," in *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organization*, ed., Cindy D. Ness, (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 86.

87. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," (2008): 21.

88. *The Living Martyr: Inside the Hezbollah* (2001).

89. Cunningham (2008): 86; Natalia Herrera and Douglas Porch, "Like going to a fiesta'—the role of female fighters in Columbia's FARC-EP," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 4 (December 2008): 609–634.

traditional, use similar "rhetorical strategies" to justify women's engagement in violent action. For both groups, this presents a challenge to their social orders since it redefines the traditional role of women.[90]

E. SUMMARY

This literature review presented three levels of analysis in which to frame discussions on the causes of suicide missions. The structural and cultural factors examined in each case study will touch upon individual, organizational and societal frames of reference in the development of the thesis argument. This review also provides value in understanding the absence of female suicide bombers in Afghanistan. While women's roles have been restructured by societal and organizational imperatives in the case of Chechnya, Palestine, Sri Lanka and Iraq, they have not in Afghanistan. Structural and cultural factors have limited the ability and inclination of insurgent groups to temporarily adjust women's role in society, thus providing them agency to participate in *jihad*. The case studies that follow will attempt to develop this logic and the reasons why women have not taken a more proactive role in the Taliban insurgency.

90. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," (2008), 28.

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III. CASE 1: SRI LANKA 1983–2009

This chapter will outline the history of conflict in Sri Lanka and explain the structural factors that were most decisive in creating societal discontent. It will then describe the LTTE organization and its successful attempt at representing the separatist aims of the Tamil nation. Finally, this case study will look at how the organization was able to harness and exploit cultural and historical narratives toward instituting a culture of martyrdom that venerated the concept of female agency and participation in the conflict.

A. BACKGROUND

Sri Lanka has experienced a unique culture of martyrdom distinct from those created by Islamic fundamentalists, primarily in its extraordinary use of female suicide bombers but also in the homogenous nature of their organization. While many terrorist organizations have non-indigenous volunteers and often use foreigners to conduct suicide missions, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are a predominately Tamil-select organization. Since 1987, there have been at least 109 LTTE suicide attacks, 23 of which were conducted by women, and many of the latter targeting political and military leaders.[91] Most analysts agree that Tamil suicide attacks were used primarily as special weapons to infiltrate tightly controlled military targets.[92] The utility of this tactic is not unique to the Tamil movement, and it has been a prime motive for nearly every organization choosing to implement women as suicide bombers. However, behind every tactic are larger collectives seeking recognition for their needs. These social movements are driven by norms, identity and social structures that define sub-state actors in turmoil.

91. The number of suicide attacks varies depending on which database one uses, these particular numbers were derived from the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), "Suicide attacks by the LTTE," http://satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/database/data_suicide_killings.htm; the National Counterterrorism Center places the count at 108, while Hoffman and McCormick place the number at least 200, see "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 256. How one distinguishes a suicide mission can affect the numbers, for example if three bombers detonate in one location that could be counted as one suicide mission or three. While SATP records only 23 female suicide missions, there have likely been more female suicide bombers.

92. Stephen Hopgood, "Tamil Tigers, 1987—2002" In *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, edited by Diego Gambetta, (Oxford University Press, 2005), 131–172; Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 23.

This study of female suicide bombers will seek to address how agency and structure of Tamil society were systemic factors influencing the organizational imperatives of the LTTE.[93]

In the case of Sri Lanka, I argue three primary factors suggest that a constructivist interpretation provides a more sufficient tool for understanding the use of female suicide bombers. First, a number of institutional programs promoted discrimination, suppression and violence against Tamil society; second, the LTTE organization was able to harness discontent and mobilize women as protectors of the Tamil nation; and third, the above two factors were skillfully wrapped in a narrative of cultural liberation that outlined the necessity of female martyrdom. As mentioned in the Introduction, realist notions of the utility of female suicide bombers as a military tactic provide a valuable explanation; however, the tactic's emergence is better explained by understanding the broader spectrum of components developed in this case study. The questions asked here are similar in scope to those asked in the Introduction: how do sub-state organizations choose their military strategies? Why do some insurgent groups implement female suicide bombers while others do not? Closer analysis of Tamil society in Sri Lanka and particularly the influence of the LTTE organization show that their approach cannot be understood purely by material motivations but must address social dimensions in Sri Lanka.

The conflict in Sri Lanka, one of South Asia's longest and deadliest since post-colonial independence, has recently come to a turning point, as the Sri Lanka military destroyed Tamil strongholds in the north and east and assassinated the legendary, cult-like leader of the LTTE movement, Velupillai Prabhakaran.[94] Since 1983, over 70,000 people have been killed from the separatist conflict in Sri Lanka.[95] The quarter century struggle for Tamil independence now rests on the shoulders of a broken LTTE

93. See footnote 8, in Introduction, for how agency and structure are defined.

94. "Rebels Routed in Sri Lanka After 25 Years of War," *New York Times*, May 18, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/18/world/asia/18lanka.html?_r=1.

95. K. Alan Kronstadt and Bruce Vaughn, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, (June 2009).

organization operating outside the island country.[96] Whereas the rebel force once held a de facto state (including a justice, administrative and full-scale military departments) in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, today authority over the minority Tamil population has been restored to the ethnic majority Sinhalese.[97]

There are significant reasons to use female suicide bombers over other tactics. Security forces tend to have more difficulty discerning female bombers from males due to traditional dress (a long shalwar kameez is often worn by Tamil women in Sri Lanka), conservative values that prevent men from touching or looking at women, and the LTTE's ability to create sophisticated bombs hidden in belts, brassieres or a feigned pregnancy.[98] Women are also able to penetrate hardened structures easier than men by using the above techniques.[99] Using women also harnesses psychological effects for LTTE military strategies via the extraordinary media attention female bombers bring. They are also uniquely efficient for they only require the death of one combatant, whereas direct assaults risk numerous lives. Thus, female suicide bombers bring substantial value to the asymmetric toolkit.[100] However, suicide tactics were only a temporary measure of a much larger internal struggle in Sri Lanka.

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96. Since the end of the civil war, about 250,000 Tamils have been detained in Western funded, military-run detention camps in northern Sri Lanka. "U.S. and Others Abstain from I.M.F. Vote on Sri Lanka," *New York Times*, July 26, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/27/world/asia/27lanka.html.

97. The Sinhalese community forms the majority of the 20 million population in Sri Lanka at 82 percent. Tamils, concentrated in the north and east of the island, form the largest ethnic minority in Sri Lanka at 9 percent. According to last Sri Lanka census in 2001: www.ancsdaap.org/cencon2002/papers/Sri%20Lanka/SriLanka.pdf.

98. It is unlikely the Tamil Tigers have recruited from outside Sri Lanka for suicide bombers. Their targets remain within the island nation, except for the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in India. The trends show that a majority of attacks have occurred in the north and east of the country and the capital city of Colombo. Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 56.

99. LTTE women have conducted a number of suicide missions against military, government and civilian targets in Colombo: the World Trade Center, the Temple of the Tooth and the international airport. One-quarter of their attacks, many involving women, have been aimed at assassinating political officials. The Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a female bomber on May 21, 1991. Sri Lankan president Chandrika Kumarantunga lost an eye when one female bomber attempted to kill her on December 18, 1999. Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 22.

100. LTTE suicide attacks have tended to surge during times when a military victory was important to reach a "balance of deterrence." Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism*, as quoted in Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 23.

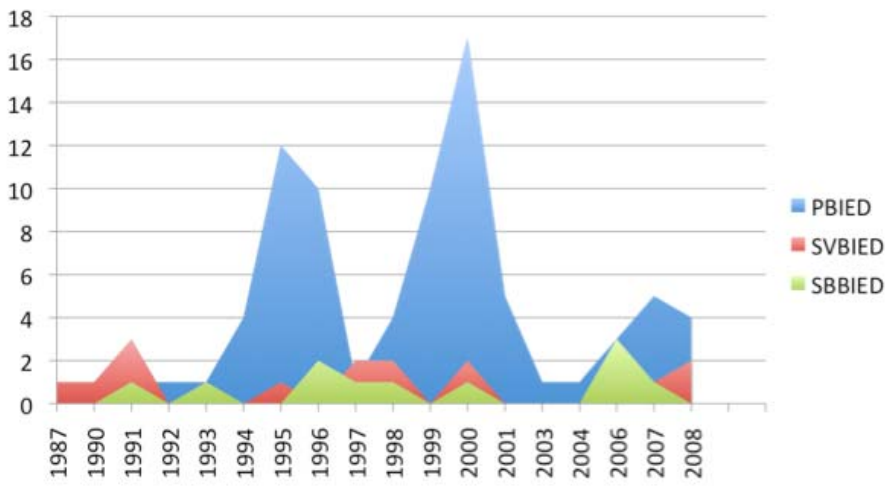

Figure 1. Suicide Attacks in Sri Lanka[101]

Insurgent and terrorist organizations are essentially political institutions, representing a perceived disenfranchised group, that act out and enforce their political views through violence. Through a "collective rationality" they seek to enact a "radical change in the status quo" by forcing amendments to the government structure or deposing leaders from their positions.[102] In many ways, the LTTE organization represented this kind of collective body that experienced and reacted to systemic and institutionalized discrimination from the Sri Lankan government. Claudia Brunner writes: "Political violence, terrorism, and resistance that take the form of suicide attacks occur in very specific contexts of asymmetric power relations."[103] In Sri Lanka, these occurred under a highly organized militant organization, borne of limited protection afforded to Tamils

101. PBIED (Person borne Improvised Explosive Device [IED]); SVBIED (suicide vehicle borne IED); SBBIED (suicide boat borne IED). Table constructed by author; data compiled from the World Incidents Tracking System, National Counterterrorism Center.

102. Martha Crenshaw, "The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice," in *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* ed., Walter Reich, (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 7–24.

103. Western scholars should keep Brunner's insight in mind; that occidentalist representations by western analysts tend to "mask colonial and postcolonial power relations and structural violence in its multiple dimensions." In other words, the West can often misinterpret relationships and perceptions other societies have with western established institutions. Claudia Brunner, "Occidentalism Meets the Female Suicide Bomber: A Critical Reflection on Recent Terrorism Debates; A Review Essay," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 32, no. 4 (2007): 969.

from the state. Western history will remember the LTTE as a terrorist organization, but Tamils will always consider them a national liberation movement.[104]

In practice and ideology, the Sri Lankan state produced and perpetuated a level of colonial domination[105] over the Tamil nation that strengthened and developed Tamil collective identity, particularly among women.[106] SJ Tambiah argues that Tamil-Sinhalese identities are constructions that did not necessarily match reality on the ground. For example, the two communities frequently inter-married, spoke both languages and often converted to Buddhism or Hinduism. Tambiah calls recent conflicts "manufactured—a truly twentieth century phenomenon."[107] This phenomenon was an inherited aspect of Portuguese, Dutch and British occupations. The first two colonizers pushed religious intolerance by favoring certain groups over others.[108] A Sinhalese community developed in the north and southwestern parts of Sri Lanka while a Tamil community consolidated in the north and east (see Figure 2).[109] Under British colonial rule, the minority Tamils were given a disproportionate share of authority. The limited agricultural yield in the Tamil territory forced Tamils to take part in civil service and administrative jobs, while the Sinhalese were employed in low-paying agricultural work. Structural barriers established by British and Tamil administrators prevented Sinhalese

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104. AS Balasingham, Liberation Tigers and the Tamil Eelam Freedom Struggle, in Suthaharan Nadarajah & Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, "Liberation struggle or terrorism? The politics of naming the LTTE," *Third World Quarterly* 26, 1 (2005): 87–100.

105. Institutional discrimination was partly a result of the colonial and hegemonic institutions established by the British prior to independence and subsequently carried over by new elites. According to Noam Chomsky, colonialism was a reflexive pattern from the British to Sinhalese – to maximize power and control over the minority ethnic group See: Noam Chomsky speaking at United Nations forum on Responsibility to Protect, 24 July 2009, http://webcast.un.org/ramgen/ondemand/pressconference/2009/pc090723pm.rm?start=00:22:35.

106. Patricia Lawrence, "The Watch of Tamil Women: Women's Acts in a Transitional Warscape," in *Women and the Contested State: Religion, Violence, and Agency in South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Monique Skidmore and Patricia Lawrence, (University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 90.

107. Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the dismantling of democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 7.

108. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 48.

109. The traditional homelands of Tamils are in Jaffna, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Trincomalee. Tamils also reside in other areas of Sri Lanka, namely the capital Colombo. They make up 13 percent of the island's 18 million inhabitants, while Sinhalese Buddhists make up about 75 percent of the population, and Muslims number about 7 percent. While most Tamils are Hindu, there are significant Christian Tamils and Muslims that speak Tamil but do not consider themselves Tamil.

entrance into the professional classes; Tamils flooded the upper and middle classes, while Sinhalese made up most of the lower class. With independence in 1948, the new government dominated by Sinhalese nationalists sought to restructure the colonial imbalance and reconstruct Sinhalese as the permanent national identity at the expense of minority Tamils.

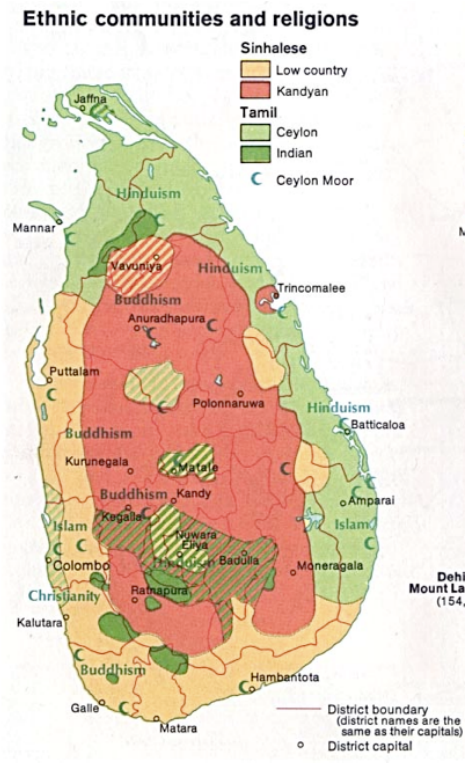

Figure 2. Map of Ethnic Communities and religions in Sri Lanka, 1976.[110]

B. STRUCTURAL FACTORS

This section will look at a number of structural factors within the Sri Lanka state that suppressed Tamil identity and facilitated ethnic violence. It will look at political and constitutional policies that discriminated against Tamils in an effort to suppress their

110. Map from: "Sri Lanka (Ethnic communities and religions, Population density, Land use and economic activity) 1976," Perry-Castaneda Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sri_lanka.html.

identity while promoting Sinhalese identity. These factors contributed to the development of a radicalized generation of youth willing to use terrorism to uphold their ethnic identity.

A major structural factor in Sri Lanka was the encouragement of ethnic outbidding instituted by Sinhalese and Buddhist elites eager to recreate a Sinhalese-only state. In 1956, the Official Language Act ("Sinhalese Only Act") was established that made Sinhalese the only official language in Sri Lanka. It was instituted with strong lobbying by pro-Sinhalese and pro-Buddhist institutions seeking to reconstitute the country on ethnic lines, calling for a "Sri Lanka for the Sinhalese."[111] Despite significant rioting by Tamils in the north, the policy was enshrined and became a mechanism for alienating Tamils from civil service jobs and the government. Within twenty years, the government developed an "institutional culture negating minority rights."[112] State jobs employing Tamil speakers declined from 30 percent to 5.9 percent by 1990.[113] Tamils in science-based education curricula fell from 35 percent in 1970 to 19 percent in 1975.[114] Most significant was the drop in Tamil armed forces rolls—from 1956 to 1970, it decreased from 40 percent to 1 percent.[115] Many of these former soldiers likely brought their skills back to Tamil militant organizations including the LTTE.

Ethnic domination was furthered in May 1972 with the constitution changing Ceylon into Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The 1956 language policy was enshrined in the 1972 constitution, making it inviolable. Minority protections previously put in place by the British were eliminated. The legislature was given power over the judiciary in order to depose justices that did not support the government. In 1976, the Sixth Amendment to the constitution "prohibited political parties and individuals from

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111. Neil De Votta, *Blowback: Linguistic Nationalism, Institutional Decay, and Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 154.

112. Ibid., 155.

113. Brendan O'Duffy, "LTTE: Majoritarianism, Self-Determination, and Military-to-Political Transition in Sri Lanka" in *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*, ed. Marianne Heiberg, Brendan O'Leary and John Tirman, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 260.

114. Ibid.

115. Robert I. Rothberg, ed., *Creating Peace in Sri Lanka: Civil War and Reconciliation* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), 6.

demanding or advocating a separate state for the Tamil-speaking people as a solution to the intractable ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka."[116] This effectively marginalized Tamil political groups and forced them to begin working outside the democratic system, as no Tamil political representative could openly espouse separatism and hold a seat in parliament.

Tamil reprisals were met with further crackdowns including The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) in 1979, which was a hallmark effort by Sri Lanka to use brutal tactics such as torture and indefinite detention to quell violence. The PTA gave security forces the ability to round up anyone, including innocent Tamil civilians and imprison them without trial. The effect was an escalation of violence in the 1980s and further oppression by security forces. The inability of Tamil political parties, namely the popular Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) to counter the violence led to a new radicalized generation of youth. The 1983 riots against Tamils was the breaking point that erupted the nation into all-out ethnic warfare. President Jayewardene in response to the anti-Tamil violence of 1983 blamed Tamils for Sinhalese actions.

> I am not worried about the opinion of the Tamil people… now we cannot think of them, not about their lives or their opinion… the more you put pressure in the north, the happier the Sinhalese people will be here… Really if I starve the Tamils out, the Sinhalese people will be happy.[117]

Tamil nationalist fervor has grown at every attempt the Sri Lanka government made to undermine national determination. A combination of failures to bridge differences between groups through a constitutional process, poor political leadership that used Sinhalese nationalism for its own advantages, and a systematic process to undermine cultural identity among Tamils were significant structural elements that led to Tamil disenfranchisement. Assistance from foreign powers and a strong organizational culture brought the LTTE to the foray as the only party that could protect Tamils from the ethnic violence beginning in 1983. These structural factors left the Tamil population

116. Brendan O'Duffy, "LTTE," 260–261; Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Sri Lanka*, 44.

117. Interview with Graham Ward, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 July 1983 as quoted in Suthaharan Nadarajah & Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, "Liberation struggle or terrorism? The politics of naming the LTTE," *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2005): 92.

unsecure from state oppression. Tamils were forced to develop their own security mechanisms, of which the LTTE quickly became the group to fill that gap.

By mid-1989, LTTE was able to fend off security forces and essentially protect the Tamil population against their incursions. By mid 1990, it had established a de facto state in the north and eastern portions of Sri Lanka, especially outside the main urban areas. Between 1991 and 2000, the LTTE was victorious in a number of battles: Pooneryn, Mullaitivu, Puliyankulam, Kanakarayankulam, and Elephant Pass. In 2003, the LTTE said that armed struggle for independence (Eelam) was considered:

> A measure of self-defense and as a means for the realization of the Tamil right to self-determination [that] arose only after more than four decades of nonviolent and peaceful constitutional struggle proved to be futile and due to the absence of a means to resolve the conflict peacefully.[118]

Political and constitutional structures in Sri Lanka flamed ethnic outbidding and blocked the minority Tamil population a respectable place in the democratic process. The failure of political elites to build a balanced approach toward ethnic representation compelled groups such as the LTTE to follow a separatist path. It also forced Tamils to look toward the LTTE as their only real political voice in the process. LTTE would take this one step further by using violence to alter the uneven playing field.

C. ORGANIZATION AND AGENCY

This section looks at the organization that developed in response to ethnic suppression and how it was able to harmonize public rage with the radical LTTE political vision and achieve political, strategic and tactical aims. LTTE was also an institution that represented the norms and values of the Tamil populace, which could not be met via the democratic process.

118. LTTE, "The Proposal by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on Behalf of the Tamil People for an Agreement to Establish an Interim Self-Governing Authority for the Northeast of the Island of Sri Lanka," Colombo, (October 2003) as quoted in Brendan O'Duffy, "LTTE," 262.

LTTE was a centralized organization with a top-down command structure. The LTTE had all of the necessary institutions to run a de facto state within a state.[119] It had a charismatic political leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, who ran a highly centralized system of governance outside the urban areas of north and east Sri Lanka with associated cabinet and administrative offices. In areas it controlled, the LTTE collected taxes, administered justice, provided social services and had a significant military presence to include an air force, amphibious group, airborne group, intelligence group and a suicide commando cell. The influence of the LTTE and particularly its leader was clear in the cult-like reverence followers had for the leader and organization. Senior officials in the LTTE considered Prabhakaran as "God become man,"[120] others refer to him as the "sun god." Subscribing to the LTTE was not necessarily forced upon Tamils—more often, they were supported due to their strong leadership and ability to unite Tamils and the variety of Tamil political parties that emerged. Few Tamils opposed the LTTE; however, some have suggested this is a result of LTTE retribution tactics for those that left or did not subscribe to their organization.[121]

Another structural factor that empowered the LTTE was foreign influence. The LTTE had obtained illegal weapons through a variety of arms markets in Burma and Singapore where large Tamil communities live.[122] They also received up to $300 million per year from an established global diaspora involved in licit and illicit businesses.[123] Prior to these transactions, India provided sanctuary, arms and training for Tamil guerillas early in the civil war as a way to prevent Sri Lanka from establishing relationships with other countries such as Israel and the United States. India also had a

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119. A.J. Wilson and J. Chandrakanthan, "The de facto state of Tamil Eelam," in Wilson and Chandrakanthan, *Demanding Sacrfice: War and Negotiation in Sri Lanka* (London: Conciliation Resources, 1998) referenced in Nadarajah and Sriskandarajah, 89.

120. O'Duffy, "LTTE," 265.

121. There are many examples of intra-Tamil violence resulting from LTTE enforcing its control and eliminating competing political parties. In 2002, the LTTE is believed to have killed over 100 members of opposing political parties. O'Duffy, "LTTE," 279.

122. W. Alejandro Sanchez Nieto, "A War of Attrition: Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 4 (December 2008): 578.

123. K. Alan Kronstadt and Bruce Vaughn, *Sri Lanka: Background and U.S. Relations*, Congressional Research Service, (June 2009), 9.

significant Tamil population in southern India's Tamil Nadu region, which lobbied New Delhi to support the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Backed by foreign support, namely training and material aid via the India Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), LTTE was able to become a formidable force.[124] Not only was India involved with material transfers, but it was also a political mediator with the Sri Lankan government in an effort to win greater autonomy for Tamils. This changed when in 1987 LTTE, fearing India's support to a rival Tamil political party would weaken its movement, refused to participate in a peace accord to disarm. According to the dictates of the accord, the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) was deployed to the northeast. The IPKF was accused of inflicting high civilian casualties, rapes, murders, and torture.[125] While India's involvement initially empowered the LTTE over other organizations, its human rights abuses also rallied Tamil passions toward supporting LTTE violence and terrorism. Furthermore, the presence of foreign troops justified arguments that the Tamil nation was being threatened. This perception, coupled with the personal experience of persecution and violence, influenced many women to join the effort to protect the homeland.

Initially, women were involved with information operations (including propaganda dissemination and intelligence collection), fundraising, logistics, medical care and recruitment. In 1983, as a response to growing pressure, the LTTE created a wing for women called the Women's Front of the Liberation Tigers. The first cadre of fighters was trained in 1985 in Tamil Nadu, India and by July 1986, it saw combat against the Sri Lankan military.[126] More women were recruited into the LTTE as a result of Tamil village massacres in the early 1990s. Representation of Tamil women in military, administrative and logistics positions at one time constituted approximately 35 percent of all LTTE fighters.[127] According to one researcher that spent time with LTTE women: "many of the women joining the LTTE feel autonomous and able to decide about

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124. Mahnaz Ispahani, "India's Role in Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict," in *Foreign Military Intervention: The Dynamics of Protracted Conflict* eds., Ariel Levite, Bruce W. Jentleson, and Larry Berman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 209–239; De Votta, *Blowback*, 171.

125. Ispahani, "India's Role," 224.

126. Miranda Alison, "Cogs in the Wheel? Women in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam," *Civil Wars* 6, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 37–54.

127. Lawrence, "The Watch of Tamil Women," 99.

their destiny for themselves for the first time in their lives. They retain this feeling and this attitude on their return to civil life."[128] Whether most women felt a sense of liberation as cadres in the LTTE is unknown, but this seems to be a general feeling among many who have been interviewed. Many women who joined in the mid-1980s were raped by Sinhalese or IPKF troops. According to the Hindu faith, of which many Tamils subscribe to, when a woman is raped, she cannot be married or have children.[129] For many Tamil women, redemption of the self and nation was gained through violence. As one author writes:

> Violence justified ideologically in the name of politics structures social relations and colonizes social space, enabling conditions of possibility/impossibility…Violent practice produces oppositional and binary bodies, heroic and aggressive, criminal and communal, which are hierarchized and celebrated, minoritized and humiliated.[130]

In other words, violence on one end produces a reaction of violence on the other end. While realists would argue female suicide bombers are products of an organization's material needs, constructivists would suggest the ideational values experienced from violence promote the perpetuation of further violence and bring the potential female bomber to the point where organizations can realize her utility in their materialist objective. As Nira Wickramasinghe writes: "In situations of violence, therefore, security is not only contextual and malleable, it is also fundamentally reactive."[131] The lack of a secure environment compelled women to enter a self-help process.

Massacres in the 1990s in eastern Tamil villages brought even more women into the LTTE ranks. While the LTTE demanded each family give one child to the organization, women and many children voluntarily enlisted as soldiers. This increased

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128. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "Female Warriors, Martyrs and Suicide Attackers: Women in the LTTE," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 1–26.

129. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 160.

130. Mangalika de Silva, "The Other Body and the Body Politic: Contingency and Dissonance in Narratives of Violence," in *Women and the Contested State: Religion, Violence, and Agency in South and Southeast Asia* eds., Monique Skidmore and Patricia Lawrence, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 140.

131. Nira Wickramasinghe, "Sri Lanka: The Many Faces of Security," in *Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences* ed., Muthiah Alagappa, 380 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

the level of female participation in the organization and compelled LTTE leadership to relax traditional concepts of womanhood, as Patricia Lawrence writes: "most women can easily recite the 'Four Virtues' of Tamil women: modesty, charm, coyness, and fear—now replaced by the new notions of courage, confidence, and thirst for liberation."132

Another structural factor that influenced the situation was the failure of counterinsurgency forces to effectively safeguard Tamil citizens. In most cases, the security forces were the victimizers and instigators of conflict. Violence as a structure created considerable levels of fear and insecurity in Tamil society. One Tamil woman expressed this fear as such: "As a Tamil in the present day, the biggest threat is the security forces—having to produce identification."[133] Many were detained, indiscriminately searched, sexually harassed and even tortured by state security forces or IPKF troops. This caused Tamils to seek other mechanisms and organizations to defend themselves. As Nira Wickramasinghe writes: "Thus when the state breaks its contract to protect all its citizens, people are left to create their own security."[134] The failure of the state to provide security for its people empowered the LTTE as most Tamils sought their assistance.

The LTTE was efficient in harnessing the norms and values that embodied a national myth of Tamil nationhood. The threat on the livelihood of the Tamil nation was a real fear for Tamils experiencing suppression and violence from Sinhalese and IPKF security forces. The LTTE harnessed these existing fears and rallied women to protect the next generation. To do so, LTTE exploited shared beliefs and narratives that could justify and mobilize a culture of martyrdom.

D. THE MARTYR IDENTITY

This section looks at the culture of martyrdom in Tamil society, a structural characteristic that LTTE harnessed and channeled toward fulfilling its strategic objectives. While realists would argue that female suicide violence is a temporary

132. Lawrence, "The Watch of Tamil Women," 99.

133. Wickramasinghe, "Sri Lanka," 379.

134. Ibid.

adjustment to achieve strategic or tactical objectives, constructivists would add this military strategy must be "made consistent with social norms of female behavior"[135] before it can be implemented, and precedes the discussion of acceptable tactics. Sub-state movements like the LTTE used intellectual leaders, cultural themes and historical narratives to mobilize an already-frustrated population to support the insurgency, and moreover, protect the existence of the nation. This is exemplified in the pervasive culture of martyrdom in Sri Lanka that embraced male and female heroes. While LTTE may have been instrumental in organizing the culture of martyrdom, it was an existing value that was wholly embraced by Tamil society and became an institution that inspired suicidal violence.

Identity for Tamil women has generally been restricted by structures based on tradition and conservatism. While some examples of female warriors exist in historical memory, frontline combat was not given traditional approval. It's generally considered a new phenomenon that was copied from the struggles led by Gandhi and the Indian National Congress as well as the movement led by Suhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army.[136] At first, the LTTE was slow to integrate women into the organization, so as not to offend the conservative Tamil culture. Women were initially given supportive roles in the organization as nurses, administrators and caretakers. Over time, restrictions were loosened as the organization needed more recruits and society experienced greater oppression from state security forces.

As the material value of female suicide violence was realized, institutions were established to ensure it would be legitimized and maintained. The commitment to martyrdom was a unique LTTE trait not readily seen among other insurgent groups in Sri Lanka, such as the Janata Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) group waging an insurgent movement

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135. Karla J. Cunningham, "Female Survival Calculations in Politically Violent Settings: How Political Violence and Terrorism are Viewed as Pathways to Life," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no.7 (July 2009): 565.

136. The LTTE has modeled its organizational structure off of the INA and has treated its women according to the INA example. The Rani of Jhansi regiment of the INA was led by Lakshmi Sahgal nee Swaminathan, a Tamil who brought considerable pride to the LTTE, and during her leadership, many Tamil women joined the INA cause. Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "Female Warriors, Martyrs and Suicide Attackers: Women in the LTTE," *International Review of Modern Sociology* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 1–26.

in the south. LTTE created a special battalion for their future martyrs known as the Black Tigers. Their first attack was on July 5, 1987, when a bomber drove a truck of explosives into an army camp at Nelliyady. This day was given a sacred marking as an official Tamil holiday, called Black Tigers Day. Holidays have been an essential symbol for venerating heroes of the Tamil nation. On April 19 and September 26, honor is given to Annai Pupati (a mother of ten children) and Tiyaki Tilipan, respectively, for fasting to death in protest against the Indian Peace-Keeping Force's occupation of Tamil territory in Northern Sri Lanka. In a sense, these women have come to embody the Tamil-mother image in a similar way that "Lady Liberty" represents life and liberty in the western world.[137] Annai Pupati is represented on billboards throughout Tamil territories—adorned in bright red and gold colors, giving a "religious aura to her action and her commemoration."[138] She is often likened to the fierce goddess Durga—a warrior archetype of the divine mother. Symbols and their relation to myth are an essential component of martyrdom that builds a link to the past.

While Mia Bloom argues that the LTTE "has never made the conflict about religion," others, like Michael Roberts contend that religion had a significant role in LTTE narrative selection.[139] The selection of symbols is very important. Michael Roberts argues that LTTE strategically used symbols and ritual to "mobilize supporters and legitimize their cause among Tamil speakers, while also cementing the loyalty of their personnel."[140] One powerful symbol adopted by LTTE fighters was the adornment of a cyanide capsule around the neck. The vial itself was to be used in case the female fighter was captured. Songs, poems and martyrologies were chanted celebrating the

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137. "Lady Liberty" is referenced by many western countries such as Marianne of France, the Finnish Maiden, Moder Svea (Sweden), Lady Britania, and even the Virgin Mary, which acts as a foundational reference for contemporary secular symbols. One particular example includes Michelangelo's La Pieta that represents the Virgin Mary holding the deceased Jesus Christ. This symbol has been recreated in numerous western contexts, not the least in, WWI and II Red Cross recruitment posters. James Aulich, *War Posters: Weapons of Mass Communication* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007); Alonso Earl Folinger, "The Greatest Mother," Red Cross Poster, Library of Congress (1918); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford University Press, 1990), 74.

138. Michael Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs': Regenerating Divine Potency?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 498.

139. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 46.

140. Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs,'" 494.

virtue of the slow death cyanide brought.[141] One became a "walking witness" by wearing the vial proving commitment to the organization, Tamil self-determination and the willingness to become a martyr.[142]

Underlying every suicide attack are potent religious symbols depicting sacrifice, death and resurrection through martyrdom. Many argue that the LTTE is a secular nationalist organization.[143] This may be misleading since the organization actually venerates, upholds and exploits existing structures, such as the Hindu faith. While the organization has secular-minded goals, its associates have a variety of religious and secular motivations. By merging the sacred with the secular, the organization is able to harness societal narratives that venerate the concept of martyrdom. Religious ideology helps society embrace the totality of struggle, as if it is a cosmic undertaking that requires any means necessary.[144] Social movements can easily become totalitarian when language and actions commit to using extreme violence to eliminate the opposition. Organizations seek to exploit the role of religious symbolism and terminology in the context of women's virtue.[145] By introducing a narrative of "the sacred" they redefine the roles of women in society from innocent and protected to courageous and protectors.[146] These narratives become structures in which women's roles are partially defined thus allowing for the realization of martyrdom as an acceptable practice within society.

The historical narrative embraced by Tamils was an invented one that utilized prevailing norms and ideational features of Tamil identity. As Ness points out, the logic of female suicide bombing in Tamil culture was created around a "trans-historical structure" embedded within perceived historical myths, "imagined and embraced

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141. Peter Schalk, "Resistance and Martyrdom in the Process of State Formation of Tamililam," in *Martyrdom and Political Resistance,* ed., Joyce Pettigrew, (Amsterdam: VU Press, 1997), 74.

142. Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs,'" 497.

143. Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97 (2003): 343–361; Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 2002).

144. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*.

145. Cunningham, "The Evolving Participation," 86.

146. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," (2008): 21.

communally" and able to create "participation structures" that prompted further suicidal violence.[147] This narrative- and performance-based ritual which female martyrdom embodied was able to unite disenfranchised women against a common enemy they saw as the state. While not all would become martyrs, female Tigers entered into a sacred tradition by becoming soldiers and defending their nation. They saw themselves as a continuation of the past, and the latest example of those proclaimed by LTTE propaganda, such as Sathyabama, wife of Krishna.[148] Giving one's life for the cause, be it in terms of service to Prabhakaran or fulfilling an LTTE mission, was considered an honor.

Roberts mentions a goddess, Kannaki that has been incorporated into LTTE literature. Her representation marks Hindu temples in Sri Lanka and she is well known among Tamils. She has "both a chaste dimension as well as the character of an avenging goddess."[149] It is little surprise that this provides a provocative image worthy of emulation. Adele Balasinghma, a sociologist close to Prabhakaron writes "behind the appearance of every uniformed female fighter, is a tender, gentle and passionate young women with all the qualities attributed to femininity."[150] The LTTE women hold the qualities of the Goddess Kannaki as a model in their aspiration to be accepted as women and revered as heroes.

Much like Palestinian political organizations, the LTTE has harnessed a cult-like atmosphere behind suicide operations, but they have also established highly professional institutions to ensure the reverence of martyrdom is maintained, such as the Office of Great Heroes. Tamils have established immaculate gravestones and cemeteries throughout Tamil territory allowing society to pay respect to the fallen. They have also

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147. Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, 3 (2005): 362.

148. Ibid., 363.

149. Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs,'" 500.

150. Adele Balasingham, *The Will to Freedom: An Inside View of Tamil Resistance*, 2001, as quoted in Cindy D. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause: Women's Work in Secular and Religious Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28, 3 (2005): 364.

built specific "hero stones" that are devised to be a continuation of stones erected in the first-to-third centuries B.C.E. to commemorate divine individuals.[151]

Similar to Hezbollah, Chechen nationalists, and Palestinian organizations, LTTE has created "rhetorical strategies" to legitimize and institutionalize martyrdom.[152] These are ways of reframing the context of suicidal violence to be made acceptable to society. A Tamil Catholic priest described the elaborate techniques as follows:

> Heroic death founded within the fire of Tamil nationalism has given birth to a new set of terms, almost all derived from the ancient Tamil religion of Saivism; indeed, within the North and East Tamil nationalism has the appeal of a new religious movement. Prabhakaran… requests the people to venerate those who died in the battle for Eelam as sannyasis (ascetics) who renounced their personal desires and transcended egoistic existence for a common cause of higher virtue. I have seen hundreds of shrines erected in Jaffna by the friends and relatives of those LTTE cadres who have died in various actions; and the rituals performed with offering of flowers and lighting of oil lamps are those normally reserved to Saivite deities and saints.[153]

The use of rhetoric is important since it creates rules and legitimacy for martyrdom, and thus a structure in which women can interpret as justification for an otherwise heinous act. Transposing religious rationale behind secular goals, LTTE has effectively channeled popular perceptions, narratives and myths to legitimize martyrdom in the name of Tamil nationalism. In this sense, LTTE women may embrace martyrdom as a purely political act as opposed to psychological, religious or avenging motivations that are often seen in other examples of female suicide missions such as Chechnya, Palestine or Iraq.

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151. Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs,'" 503–504; Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam "And Heroes Die: Poetry of the Tamil Liberation Movement in Northern Sri Lanka," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 28, no. 1 (April 2005): 112–153.

152. Ness, "In the Name of the Cause," (2005): 355–356.

153. Chandrakanthan, "Eelam Tamil Nationalism: An Inside View," in *Sri Lankan Tamil Nationalism. It's Origins and Development in the 19th and 20th Centurie* ed., A.J. Wilson (London: Hurst and Company, 2000) as quoted in Roberts, "Tamil Tiger 'Martyrs,'" 504.

E. SUMMARY

The Sri Lankan government continues to undermine any opportunity for Tamil self-governance, let alone provide significant structural openings in the political, economic and state systems for Tamil livelihood.[154] Failure to negotiate opportunities for Tamils in the current Sri Lanka state could manifest the same structural conditions that led to Tamil separatism, conflict, and endorsement of suicide terrorism. How the Sri Lanka government deals with the post-conflict period will determine whether reconciliation or violence emerges.

The Sri Lanka government should understand that these sufficient conditions exist in Tamil society and a charismatic leader could harness, re-formulate and operationalize them toward achieving political objectives. One area this thesis only briefly touched upon was the charisma of Prabhakaran and how this mobilized the Tamil people. Assessing the LTTE movement post-Prabhakaran could show that the conditions he helped hold together for female martyrdom may be too weak to bring back. There is an intersection between what is tactically useful and what is socially appropriate at any particular time and charismatic leaders often act as the lynchpin for that relationship. This analysis suggests that there are realist factors that drove LTTE to use female suicide bombers, but these military tactics were only viable options because of the long-term structural barriers put in place by Sinhalese politicians, the snowballing effect these structures had on creating ethnic separatism, and the deep scars this left in Tamil society which made suicidal violence an act to be revered.

154. The International Crisis Group recently found that Sri Lanka's judiciary is "failing to protect constitutional and human rights" and has "punished foes and blocked compromises with the Tamil minority." See "Sri Lanka's Judiciary: Politicized Courts, Compromised Rights," *Asia Report*, no. 172, June 30, 2009, http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=6186&l=1.

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IV. CASE 2: IRAQ 2003–2009

This chapter will outline the recent nature of conflict in Iraq and explain the structural factors that were most decisive in facilitating political violence. It will then describe the main groups utilizing female suicide bombers and how they approach the controversial subject. Finally, this case study will look at how organizations were able to harness and exploit cultural and historical traditions toward spreading a moral narrative embracing martyrdom and the use of women in combat.

A. BACKGROUND

In 2009, Iraq faces the challenge of a resurgent Sunni al-Qaeda-affiliated insurgency.[155] Insurgent use of IEDs is widespread as they pursue strategic goals, which are primarily to undermine stability and reconciliation at all costs. Iraqi women are volunteering as weapons in this conflict and pose a significant risk to stability. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, there have been over 60 suicide bombings attempted or carried out by women, most of them in 2007 and 2008.[156] One-third of those bombers came from Diyala province, where the Islamic State of Iraq—an organization that branched off Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia—was the most brutal group of insurgents and terrorists in the province, orchestrating kidnappings, beheadings and suicide attacks.[157] The majority of suicide bombings in Iraq involve foreign-born men, but a surge of female-led attacks in recent years has marked a new paradigm for Al Qaeda and affiliated insurgent groups. [158]

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155. Between June and August 2009, when Iraqis took over security in urban areas, over 700 civilians have died. The level of violence is strikingly similar to 2006, when hardly a week went by without the destruction of mosques and markets. "Violence in Iraq: The limits of restraint," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2009, and Eric Etheridge, "The Bombs of Iraq," *The Opinionator Blog, New York Times*, August 20, 2009.

156. In 2007, there were 7 successful female suicide missions. In 2008, there were over 30 successful attacks. See Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), National Counterterrorism Center Database, http://wits.nctc.gov.

157. Alissa J. Rubin, "How Baida Wanted to Die," *New York Times*, August 16, 2009.

158. Women have only recently taken an operational role in al-Qaeda. Leaders such as Ayman al-Zawahiri have denied the existence of women within the organization. Tuty Raihanah Mostarom, "Al Qaeda's Female Jihadists: The Islamist Ideological View," *RSIS Commentaries*, February 6, 2009.

What explains the sudden use of female suicide bombers by groups in Iraq? This is a particularly important case to analyze as it can show how traditionally conservative insurgent groups evolve their military tactics to accept previously forbidden paradigms. As in the case of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, there were many tactical reasons for using female suicide bombers in Iraq. Most analysts agree that tactics provide a useful explanation for their sudden prominence, however the existence of social barriers and the risk of losing popular support tends to initially make groups hesitate in using female suicide bombers.[159] But in 2006 and 2007, insurgent groups in Iraq came under increasing pressure to use women as bombers for a variety of reasons. Suicide tactics became a way for insurgent groups to create space for themselves with an increasingly proficient counter-insurgency strategy by coalition forces and the Iraqi government. U.S. Special Forces became exceedingly efficient in eliminating mid-level Al Qaeda commanders, breaking apart the structural alignment of the organization to the point that then commander of the Joint Special Operations Command, Lt. General Stanley McChrystal said, "We sensed that Al Qaeda was going to implode."[160] Female combatants were a logical response to an effective COIN strategy that led to the elimination of a number of male Al Qaeda fighters and the reduction of their support base.[161]

One reason to use female bombers is that they are able to continue suicide missions when male reserves have been minimized. American and Iraqi security forces were searching in earnest for innovative ways to thwart attackers. While American forces were successful in eliminating elements of command and control within Al Qaeda they also increased countermeasures against male suicide attackers. Women in Iraq typically wear the long black *abaya*, which covers the entire body, is heavy, flowing and bulky,

159. Luis de la Corte and Andrea Gimenez-Salinas, "Suicide Terrorism as a Tool of Insurgency Campaigns: Functions, Risk Factors, and Countermeasures," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3, no. 1 (April 2009): 11–19.

160. Dexter Filkins, "Stanley McChrystal's Long War," *New York Times Magazine*, October 18, 2009.

161. By 2005, there was a 456 percent increase in suicide attacks from the year prior (see Figure 3).

and is able to conceal a large suicide vest.[162] Thus, the state's ability to defeat male suicide bombers became one primary reason organizations embraced female suicide bombers. However, this behavior needed to be justified against strong normative traditions defining the role of women in jihad.

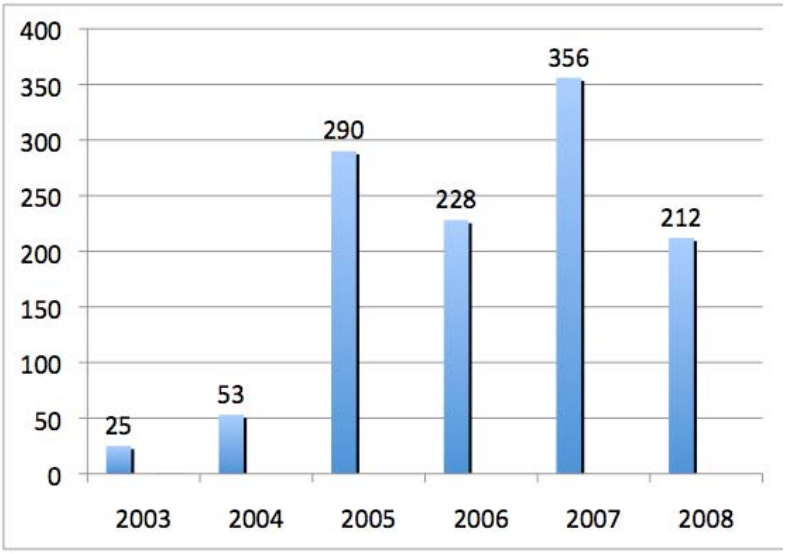

Figure 3. Suicide Attacks in Iraq, 2003–2008[163]

Tactical reasons alone do not fully explain how female suicide bombers became a mechanism that organizations and social groups in Iraq endorsed. There have been times that the tactical utility of a female bomber is not even utilized, such as the first female suicide bomber in Iraq who detonated her explosives in Tel Afar, dressed as a man instead of as a woman.[164] While critically important to the survival of an organization,

162. Women will often wear double abayas to ensure the explosives vest is hidden. They are also known to wear heavy makeup in order to look their best upon entering heaven. See Alissa J. Rubin, "How Baida Wanted to Die," Op. Cit.

163. Table constructed by author; data compiled from the World Incidents Tracking System, National Counterterrorism Center.

164. Christopher Dickey, "Women of Al Qaeda," *Newsweek*, December 12, 2005.

tactics alone do not define military strategies.[165] Societal and individual motivations, norms and values play a strong part in crafting insurgent behavior. Structural variables that affect women's norms and values play a strong part in the emergence of female martyrdom in Iraq. Insurgent organizations use suicide bombers to create space in a threatening security environment in order to perpetuate their identity and survival, but women also embrace martyrdom as a means to create space in a highly patriarchal society where identity and appropriate behavior is typically in question. Thus, the structural components discussed in this chapter are a strong factor driving the individual, organizational and societal motivations behind female suicide bombers in Iraq.

In the case of Iraq, this chapter argues three primary factors suggest a constructivist interpretation provides a more sufficient explanation for understanding the use of female suicide bombers. First, a structural shift opened up an identity struggle between the minority Sunni Arabs and the new Shia political majority; second, extremist organizations were able to merge religious and sectarian grievances as part of the identity struggle and mobilize women to defend the nation; and third, the above two factors were skillfully wrapped in a narrative of jihad that emphasized the necessity of female martyrdom for the survival of Sunni Islamic identity. As posited in Chapter I, realist notions of the utility of female suicide bombers as a military tactic provide a valuable explanation; however, the tactic's emergence is better explained by understanding a broader spectrum of components developed in this case study. The questions asked here are similar in scope to those asked in the Introduction: How do sub-state organizations choose their military strategies? Why do some insurgent groups implement female suicide bombers while others do not? Closer analysis of the conflict in Iraq, and particularly the Al Qaeda organization, shows that their approach cannot be understood purely by material incentives but must address social structures in Iraq and the Islamic world.

165. If materialist incentives and the tactics which achieved them were the only factor, one would expect suicide operations to be a common tactic of all organizations seeking to defeat an enemy by violent means.

B. STRUCTURAL FACTORS

This section will look at a number of structural factors within Iraq that facilitated religious and sectarian violence. First, it looks at how long-suppressed political identities resurfaced in the midst of a collapsed state and generated ethnic and sectarian violence. Then it addresses the religious extremist organizations that arose out of a security vacuum and used suicide terrorism as a means to impose anarchy and prevent the emergence of a new Shia-dominated state. Finally, it looks at how women were drawn in under these structural conditions in the agency of protecting the Sunni-minority and the Islamic state.

Phebe Marr writes that one of the most important shifts in Iraq since 2003 has been the transition from an Iraqi identity to ethnic and sectarian loyalties.[166] There were periods in Iraq's history where ethnicity held very little influence over the national identity, such as the 1950s and 1960s, when global ideologies such as communism, socialism and pan-Arabism "emphasized social equity and the irrelevance of ethnic identity."[167] But in the transitional phase from authoritarianism to democracy, state institutions can be weak, and consensus among competing groups can be difficult to form.[168] The process of democratization in Iraq brought previously marginalized groups and individuals—the Shia and Kurds—on top, and displaced the previous minority leaders—the Sunnis—to the bottom. Appropriate incentives to form coalitions could

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166. Phebe Marr, "Kurds and Arabs, Sunnis and Shiites: Can an Iraqi Identity be Salvaged?" in *Religion and Nationalism in Iraq A Comparative Perspective*, ed. David Little and Donald K. Swearer, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 63–72.

167. Juan Cole, "The Rise of Relgious and Ethnic Mass Politics in Iraq," in *Religion and Nationalism in Iraq A Comparative Perspective*, ed. David Little and Donald K. Swearer, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 50.

168. This is because WWI Iraq was under British mandate until independence in 1947. A series of coups labeled as revolutions kept Iraq from achieving a semblance of stability. In 1958, the fledgling Baath Party took control and slowly manipulated the political system to give Sunnis a dominant sway in governing the country. The party used violence and intimidation to hold power. The country slipped into authoritarian control when Sadaam Hussein took power in 1979. He built a secular totalitarian nation that revolved around his personality, eliminating any opponents and crushing Kurdish and Shia social movements. For more on the structural conditions of pre-2001 Iraq see: Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *The Future of Iraq: Dictatorship, Democracy, or Division* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Samir al-Khalil, *The Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'athis Iraq, 1969—89* (New York: St. Marin's, 1991).

have been made available, but Mansfield and Snyder argue that in these conditions, instrumentalist elites will often "use the control of traditional political institutions to shape the political agenda and structure the terms of political business" to ensure their special status in the new government.[169] As Sunnis realized their loss of power, historical narratives were constructed emphasizing sectarian divides and preventing national institutions from forming. The fears of Shia domination were significant enough to encourage the formation of a militant insurrection.[170] The first legislative election, forming the 275-member Iraqi National Assembly, was a critical moment in solidifying the new Iraqi government. To represent the impact the election would have on the Sunni Arab insurgency, Al Qaeda planned nine suicide attacks in Baghdad on January 30, 2005, specifically targeting polling stations. These attacks were an effort to upset the elections process, but also signal to the emerging Shiite government that more catastrophic bombings would occur.[171]

A fundamental structural shift was under way that ripped open cleavages that had been sutured together by the absolute rule of Sadaam Hussein and his Baath Party for over 20 years. The new emerging government in Iraq was absent of the main Sunni-political vehicle of the last four decades, the Baath Party. Sunni Arabs saw their competitors, the Shiites, mobilizing around religious themes and their clerics taking the political lead. Juan Cole argues that as a result, the historically secular Sunni Arabs began turning toward religious parties and leaders, such as the Association of Muslim

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169. Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratization and War," in *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace,* 2nd ed. ed., Richard K. Betts, (New York/London: Longman, 2001), 327, 330.

170. The U.S. also failed to assume its role as the new law enforcement in Iraq and subsequently disbanded the Sunni-dominant Baath political party and military establishment. This effectively forced groups to rely upon sectarian and tribal ties to provide security and resources. That Iraq was sitting on one of the world's largest repositories of oil incited many to ask, "To whom is granted the benefits of this treasure?"

171. It is important to mention that the perpetrator of this attack was Al Qaeda since, as addressed below, there were divergent strategic motivations of each insurgent group. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi saw the opportunity to divide Sunni and Shia in Iraq and realized the extent to which provocation of sectarian divisions would undermine western efforts to influence the Muslim world. See Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), 243.

Scholars and the Iraqi Islamic Party to have their grievances heard.[172] The result being an Islamicization of politics in which Iraqis voted on ethnic lines in 2005, and probably the most important group, the minority Sunni Arabs, boycotted the election, with only 2 percent voting from the Sunni Anbar Province. Whereas terrorism against the United States and Al Qaeda attacks in Afghanistan could never mobilize the Muslim world to oppose western influence, sectarian nationalism could. The belief among many extremist Muslims, according to Vali Nasr, is that "Washington has snatched Iraq from the hands of 'true' Islam and delivered it to 'heretical' Shias."[173] The threat of a dominant Shia Iraq mobilized a Sunni extremist rebellion in Iraq and the Muslim world that was orchestrated with militancy, bombs and absolutist rhetoric. It was a convenient wedge for jihadist groups to use in upsetting the new government structure.

Attacks represent both the deep perception of mistrust between Sunni extremists and the Shia population as well as the belief that specifically targeting Shia will create conditions conducive for sectarian violence. Recently, as U.S. troops began pulling back from forward operations in Iraq, Sunni extremists sought to repeat the 2006-2007 sectarian conflict. Two female suicide bombers in April 2009 attacked a Shia symbol in Iraq, the Imam Moussa al-Kadhim shrine in Baghdad, killing 75 people and injuring 125 others.[174] In January, a woman hiding among Shia pilgrims detonated her explosives killing more than three dozen people. Attacks have not only been focused on Shia shrines and mosques, but marketplaces, weddings, pilgrimages and hospitals. An attack in February 2009 by a female bomber killed 40 Shia women and children resting from a pilgrimage to Karbala. In July 2008, female suicide bombers struck Shiite pilgrims in Baghdad and a Kurdish protest rally in northern Iraq. In May of that year, a female bomber feigning pregnancy killed at least three dozen people at a wedding ceremony.

172. Cole, "The Rise of Religious," 54.

173. Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 245.

174. Repeating a similar attack from February 2006 when a shrine in Samarra was attacked by Sunni suicide bombers, in which no one was killed, attacks in January and April 2009 sought to unravel security in Baghdad. This attack came a day after two other suicide attacks targeted Shia pilgrims, many from Iran. "2 blasts in Iraq aimed at Shiites," *Washington Post*, 25 April 2009.

While 2006 saw a degree of retaliation from the Shia community, 2009 has seen restraint and patience, as Shia religious and political leadership have spoken out against retaliation.

Compounding the sectarian divide are underlying structural factors driving Sunni-Islamic extremists in Iraq led by the foreign support of Al Qaeda. These include the perceived occupation of Islamic land by infidels, the demand for *sharia* law versus democracy, and the absolute will to participate in eternal jihad until the Islamic Caliphate is reestablished. First, suicide attackers appear to be motivated by a sense of nationalism against perceived U.S. occupation and a defense of Islam which they believe is being attacked by western aggression and apostate regimes such as the new Shia dominant government. A common theme emanating from extremist propaganda according to Mohammed M. Hafez is that "secularism, nationalism, and Shiism are instruments of this nefarious plot to divide and conquer Muslims."[175] According to terrorism expert Farhana Ali, one Iraqi woman, Wadad Jamil Jassem appeared on an insurgent video in 2003 stating: "I have devoted myself to Jihad for the sake of God and against the American, British, and Israeli infidels and to defend the soil of our precious and dear country."[176] Underlying many jihadist statements is the historical occupation and humiliation of Palestine by Israel and its connection to Al Qaeda's overall struggle.[177] Palestinian and Lebanese political violence would become models for Al Qaeda to emulate in Iraq. "Um Osama" a leader of the women Mujahedeen of Al Qaeda stated that women were following the example of Palestinian women and preparing for martyrdom in Iraq.[178]

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175. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 95 (2007): 99.

176. Farhana Ali, "Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq: Why the Trend Continues," *Counterterrorism Blog*, June 25, 2009.

177. Osama bin Laden stated in his letter to America in 2002: "you attacked us in Palestine." See: "Why we are fighting you: Osama bin Laden's Letter to Americans," in *The Al Qaeda Reader* ed. and trans., Raymond Ibrahim, (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 197–208.

178. Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 153.

Second, female suicide bomber testimonies have stated that *sharia* law must be established in the Muslim world.[179] Al Qaeda and affiliated groups view Arab governments as corrupted by western occupation and influence. Bin Laden states: "these governments prevent our people from establishing *sharia* law … give us a taste of humiliation, placing us in a large prison of fear and submission."[180] For Al Qaeda, democracy represents a system of rule by man. Ayman al-Zawahiri, referring to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, wrote in 1991 that: "the stark reality that needs to be confronted by Islamic organizations is none other than the regimes ruling Muslim lands."[181] Al Qaeda views democracy as a secular religion propagated by the West, corrupting Muslim governments and thus preventing Muslims from living under a true Islamic government.[182]

Third, jihad is debated widely, but interpreted by many in extreme forms.[183] The literal interpretation is "to strive or exert one's self." Of the 41 mentions of jihad in the Qur'an, only ten refer to warfare.[184] There are three phases or aspects of jihad in the Qur'an: the pacifist, the defensive, and the offensive jihad phase.[185] Salafi Jihadist groups interpret the occupation of Iraq by infidels as a call for defensive jihad and thus

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179. In Islam, *sharia* is the straight path or the law of God; all other ways are paths of unbelief. However, like all religions, there is significant disagreement upon the interpretation of the law of God. John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

180. "Why we are fighting you," in Raymond Ibrahim, *The Al Qaeda Reader*, 201.

181. Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Sharia and Democracy," in *The Al Qaeda Reader* ed., Raymond Ibrahim, (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 121.

182. Sheikh Abu Hamza al-Baghdadi wrote in 2005 in a document, "Why Do We Fight, and Whom do We Fight?" that the West wants Muslims to embrace democracy so "that would bring it more gains and benefits than it had obtained from the church's (Christianity) religion." Cited in Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 73.

183. Jihad is often considered the sixth of five pillars of Islam. The five pillars of Islam are the obligatory practices all Muslims must accept. They are: the profession of faith, prayer, giving of alms (zakat), fasting during Ramadan, and pilgrimage (Hajj). For descriptions of each see: John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 88–93.

184. Mohammed M. Hafez, Lecture on Jihad, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2, 2008.

185. The pacifist phase was prior to the Prophet Muhammad's emigration to Medina in which the struggle was to spread the word of God peacefully, "Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder. You are not a warden over them." Quran 88:21–26. The defensive jihad was meant to defend Islam: "Fight in the path of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits…" Quran 22:39; In 628 A.D. as war became more frequent, the tone of jihad became offensive: "Kill them wherever you find them and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for persecution is worse than killing." Quran 2:191.

the individual obligation of all Muslims around the world to participate. Those who do not subscribe to these views are labeled as infidel (*takfir*) and subject to judgment. Even those working with infidel governments are subject to branding as an infidel. This broad interpretation gives Salafi Jihadists the ability to use suicide terrorism even against Muslims.[186] Groups have utilized a number of media formats to explain their position behind the usage of martyrdom operations and the legitimacy of jihad against infidels. This ideology has developed into a normative structure upon which insurgent groups base their philosophical foundations and from which many women draw inspiration. While martyrdom operations are a weapon for insurgent groups, they are also constructs inspired by social values and a global ideology.

C. ORGANIZATION AND AGENCY

This section looks at the loosely structured insurgent organizations that developed in response to the sudden structural transition in Iraq and how these groups were able to exploit sectarian differences to advance their strategic objectives. The insurgency included over 100 different groups, many coming from Saddam Hussein's former Baath Party, foreign Islamists, criminals, tribesmen, and indignant Iraqis.[187] The most radical Islamist groups and individuals were able to harness and merge existing Sunni grievances with their absolutist religious ideology to achieve political, strategic and tactical aims. These groups held different grievances but similar structural elements to the LTTE insurgent organization described in Chapter III. In particular, both groups represented the norms and values of a minority population disillusioned by the government structure put in place. However, the LTTE was generally the dominant insurgent or political group representing Tamils, while there has been a competition for dominance among insurgent groups in Iraq.

186. However, it also works against their favor as it draws considerable public backlash since most Muslims do not subscribe to such radical interpretations.

187. For a list of Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq from 2003–2006 see Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, Appendix 1, 243–249.

There are at least three types of groups operating in Iraq that use Islam for different strategic objectives.[188] There are Islamic nationalists seeking to rid Iraq of foreign occupation. There are those, like Ansar al-Islam, seeking to collapse the state and create a social revolution. And there is Al Qaeda in Iraq, a group seeking to use the country as a launching pad for terrorist operations around the world. Most groups conducting suicide attacks in Iraq adhere to a strict puritanical version of Islam often referred to as Salafi-Jihadist.[189]

The presence of a large number of foreign fighters in Iraq and a disproportionate number of them conducting suicide attacks could be explained by the level of anti-Shia sentiment shared by radicals in the Arab world. Juan Cole argues that there were actually few foreign fighters participating in Iraq and their effectiveness in the overall insurgency has been "greatly exaggerated."[190] Instead, he suggests most fighters have been Iraqi but have implemented Al Qaeda-like strategies and rhetoric out of expedience. However, General David Petraeus in 2007 said that "eighty to ninety percent of the suicide bombers come from outside Iraq,"[191] and the Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte said that foreign fighters using suicide tactics had a "disproportionate impact" on the insurgency.[192] Those most concerned with a Shia-aligned Iraq and Iran are Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Kuwait, among the nations most represented by foreign fighters.[193] Fighters have been supported by wealthy donors in the Arab world and over two dozen religious

188. Mohammed M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq,* 63.

189. The largest Salafist-Jihadist group in Iraq is Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI); others include: Ansar al-Islam, Ansar al-Sunna Group, the Victorious Sect, Jaish-e Muhammad, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaah Army, and the Conquest Army. See List provided in Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 244. Also see: Juan R. I. Cole, "The Rise of Religious and Ethnic Mass Politics in Iraq," in *Religion and Nationalism in Iraq: A Comparative Perspective*, eds., David Little and Donald K. Swearer, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 56.

190. Cole, "The Rise of Religious," 57.

191. Joshua Partlow, "An Uphill Battle to Stop Fighters at Border," *Washington Post*, May 5, 2007.

192. U.S. Congress, Senate, Statement by the Director of National Intelligence, as quoted in Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 305, note 14.

193. Moghadam references a 2005 study conducted by Reuven Paz in which 33 members of the Salafi-Jihadist insurgency who died in Iraq as suicide bombers: 23 (70 percent) were Saudi, 5 (15 percent) Syrian, 2 were from Kuwait and 1 each from Libya, Iraq and Morocco. See Reuven Paz, "Arab Volunteers Killed in Iraq: An Analysis." *PRISM Occasional Papers* 3, no. 1 (March 2005): 1–7. Also see Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 242.

leaders calling for jihad in Iraq.[194] In many ways, the context of the Iraq insurgency is mixed in the complex arena of geopolitical affairs, a topic outside the range of this thesis.

A study by Mohammed Hafez suggests that the strategy behind Salafi Jihadist suicide missions in Iraq is to collapse the government system and replace it with an Islamic emirate similar to what the Taliban established in Afghanistan in the late 1990s.[195] This group uses suicide missions to pick-away at the system of governance in Iraq: infrastructure, economy, religious institutions, and the Iraqi security apparatus. Those seeking a reintegration into the Iraqi system tend not to use suicide missions and limit their attacks against coalition forces. For example, Sunni politicians have openly condemned attacks against Shiites and pointed out these attacks are only trying to create sectarian retaliation.[196] These groups, primarily made up of Iraqi nationals, tend to be focused on Arab nationalism and Sunni Islam but do not wish to inflame the Sunni-Shia divide.[197] Those implementing a system collapse strategy tend to conduct most suicide operations.[198] Nick Ayers' study found that most claimed suicide attacks (94%) were carried out by Al Qaeda linked groups.[199] Particularly, in 2004 when suicide attacks began killing many civilians, groups concerned about their reputation ceased claiming responsibility.[200] Nick Ayers concluded that groups were not using suicide attacks as a means of outbidding each other as Bloom has noted,[201] but were instead using them for their tactical utility. Realizing that suicide attacks in Iraq had not reached the type of societal support seen in Palestine, groups likely decided it was better not to claim

194. Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 225.

195. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 70.

196. Rod Nordland, "Iraq's Shiites Show Restraint After Attacks," *New York Times*, August 12, 2009.

197. Sunni-Nationalist organizations include the Islamic Army of Iraq, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades, and Partisans of the Sunni.

198. These groups consist of Salafi-Jihadist groups, such as Al Qaeda and Baathist still committed to their political ideology. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian, led two Al Qaeda groups in Iraq—Tawhid and Tanzim Qaid.

199. While Sunni-Nationalist organizations have been making claims of conventional attacks against Coalition forces, they rarely claim suicide attacks that target coalition forces but typically maim civilians. See: Nick Ayers, "Ghost Martyrs in Iraq: An Assessment of the Applicability of Rationalist Models to Explain Suicide Attacks in Iraq," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (September 2008): 856–882.

200. Hafez, *Suicide Terrorism in Iraq*, 109.

201. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, 78–79, 94–97.

attacks.[202] In some cases, local "revenge brigades" arose in retaliation to Al Qaeda-led suicide missions,[203] a point which would later aid U.S. forces in their effort to recruit Sunni militias.

1. Women and Agency in Salafi Jihadist Organizations

Female martyrs generally come from small pockets of tightly organized cells, usually in isolated communities of Iraq that have yet to experience or accept the new governing structure. Most female suicide bombers in Iraq were Iraqi citizens, whereas most men tend to be foreigners with connections to transnational jihadi networks. An extremist Islamic ideology founded upon absolutist demands drives these cells. While women cannot choose who they marry, how many children they have, whether they can work or not, they can choose martyrdom. It is this sole power to control one's future which drives many women in Iraq to choose martyrdom. Becoming a martyr differentiates women and gives one the opportunity to hold a special status outside the traditional boundaries of female identity.

How do Iraqi women then become involved in Salafi Jihadist organizations as suicide bombers? There are at least four factors involved. First, the strategic necessity to integrate women in the sectarian and religious conflict in Iraq has taken precedence over traditional cultural barriers. Equally, cultural notions and structural norms have been temporarily relaxed in order to allow female participation in the greater cause of jihad. Generally, there are three types of women involved with the global Salafi Jihad movement: those who support the global movement by raising sons and daughters to be future martyrs; those who provide support to terrorists by way of supplies and accommodation; and those who perform physical violence such as suicide bombings, staging bombs, or armed resistance.[204] Organizations exploited societal norms that

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202. Societal support for Palestinian suicide attacks against Israel reached a peak of 85 percent in October 2001 and never dropped below 60 percent between January 2001 and October 2003. Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, Figure 2.1A, 193.

203. John Ward Anderson, "Iraqi Tribes Strike Back at Insurgents," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, March 7, 2006.

204. Cunningham, "In the Name of the Cause," (2008), 94.

viewed women as passive and innocent and utilized them as extraordinary weapons, which could strike deep inside government walls, such as intelligence and security installations. The more often women were engaged with insurgent organizations, the more acceptable it became for all involved. Over time, as men were eliminated from the battlefield, women became integral participants and traditional social norms were altered even further so that jihad could continue.

Second, some argue that female suicide bombers in Iraq are driven to violence because of the cycle of victimization they live through. Insurgents are known to have coerced or forced women and even children into becoming suicide bombers. Some are drugged, raped or beaten and live in conditions that promote severe emotional problems.[205] This kind of victimization is a method of control that places shame on the family and may compel her to become a martyr to regain her lost honor. In these cult-like cells, many women are in a self-help environment where their options are limited and they rely upon the assistance of their abusers. One way insurgent fighters have solidified women's commitment to jihad is through marriage. Short-term marriages, known as *muta'a* are common in Shia culture, but Sunni groups have also used this as a way to recruit and gain the trust of women. In the case of a 15-year-old Iraqi girl named Ranya, shortly after marrying her husband she was fitted with a suicide vest and sent on a mission that ultimately failed.[206] In this sense, marriage is a sacred act, which prepares the woman for fulfilling a sacrifice on behalf of the family. Agency is limited in these situations by the structural barriers in place with jihad and martyrdom becoming pathways to freedom.

Third, women's networks in Iraq have a strong role in the recruitment process, transfer of grievances and extremist ideology to other family members, and assuring overall logistical support is available to men conducting operations. Salafi Jihadis in Iraq

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205. One operation is said to have involved men who would rape young women and then an older woman, Samira Ahmed Jassim (aka: The Mother of Believers), would council the victims and persuade them to become suicide bombers to regain their honor. She is said to have recruited more than 80 women, under the auspices of Ansar al-Sunnah, to carry out attacks. See: Qassim Abdul-Zahra and Brian Murphy, "Iraq Arrests Female Suicide Bomber Recruiter," *Associated Press*, February 3, 2009.

206. Rubin, "How Baida Wanted to Die."

have well-established networks that bring hundreds of brigades together toward common operational goals even if they have different strategic objectives.[207] Women also collaborate through highly structured networks called Sisterhoods that operate in places like Diyala province.[208] These groups resemble the secular Death Maidens in Sri Lanka, the Salafi influenced Black Widows in Chechnya, and the Sisterhood groups in Palestine. The leader of one women's network developing recruits in Iraq goes by the name of Umm Fatima. The group tells young women that if they become martyrs they will "go to heaven where they will sit by rivers of honey and have lunch with the Prophet Mohammad and live in comfort."[209] These are reassuring words for women plagued by poverty, conflict and uncertainty for over ten years. Other tales are woven that describe how the family will have all sins forgiven if the woman martyrs herself, how she will regain her lost honor, and how she will forever be venerated among men and women when the Islamic Caliphate is established.

Fourth, as Katharina Von Knop explains, the role of women in supporting male relatives in the global Salafi Jihad, particularly as logistical necessity warrants, is becoming more important for the short and long-term survival of Al Qaeda networks than conducting suicide operations.[210] Women can provide moral and emotional support to husbands, brothers, and other family members. They provide sustenance and security as well as education to members of the family. They also provide continual representation of the male martyr and thus confidence in the minds of pending martyrs.[211] Osama bin Laden has emphasized the value women bring to the jihad: "Our women had set a

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207. Hafez, *Suicide Terrorism in Iraq*, 52–53.

208. Amorphous groups, under the Al Qaeda umbrella link via web communication across the world. Each type provides space for women to develop relationships, discuss political and social topics, and support those who have martyred family members. See: Katharina Von Knop, "The Female Jihad: Al Qaeda's Women," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 30 (2007): 408.

209. Aqeel Hussein and Damien McElroy, "Mother of all suicide bombers warns of rise in attacks," *New York Times*, November 16, 2008.

210. Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 410.

211. All of these are necessary aspects of the martyrdom campaign, not very different than the role spouses or the Veteran's Administration play for U.S. military personnel.

tremendous example for generosity in the cause of Allah; they motivate and encourage their sons, brothers and husbands to fight for the cause of Allah."[212]

The increased role of women in the suicide campaign shows signs of fragmentation within the insurgency. In most cases, there are plenty of men to conduct suicide attacks; however, if there is an increasing trend of female suicide bombers by a particular group this could be a sign of decreased male operatives within the organization. But what kind of individual motivations would a woman have to embrace the call of violent jihad? Studies show that a variety of reasons are instrumental, but primary among them is the urge to protect that, which is most sacred—family and home.

Many female participants in the Iraqi insurgency come from families enmeshed in warfare. Cindy Ness argues that protection for noncombatants is meaningless in conflicts that rely upon guerilla tactics provoking an overreaction from counterinsurgent forces upon civilians.[213] Thus, in areas controlled by anti-government forces, civilians and insurgents are drawn together and become co-partners in violence. There is a relaxation of traditional male dominance among these families that allow for the participation of women in front-line operations. A level of Islamic feminism, where women feel liberated through jihad, is also present among women within small family-based groups or networks like the Sisterhood, where political violence is a way of life. One captured bomber, Baida Abdul Karim al-Shammari, from Baquba saw five of her brothers killed by U.S. forces.[214] Her brothers ran an I.E.D. cell and Baida was part of the manufacturing process, purchasing components and putting them together. She was initiated into the jihad on behalf of her family and felt obligated to pursue martyrdom when her brothers were killed. Thus, female suicide bombers require some level of support from men in order to operate within the Al Qaeda organization. A 15-year-old woman, Ranya was recruited by her husband and cousins to be a bomber. Both women were from a dangerous cell of female martyrs from Diyala Province, where one-third of

212. "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places, Expel the Mushrikeen from the Arabian Peninsula," referenced in Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 405.

213. Cindy D. Ness, "The Rise in Female Violence," *Daedalus* 136, No. 1 (Winter 2007): 93.

214. Rubin, "How Baida Wanted to Die."

female bombers originate.[215] Female martyrs were provided agency in Iraq to awaken the Sunni minority to what they viewed as the takeover of their nation. They were active participants, some martyring themselves for the cause and the community that served as their family. While Al Qaeda manipulated these women to carry out tactical and strategic objectives, the women were radical political agents seeking to upset the underlying structure of a changing society. Women are not only accepting of their role within the family, but embrace a sense of honor and commitment to the martyr identity that gives them a place in the organization and society.

D. THE MARTYR IDENTITY

The active participation of women in the Iraq insurgency violates traditional gender relations. However, exceptions have been made to those socialized into jihadist groups waging violence in the name of the cause. While the participation of women in jihad does not necessarily suggest an equalization of genders, it does show that organizations are willing to relax norms and structures that typically define female roles. Cindy Ness argues that it is commonplace that norms and customs can be superseded by the immediate political cause, such as the call to jihad, without a fundamental shift in society's principles involving gender relations.[216] This section looks at the factors underlying the cult of martyrdom among Salafi Jihadist groups in Iraq. The cultural and structural factors behind this movement include illustrating the aesthetics of female martyrdom via poetry, martyrologies and symbolic representation. The main theme is that terror groups emphasize a simple moral narrative giving legitimacy to martyrdom and representing female participation as not a new paradigm, but a continuation of the past.

215. Rubin, "How Baida Wanted to Die."

216. Ness, "The Rise in Female Violence," 87.

Relying upon the consumer's emotional response, namely humiliation and redemption, Jihadists present a simple, unified message that builds a compelling image of a heroic martyr.[217] Hafez argues that Jihadists in Iraq present their message within the framework of three interwoven themes: a long line of Muslim humiliation and defeat at the hands of Western crusaders, existing Muslim regimes colluding with and serving the interests of the West, and the eventual victory of pious Muslims via the heroic acts of martyrs and their battlefield success.[218] These ideas are wrapped in aesthetically pleasing imagery and music that can both shock and appeal to the broader Muslim world. Martyrdom is framed as a morally just act, legitimated by proper religious authorities and delivered with rhetorical eloquence that helps reshape the boundaries of acceptable behavior. Providing social approval within a culturally appropriate framework ultimately gives women agency to become martyrs.

The first stage in introducing women to the martyrdom is to provide space for them to participate in jihad. Whereas male martyrdom mythologies tend to focus on the abandonment of the good life, the achievement of happiness and the fulfillment of a larger duty in martyrdom, female mythologies focus more on women's role as a mother. It is the mother's duty to protect the children, the home and the husband and to support him in his jihad. Thus, a woman's jihad is an extension of the man's jihad. Protection of the nation becomes an extension of protecting the home and family. Part of this protection requires proper education of children so that they grow up to become good Muslims. A common theme is that women must be prepared to sacrifice their husband and children for the greater cause.

The online journal *al-Khansaa*, an Al Qaeda publication devoted to women's issues, is one example. Al Khansaa was one of the major female poets of the *Jahiliyya*, or the time preceding Islamic Arabia. Her poetry laments the death of her brothers in battle and has been emulated by many women. The magazine seeks to engage women in jihad by compelling them to raise male children who will embrace jihad or female children that

217. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 95 (2007): 95–115.

218. Ibid., 96.

will be pious, support their husbands and family, and become martyrs when called upon.[219] The first journal includes a biography of female mujahedeen, how to raise children by the teachings of Jihad, and an article on a women's training camp.[220] Al Qaeda seeks to temporarily legitimize female martyrdom by unraveling historical identities that point to an ongoing culture of martyrdom.[221]

A sophisticated multimedia structure builds a global community that transcends borders and fosters the idea of individual responsibility to conduct violent jihad. Suicide terrorism works and the strategies used to influence nationalist identity movements are re-invented to motivate and inspire others to embrace and participate in martyrdom. Al Qaeda has formed multiple levels of social networks that rely upon informal communication channels through the Internet, mass media statements, and deeply embedded community networks. They build imagined communities that can spread by the proliferation of mass media showcasing aggression, occupation, and perceived tyranny over Arabs.[222] These imagined communities become production centers for new recruits and potential suicide bombers and gives Al Qaeda religious legitimacy to endorse operations Sunni nationalists may have difficulty approving, such as female suicide bombers. However, the movement realizes the debate within the Islamic community around suicide bombings and attempts to legitimize its actions via the power of its organizations and the simplicity of their moral narrative.

Religious scholars have provided decrees and justifications for their use of suicide bombers and women's participation. Hezbollah leader, Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, legitimized suicide bombings as an acceptable military tactic against well-armed enemies.[223] One Saudi preacher, Fatima Umar Naseef, contests conservative traditions women are held to represent and argues women should be as active as men in

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219. Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 407.

220. "The 'Women's information office in the Arab Peninsula' releases the first issue of a new publication for women," SITE Institute, March 3, 2009.

221. How prolific this magazine is in areas like Diyalah where many female bombers in Iraq have originated may provide context to how valuable online Jihadist propaganda is within conflict zones.

222. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*," 169.

223. Moghadam, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, 22.

defending the Muslim nation, asserting that: "it is unlawful for anyone to refrain from fighting."[224] In 2001, the Saudi High Islamic Council gave the legal justification for female suicide attacks against Israel. Prior to 2007, six fatwa had been identified allowing women to conduct martyrdom operations.[225] From these official pronouncements came the need for a structured language and history devoted to explaining female martyrdom to the Islamic world.

In videos, women are generally portrayed as equal to men, fulfilling similar duties of defending Islam and Iraq against invaders and taking revenge on the part of all Muslims. One of the first female suicide bombers in 2003, Nour Qaddour al-Shammari brandished an assault rifle in front of an Iraqi flag stating: "We say to our leader and holy war comrade, the hero commander Saddam Hussein, that you have sisters that you and history will boast about."[226] Von Knop notes that in the past, Muslim women would have to abide by society's strict honor-based codes and required permission from their families in order to participate in a militant organization. She argues that *al-Khansaa* appears to be recruiting women outside of these traditional codes with its call for a broader role of women in jihad. However, it is apparent that women still require family approval and society demands legitimate authorities approve such behavior.

E. SUMMARY

Iraq is a particularly important case to analyze as it shows how traditionally conservative insurgent groups evolve their military tactics to accept previously forbidden paradigms. There were many tactical reasons for using female suicide bombers in Iraq, namely Al Qaeda needed even more creative methods to infiltrate tightly controlled areas and female bombers were able to use tribal and cultural traditions to evade detection. However, tactical reasons alone do not fully explain how female suicide bombers became a mechanism that organizations and social groups in Iraq endorsed.

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224. Fatima Umar Naseef, *Women in Islam: A Discourse in Rights and Obligations* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1999), 153.

225. David Cook, "Women Fighting in Jihad?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28 (2005): 380; Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 405.

226. Von Knop, "The Female Jihad," 402.

In the case of Iraq, a combination of three factors provides a sufficient explanation for understanding the emergence of female suicide bombers. First, a structural shift opened up an identity struggle between the minority Sunni Arabs and the new Shia political majority; second extremist organizations were able to merge religious and sectarian grievances as part of the identity struggle and mobilize women to defend the nation; and third, the above two factors were skillfully wrapped in a narrative of jihad that emphasized the necessity of female martyrdom for the survival of Sunni Islamic identity. Societal and individual motivations, norms and values play a strong part in crafting insurgent behavior. Insurgent organizations use suicide bombers to create space in a threatening security environment in order to perpetuate their identity and survival, but women also embrace martyrdom as a means to create space in a highly patriarchal society where identity and appropriate behavior is typically in question.

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V. CASE 3: AFGHANISTAN

This chapter looks at Afghanistan during two separate conflicts—the anti-Soviet resistance (1979–1989) when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) led Afghanistan and the current Taliban-led insurgency (2002–2009) against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA). It outlines the history of these conflicts and the structural factors which inhibited women's participation in martyrdom operations. It first looks at structural characteristics unique to Afghanistan, namely the convergence of tribal and religious institutions and how these interact under the threat of external invasion. It then looks at the organization of the insurgency and the various actors involved. Finally, it assesses the martyrdom identity in Afghanistan during the two conflicts and how women played a supportive role in developing historical and cultural narratives of jihad.

A. BACKGROUND

Afghanistan has suffered from violent conflict for more than thirty years. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded the country in order to aid the PDPA government. From 1979–1989 a fierce rural resistance mobilized and fought against central governance from an infidel regime displaying what many saw as disrespect for Afghan culture and Islam, and which enacted mass killings, institutional torture, summary imprisonment, environmental devastation and a breakdown of society. A general level of insecurity throughout the country led to the failure of an illegitimate government and its inability to provide resources or presence at the village level. Out of this violent period arose a number of previously formed mujahedeen parties ready to represent various factions within Afghanistan. When the Soviets were finally defeated and Afghanistan gained its independence, the communist regime collapsed in 1992, and the country became embroiled in civil war. The various factions that held some level of alignment during the anti-Soviet jihad were now fierce enemies in a fight over control of Afghanistan. In 1994, the Taliban, flush with support and resources from Pakistan, arose as the only

group able to unify the country and bring a level of peace to the region.[227] The Taliban regime brought a puritanical version of Islam and Pashtunwali that kept the nation from recovering its pre-war position and kept women in a protected status leaving them little opportunity outside the home. In the new Taliban state, the central government was weak in terms of providing essential social services but it succeeded in providing security and justice—hallmarks of Taliban governance.[228] Under this structure, Osama bin Laden found refuge and access allowing his organization, Al Qaeda, to plan global attacks on Western targets.[229] The suicide terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, were planned and coordinated from Afghanistan thus compelling the U.S. to overthrow the Taliban regime and prevent terrorists from using the country as an area to plan further attacks.[230] Though these suicide attacks did not involve Afghan nationals, they represent the level of influence foreign jihadi organizations have had in Afghanistan since the anti-Soviet jihad. While suicide missions have become an increasing trend in Afghanistan since 2001, the propensity of female suicide operatives is much less than in other conflict regions.[231] This chapter will discuss the agency and structure influencing Taliban organizational objectives.

As discussed in the introduction, suicide missions have increased dramatically throughout the world since the 1980s and insurgents in Afghanistan are increasingly

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227. One of the first acts that brought prominence to the Taliban and their leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, was bringing to justice a mujahedeen commander who abducted, raped and killed three women in 1994. Abuse of women by mujahedeen fighters was a common problem during the years of conflict that preceded the Taliban. However, many narratives of this incident and the subsequent rise of Mullah Omar rank on the level of folklore and myth. See: Kristian Berg Harpviken, "Transcending Traditionalism," *Journal of Peace Research* 34, no. 3 (August 1997): 271–287; Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban*, 25; Thomas H. Johnson, "The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters)," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (September 2007): 317–344.

228. Christopher R. Mullins, "State Capacity and Resistance in Afghanistan," *Naval Postgraduate School Thesis* (March 2009), 65–76.

229. For more on Osama bin Laden and his relationship with the Taliban see: Steve Coll *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York: Penguin Books: 2004), 334–344.

230. For background on the War on Terror see: Coll, *Ghost Wars*; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

231. Anna Pont writes: "Despite where their sympathies and support may lie, no women are members of the Taliban movement." Anna M. Pont, *Blind Chickens and Social Animals: Creating Spaces for Afghan Women's Narratives Under the Taliban* (Mercy Corps, Portland: 2001), 14.

reliant on this phenomenon as a tactic. However, during the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets in the 1980s, suicide attacks were rare, if not nonexistent.[232] In fact, this extreme tactic was largely considered anathema to the Pashtun warrior spirit that embraced hand-to-hand combat or a direct assault rather than the less personal, foreign-influenced suicide operation. Nevertheless, suicide bombing has gradually become a guerrilla tactic embraced by insurgent groups throughout Afghanistan, especially among Pashtun-dominated elements like the Taliban.[233] However, while most groups have also embraced women as participants in suicide missions, it remains a tactic without precedence in Afghanistan. What explains the lack of propensity for Afghan women to engage in suicide missions in Afghanistan? This thesis argues there are structural barriers in Afghanistan limiting insurgent military strategies. Organizations are not governed purely by material gains and losses; rather their motivations are influenced by strict cultural barriers and ideological foundations that are currently distinct from other insurgent groups.

Like other insurgent groups around the world, Taliban use suicide attacks for many of the same tactical reasons discussed in Chapter II. Suicide bombers are able to strike deep within secure facilities, are able to target specific persons, bombers can hide their payloads under culturally appropriate attire, they can signal to the enemy the extent to which insurgents are willing to attack, and they keep counterinsurgent forces wary of the civilian population since anyone can be a bomber. Suicide attacks increased 23 percent from 2006 to 2007, but then declined slightly in 2008 (see Figure 4). As well as suicide bombings, insurgents in Afghanistan use a number of improvised explosive devices (IED), which continue to be the greatest cause of death for U.S. troops in Afghanistan. From 2006 to 2007, IED attacks increased 83 percent from 1232 IED

232. The first recent suicide attack in Afghanistan was an attack on the famous mujahideen commander Ahmed Shah Massoud at Khwaja Bahauddin on September 9, 2001 by Arab al-Qaeda members. See: Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 582–584.

233. This chapter discusses the various insurgent groups operating in Afghanistan. While not all groups fall under the Taliban organization (often referred to as the Quetta Shura Taliban), most have some allegiance to their cause and are influenced by their directives and regulations.

attacks to 2258.[234] Since May 2009, the number of U.S. troops killed by IEDs was 206 while those killed by suicide attacks were eight.[235] Suicide attacks are generally concentrated in provinces the Taliban consider the most important, such as the volatile southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar which is the perennial Pashtun heartland, the eastern border province of Khost—a long contested region with strategic transportation routes, and the capital province of Kabul (see Figure 5).

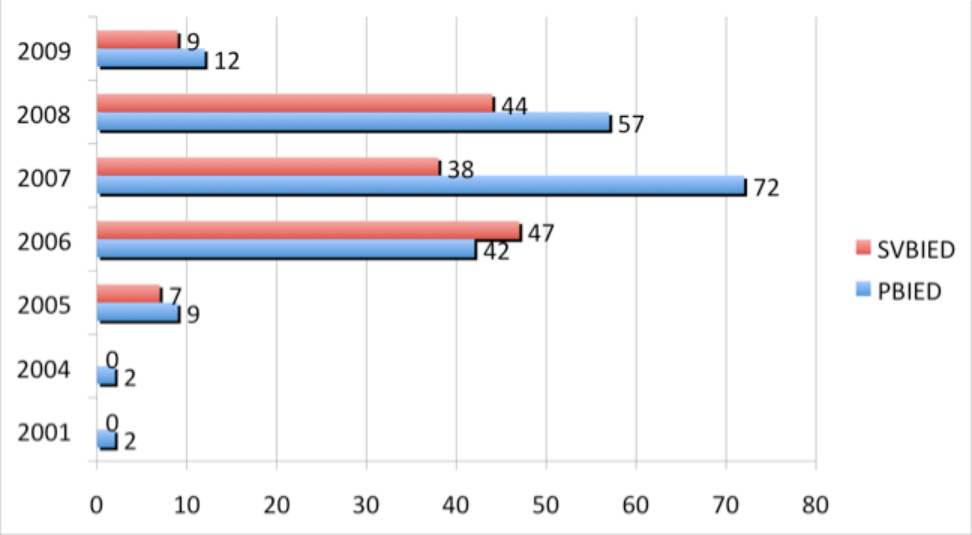

Figure 4. Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan[236]

234. IED attacks increased 45 percent from 2007 to 2008 (3276 in 2008), Jason H. Campbell and Jeremy Shapiro, "Afghanistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-9/11 Afghanistan," *Brookings Institution*, May 19, 2009.

235. By August 2009, U.S. casualties had already surpassed last year's with 295, most killed by IEDs. Insurgent suicide attacks have targeted and killed more Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) forces then coalition troops. More civilians (34 percent) are killed as a result of insurgent suicide bombings and IEDs than any other violent act (such as 26 percent killed by coalition airstrikes). See: Campbell and Shapiro, "Afghanistan Index."

236. SVBIED: Suicide vehicle borne improvised explosive device (IED); PBIED: person borne IED. Numbers for 2009 are only through the month of March. Table constructed by author, data compiled from World Incidents Tracking System, National Counterterrorism Center.

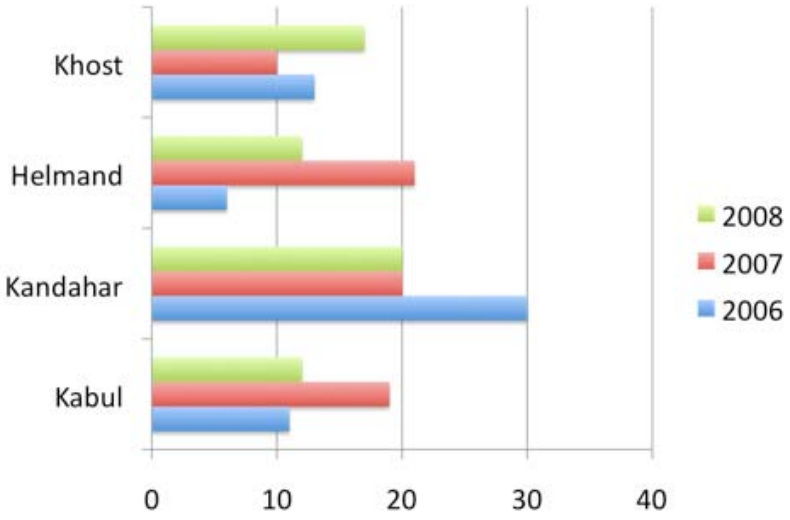

Figure 5. Prominent Attack Locations by Province[237]

While critically important to the survival of an organization, tactics alone do not define military strategies. Societal and individual motivations play a strong part in crafting insurgent behavior. Structural variables that affect norms, ideational values and identity play a strong part in the emergence of female martyrdom. Insurgent organizations use suicide bombers to create space in a threatening security environment in order to perpetuate their survival, but this tactic also gives agency to women and a means to create space in a highly patriarchal society where identity and appropriate behavior is always in question. In Iraq and Sri Lanka strict norms defining female behavior were present but opportunities provided through organizational change allowed women to become active participants in the insurgency. While structural components create and sustain individual, organizational and societal acceptance of female suicide bombers in some countries, they can also infringe upon the use of this tactic in others, like Afghanistan.

237. Table constructed by author, data compiled from World Incidents Tracking System, National Counterterrorism Center.

In the case of Afghanistan, I argue three primary factors suggest a constructivist interpretation provides a better explanation for understanding the lack of female suicide bombers. First, a permissive social and geographic environment in Afghanistan gives insurgents freedom of mobility and resistance that lowers the need for female bombers; second, the enduring presence of a strict culture restricts female participation in Afghan society and insurgent organizations; and third, a female culture of martyrdom that would typically open space for female participation in insurgent actions and narratives is identifiably absent. As mentioned in Chapter I, realist notions of the utility of female suicide bombers as a military tactic provide a valuable explanation; however, the tactic's emergence is better explained by understanding a broader spectrum of components developed in this case study. The questions asked here are similar in scope to those asked in Chapter I: how do sub-state organizations choose their military strategies? Why do some insurgent groups implement female suicide bombers while others do not? Closer analysis of the conflict in Afghanistan shows that insurgent behavior cannot be understood purely by a realist framework but must address institutional and social structures in Afghanistan.

B. STRUCTURAL FACTORS

This section looks at the converging roles of two structures—Pashtunwali and Islam—and how these influenced resistance factions fighting against external aggression. It also looks at the role women held during these conflicts and how agency has been influenced by conflict and competing social structures. Pashtunwali and Islam are two competing normative structures in Afghan society that have supported and limited the role of resistance against foreign invaders. Islam and the tribe operate in distinct realms that at times support and other times conflict with each other.[238] Even under times of jihad, Pashtunwali has constricted the normative perceptions of women among tribes and

238. David Edwards' thesis in *Heroes of the Age* presents the notion that honor, Islam and rule (represented by state governance) "represent distinct moral orders that are in many respects incompatible with one another." While these realms find ways to reconcile their differences in the interest of society, they remained the foundation of internal conflict with the rise of the nation-state.

mujahedeen parties thus limiting their participation in insurgencies. This section will describe the relationship between competing social systems and how it alters identities during times of conflict.

The Pashtuns are an ancient ethnic group, comprising about 60 tribes that span from southern Afghanistan into eastern Afghanistan and across the border into northwest Pakistan, with pockets of Pashtun communities in the north and west of Afghanistan.[239] It is believed that they already resided in the eastern highlands and mountains of what is now Afghanistan when Alexander's armies passed through the area to invade India in the fourth century B.C.[240] British occupying the Indian subcontinent in nineteenth century often wrote of Pashtuns in an iconic fashion, both with admiration of their valor and independence, as well as disgust at the inability to govern them.[241] The Pashtuns have since been esteemed for what British described as character and commitment to their tribal code, Pashtunwali.[242]

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239. The Pashtuns reside in all areas of Afghanistan, but they predominate in the southern and eastern provinces. Pashtun representation straddles the Durand Line border as they also reside in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan. The term Afghan, while today encompassing all ethnicities in Afghanistan, has traditionally referred to Pashtuns. When Afghanistan was able to consolidate into a state, the term became descriptive of all ethnic groups. Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid* (Oxford: Westview Press, 2000), 11.

240. Afghanistan has always been a highway of sorts for empires crossing west to east; notable empires to pass through include the Persians led by Cyrus and Darius the Great (350 B.C.), the Graeco-Bactrians (187 B.C.), the Sassanians (365 B.C.), the Turkish Mamelukes under Ayyaldiz (1206 A.D.), and the Mongols under Genhis Khan (1220 A.D.). Pashtuns trace their genealogy to Qais, a companion of the Prophet Mohammed, however they had already inhabited Afghanistan centuries earlier. See: Rashid, *Taliban*, 10. Others argue they came with Ephthalite Hun invaders in the fifth century A.D. See: Martin Ewans, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002), 5. Herodotus writes of "Paktues" in the fifth century B.C. in northern India, while some see this same tribe referenced in the text of the Vedas originating with Aryan invaders of the Indian subcontinent 6000 years ago. See: Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), chapter 11; D.H. Gordon, *The Pre-historic Background of Indian Culture* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing, 1975), 94.

241. P.D. Bonarjee, *A Handbook of the Fighting Races of India* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co. 1899), 9. He writes: "they are a wild, lawless turbulent race, to whom law and order are things to be scoffed at."

242. As Dupree explains, "this is a stringent code, a tough code for tough men, who of necessity live tough lives." It is an adaptive, non-written code given prominence by western observers of Pashtuns attempting to explain the behavior of people they did not understand that provides significant utility for the harsh geographical environment Pashtuns live in. See: Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: University Press, 1973), 127.

The tribe in Afghanistan holds a powerful role as an institution shaping and defining behavior among men and women. Kinship and patrilineal descent are important structures that define roles and provide security, praxis and order within the tribal community. Concepts such as *nang* (honor), *melmastia* (hospitality), *nanawati* (asylum), and *badal* (vengeance) are represented within *Pashtunwali*. Honor is an important concept that defines the worth of a Pashtun to himself and in the eyes of the tribe.[243] Olivier Roy describes Pashtunwali as an "ideology" and a "body of law," which has changed over time as needed.[244] Due to the strict cultural code Pashtuns live by, blood feuds are a common occurrence, typically arising out of issues involving women, land and personal injury.[245] In many ways, women derive power from their ability to retain or take away a man's honor. It is the duty of men to uphold the respectability of their women, lest they be dishonored.[246] But a woman can easily manipulate this fragile status symbol through her own actions. Thus, a man is obligated to always keep an eye on his wife, sisters and female relatives. It should be noted that the nature of power relations in Afghanistan is not absolute. Some women have more power and dominate over men within their home, family or tribe in subtle ways that may or may not be viewable to the community.

This tribal (secular) code comes into conflict with Islam, which is a separate (religious) legal code. Traditional tribal interaction is through the legal code of Pashtunwali and the political body of the tribal assembly (*jirga*), whereas Islam presents

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243. One famous Pashtun poet, Kushhal Khan Khatak writes: "The very name of Pushtun spells honour and glory, Lacking that honour, what is the Afghan story?" see: Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, 13.

244. Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 35.

245. Pashtuns that have been dishonored are obligated to seek revenge in order to regain their status within the community. Revenge may take years, even generations to secure, as one proverb makes clear: "People say of the Pakhtun who took revenge after a hundred years, 'He took it quickly.'" See: David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 241, n. 9.

246. A man without honor is called daus, or one who is "unable to preserve the sexual honor of his wife … that the normally sacrosanct domestic quarter of his home is violable and that he himself has not the power to defend his home, his lands, or his women" are areas which would characterize him as *daus*. This is undoubtedly the worst identity one could be given. See: David Edwards, 58.

itself through *sharia* and those who interpret it, mullahs.[247] There are many examples of the opposition between Pashtunwali and Islam to include disagreements over property rights for women, adjudication of adultery, dowry allotments, land distribution, the right of vengeance and much more.[248] That these institutions are different is an important factor to recognize, particularly when looking at how insurgent organizations are influenced by structure.[249] As seen in Chapter II, legitimating authorities with religious significance are typically the agents that sanction suicide missions. During times of conflict in Afghanistan, jihad has been a mobilizing and unifying factor, weakening the power of the tribe and empowering the role of religious figures.[250] Even under disagreement, mullahs have been able to influence strict Deobandi and even Salafi Jihadist regulations that are in conflict with tribal laws and livelihood.[251] Particularly, the imposition of *sharia* on Pashtunwali has always been a clash between Pashtun tribes and Islamic leaders. Recent events have shown Taliban to be at odds with tribes, often assassinating tribal elders that promote peace jirgas and imposing threats against others to

247. Olivier Roy states that, "Afghan peasant life is permeated by religion." Islam is a structure that provides norms and regulations for how Afghans are to think, behave and relate to each other. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 30.

248. For discussion of these differences see Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 36; also Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan* (Stanford University Press, 1969), 41; Akbar Ahmed, *Pukhtun Economy and Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 295; Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton University Press, 1973), 104.

249. The encroaching influence of the centralized state and international institutions on issues such as women's rights and modernization has also been a point of contention for both tribal and religious groups which see these issues as their own territory dealt with through customary and sharia law, not Western law. See: Deniz Kandiyoti, "Old Dilemmas or New Challenges? The Politics of Gender and Reconstruction in Afghanistan," *Development and Change* 38, no. 2 (2007): 169–199; Nancy Hatch Dupree "Afghan Women under the Taliban," in *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban* ed., William Maley, (London: Hurst and Company, 2001), 145-166.

250. Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 36; 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): 41–77.

251. Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 58.

cooperate.[252] At the same time, other "moderate" Taliban realize the tenuous ground they tread on in some villages and are careful at how they reintroduce *sharia*.[253]

Magnus and Naby explain how the 1980s resistance movement provoked deep-seeded grievances that had gone unresolved for many years, "The Afghan jihad provided a stage on which a spectrum of political ideas and religious convictions could be activated."[254] Jihad against external forces was a unifying factor for Pashtuns creating a shift in power relations from tribal to religious leaders. The mujahedeen were defending their Islamic land against aggressors, not pushing forward to conquer infidel societies. This distinction is an important structural concept that influenced foreign and local fighters to participate. The moral imperative to participate in defensive jihad was quite obvious not only to Afghans and foreign fighters, but to the international community which supported the mujahedeen, as Afghanistan was a stage in which the Cold War was being fought.

One of the greatest reasons Muslim peasants supported the defensive jihad was the push of atheism by Soviet-led communist parties in Afghanistan, Khalq and Parcham. While Islam often clashes with the tribal code Pashtuns live by, it has been a constant force in Afghanistan for over a thousand years. One of the central structures in Islam and the Afghan village is the mosque, which acts as a convenient location for social relations and communication to take place. Here people can share their grievances, discuss news and happenings outside the village and engage in a manner that foreigners and irreligious people may not fully appreciate, thus the secular tribe and the religious group is united within the mosque. When Soviet atheists tried to take this crucial system of human interaction away from Afghans, it initiated resistance. PDPA social reforms initiated at the behest of Moscow sent those resistance groups previously on the fence to become

252. Xinhua, "Gunmen kill pro-gov't tribal leader in S. Afghanistan," *China View*, June 6, 2008; Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January 2008): 1–4.

253. *Maliks* (tribal leaders) have been known to refuse refuge for mullahs that preach against GIRoA or try to undermine the *malik's* authority by imposing Taliban-like rules and regulations.

254. Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, 136.

fully engaged jihadists.[255] When the Marxist-influenced policies were instituted they undermined local traditions, land ownership and gender relations to the extent that tribal leaders and religious elements united as one against a common enemy.[256]

The threat of foreign invasion and the imposition of a secular, modern central government on the sovereignty of the rural areas caused groups to mobilize under the banner of jihad. The following will describe two major variables at work in this resistance—the ideology of jihad and its ability to mobilize and provide legitimacy behind resistance, and the influence of religious figures in the transmission of resistance ideology.

Religious movements against oppressive and illegitimate regimes hold historical significance in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[257] Striving to live as the Prophet and emulating his example of resistance, particularly in the period of conflict in Medina (622—632), many alienated Afghans would follow the mullahs (religious leaders) in response to their corrupt and failed governments.[258] They would create imagined communities based on piousness and spiritual perfection that could conform to the shared conflict tribes resided in. While some movements were quietist and pacifist, others took on violent, offensive

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255. Considerable evidence shows these social changes began much earlier. In 1959, Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud and his cabinet appeared in front of the world during Independence Day celebrations with their wives' faces exposed, causing anger throughout the Pashtun heartland. Thirty years prior, King Amanullah suffered the consequences of tribal and religious revolt when he implemented a campaign to modernize the country with Ataturk-like policies. Amanullah's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mahmud Tarzi, a frequent traveler in Europe, was subject to having photos of his western-dressed daughter, Queen Soraya, distributed by conservative opponents in the late 1920s. This created calls that the King had "turned against Allah and Islam!" Ultimately, Amanullah's reform efforts created significant backlash from conservative and traditional factions to the extent that Shinwari Pashtuns burned down the King's palace and the British Consulate in Jalalabad in 1928. See: Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 448–452, 530–531.

256. The arrest of family members of Mujaddidi in 1978 ordered by Prime Minister Taraki was symbolic as an anti-Islamic action directed at undermining traditional elements in Afghanistan. See: Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, 140–143.

257. In 1897, the Mullah of Hadda and Mullah of Fakir organized an insurgent force in the Swat Valley of the North West Frontier Province. They rose up against British occupying forces in what seemed an otherwise peaceful and controlled area of the northern Indian subcontinent. Key to their organization was their charismatic call to jihad that resonated with diverse tribal and ethnic groups and acted as a rallying call among different social polities. See: Edwards, *Heroes of the Age*, 191.

258. Barbara D. Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic Activism: Deoban, Tablighis, and Talibs," *SSRC Website*, 10.

jihad as their slogan.[259] Influential to the Taliban's insurgency today is the power of the village mullah. Prior to Deobandi-trained mullahs, Afghanistan had a very strong Sufi influence and representation that preached moderate and personal forms of Islam.[260] Partly due to their politicization in Afghan politics, and partly due to the increase of young Deobandi–trained mullahs arriving from Pakistan, the peaceful Sufi influence among Afghans declined in the 1990s.[261] This is particularly important because the religious establishment plays a vital role in spreading information and recruiting local support to the Taliban.[262]

The Taliban movement is representative of past charismatic "mad mullah" movements in which violent jihad was used as a rallying cry.[263] The religious duty and the charismatic leaders calling for it resonated with diverse tribal and ethnic groups similar in their cause and fervor to rid the nation of infidel occupiers.[264] Winston Churchill blamed the mullahs for their "vitriolic preaching," their "slanders," and "incitement" that prevented the British from quelling tribal uprisings sparked by mullahs keen enough to realize their power remained intact only if the reach of civilization remained outside the village.[265] Mullah Omar also knew the instrumental nature these

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259. Deobandi roots reside in Darul Uloom, India. These consist of moderate and quietist interpretations of jihad. They follow a pacifist model and have even issued a fatwa (religious edict) against terrorism. The Taliban movement, which finds its roots in Deobandism, is a radical interpretation of this order that embraces defensive and offensive forms of jihad. For more on the Deobandi Fatwa see: Jeffrey Donovan and Abubakar Siddique, "Taliban's Spiritual Fathers Denounce Terror. Could Taliban be Next?" *Radio Free Afghanistan* sourced in *Moby Media Updates*, November 18, 2008.

260. Prior to the 1970s, mullahs played a minor role within the tribal areas of Afghanistan. They acted as notaries for marriages, presided over ceremonies and provided charms for those seeking a mullah's blessing. The *khan* (landowner) and *malik* (tribal elders) played the most influential role in Afghan society and the mullah acted in the interest of the tribe, not opposed to it. See: Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 26–29; Edwards, *Heroes of the Age*, 131–132; Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy," 117.

261. Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 43–44.

262. Conrad Jennings, "Update from Kandahar: A City in Crisis and Implications for NATO," *The Culture & Conflict Review*, 2, no. 4 (November 2008), http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/WebJournal/Article.aspx?ArticleID=21&IssueID=19.

263. Some examples of "mad mullah movements" in Afghanistan and Pakistan include: the Fakir of Ipi, Shami pir or Hadda-yi Sahib, the Akhund of Swat, Bacha-yi Saqaol. Also see note 257.

264. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age*, 191.

265. Ibid., 178

religious underpinnings could have on the population and used it to boldly present the hallowed cloak of the Prophet Mohammed and proclaim himself "Leader of the Faithful."[266]

In the 1980s, mullah networks were used to mobilize and spread the ideology of the anti-Soviet jihad. As a process of the Cold War, the tribal system on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border was systematically broken apart as elders lost authority over their people and politicized Deobandi mullahs and factional religious figures were supported and resourced by international actors.[267] War in Afghanistan brought millions of Afghan refugees into Pakistan where their children were divorced from the traditional tribal structure and raised in Islamic fundamentalist environments. Here, mullahs gained a prominence unseen in the past, receiving significant support and respect from the community, allowing them to travel freely throughout Afghanistan and often preaching anti-government messages to thousands of mosque attendees every Friday.[268] Like

266. Rashid, *Taliban*, 42.

267. Part of this was a systematic effort by Pakistan to eliminate Pashtun nationalism in Afghanistan and on its western border, the Durand Line. Named after the British foreign secretary of the British Indian government, Sir Mortimer Durand convinced Afghan Emir Abdur Rahman Khan to sign an agreement in 1893 demarcating the border between Afghanistan and then British India. A loya jirga (tribal council) in Afghanistan in 1949 declared the agreement invalid once the partition of India took place in 1947, however Pakistan and the international community failed to recognize the loya jirga's ruling. The uncontrolled official border runs 1,610 miles and splits the Pashtun nation in two. It continues to be a contentious issue that fuels nationalist aspirations on both Afghan and Pakistan sides of the border. For the Taliban, it holds strategic and ideological value. As a strategic asset, the Pakistani side of the border has provided a safe haven for insurgents, particularly in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which Pakistan has found increasingly difficult to govern. Pakistan worries that if the focus on driving out foreign troops morphs into a secular nationalist struggle for the Pashtun homeland, the insurgency could become a much less manageable affair. See: Ann Scott Tyson, "Border Complicates War in Afghanistan," *Washington Post*, April 4, 2008, Johnson and Mason, "No Sign Until the Burst of Fire," 67–72; Seth G. Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," *RAND Counterinsurgency Study Vol. 4* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2008).

268. Conrad Jennings, "Update from Kandahar: A City in Crisis and Implications for NATO," *The Culture & Conflict Review*, 2, no. 4 (November 2008), http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/WebJournal/Article.aspx?ArticleID=21&IssueID=19.

western politicians on Sunday morning talk shows, mullahs drive home detailed but simple messages that resonate with millions of Afghans.[269]

1. Position of Women in Afghanistan

It is important to assess the status of women in Afghanistan as they live under competing structures of Pashtunwali and Islam in the midst of over thirty years of conflict. Much more than the other cases in this thesis, Afghanistan has a highly conservative culture that generally requires a strict segregation of the genders, restricts female mobility and deters women from leaving the home.[270] While the overall status of women in Afghanistan today is better than life under the Taliban, there are still many cultural, socio-economic and gender problems that leave women with little choices. Many young girls are sold at a young age to older men in order to pay off family debts, despite the Constitutional law that establishes sixteen as the legal marriage age for women.[271] Others are forced into child labor or sex work in order to pay off opium debts.[272] The inadequacy of the official legal system means 85 percent of all administered justice takes place in *sharia* or tribal court systems.[273] The majority of

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269. In one recent study, 42 Taliban foot soldiers were interviewed in southern Afghanistan —all from a variety of Pashtun tribes. None were aware of Afghanistan's relation to the rest of the world or Mullah Omar's ideological motivations, but most had similar grievances, citing coalition bombings, government corruption and unemployment as their main motivations for fighting. Answers among interviewees were resoundingly similar between each Talib reflecting the deep and widespread influence mullahs have in Afghanistan. See: Graeme Smith, "Talking to the Taliban," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, May 2008.

270. The level of conservatism varies throughout the country and is dependent upon the tribe and family from which women reside. Whereas most women in Kabul travel without the full burqa or chaddari (a loose garment completely covering a woman's body and face), hardly any will be seen in Kandahar without it. Kuchi (nomad) women will freely walk about their encampments without the covering. Kalasha are a non-Islamic tribe in the north-eastern Nuristan Province that do not follow the rules of purdah. Other tribal women will farm and collect water with or without the burqa dependent upon the presence of men in the area. Most women are required to travel in pairs, during the daytime or be accompanied by their husbands or male relatives (otherwise known as *mahram*).

271. Selling one's daughter for a fixed amount in order to settle a debt is commonly associated with the Pashtun practice of *badal*. Girls can also be traded to settle a dispute between clans, otherwise known as the practice of *bad dadan*.

272. An estimated 60–80 percent of Afghan marriages are forced, and more than 57 percent of women are married before they turn age 16, many to men several decades older. See: "Afghan Women turn to Suicide by Fire," *Associated Press*, November 18, 2006.

273. Many of the courts are run by Taliban shadow justice systems. See: John W. Warnock, "The Status of Women in Karzai's Afghanistan," *Global Research* April 14, 2009.

women in prison are there for "moral crimes" such as adultery, running away from home or eloping to escape an arranged marriage.[274]

Another way of denying women access to economic, social and political power has been the practice of *purdah*.[275] In daily life, *purdah* creates boundaries in areas women are denied access to, such as education and jobs.[276] *Purdah* was originally an urban phenomenon in Afghanistan, used as a measure of social status and protection.[277] There is no definite requirement in Islam for a woman to practice *purdah* or wear the veil, thus the tradition finds its roots in the structure of male-dominated social spaces, particularly as a means to control women.[278] In rural areas it is often dependent upon the rigidity of the family, tribe or local warlords, but generally in the Muslim world, village and nomadic women have rarely worn a veil due to its impracticality in everyday life. In village areas, women are needed as much if not more than men to perform farming and other daily livelihood tasks, making *purdah* an inconvenient custom to apply.[279] The practice became more prominent under Taliban rule, however women often bent the rules, covering their faces with the *chadar* when a Talib is around, and then pulling the *chadar* away when the Talib passes.[280] Ultimately, *purdah* is a lever for men to control

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274. One report cited 56 percent of women in Kabul prisons in 2005 were held there for these reasons. See: "Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights," Report No. E/CN.4/2006/108, Sixty-Second Session of the Commission on Human Rights, March 3, 2006, 6.

275. *Purdah* is the practice of women's seclusion and the segregation of the sexes. It is applicable primarily to women past the age of puberty, but young girls and boys will often be separated. Anna M. Pont, *Blind Chickens and Social Animals: Creating Spaces for Afghan Women's Narratives Under the Taliban* (Portland: Mercy Corps, 2001), 18.

276. The adult literacy rate for women in Afghanistan in 2005 was a meager 12 percent, compared to 43 percent for men. See: "Human Development Report 2007/2008" UNESCO Institute for Statistics, http://www.uis.unesco.org/.

277. President Hamid Karzai's wife, Zenat Karzai, practices purdah. Women's rights groups often question her seclusion, especially since she is an educated and trained gynecologist. Though not wanting to stir the ire of conservative Pashtuns as King Zahir Shah did when presenting his wife in public in Western clothing during the 1950s, the Karzais have chosen a less public image for Afghanistan's first lady. See the first interview with Zenat Karzai: "Afghan First Lady's quiet pubic debut," *The Telegraph*, April 12, 2004.

278. Louis Dupree writes, "A careful examination of the Qor'an, the Hadith (Sayings of the Prophet), and the Hanafi Shari'a of Sunni Islam (the religious law practiced in Afghanistan), reveals no definite, unqualified requirement for purdah and the veil," 531.

279. Ibid., 531.

280. Pont, *Blind Chickens and Social Animals*, 37.

the behavior of women, particularly in urban areas where tribal and religious values intermix and women are often considered property. However, its application is often dependent upon social, economic and political conditions and women find ways to maneuver around the rules.

A modern example of the system women live under can be seen in Musa Qala district in Helmand when in February 2007, British forces struck a deal with local leaders to withdraw from the area. Soon after, Taliban forces recaptured the key district center. Almost immediately, the strict Taliban code of conduct was imposed: schools were shut down, beards became compulsory and *sharia* enforced. Women were "treated like slaves in Musa Qala," according to Fawzia Olomi, director of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Helmand. She said, "Either due to insecurity or a lack of opportunities women in Musa Qala have always—even when the Taliban were not ruling there—suffered deprivation and violence."[281] She explained that after 2001, women were able to choose whether they wanted to wear the *burqa* or not, but once the Taliban regained control of the city, they not only had to wear the *burqa*, but were also required to have a male relative escort them outside the home.

Due to the tight restrictions on women, they still face difficulty accessing essential social services.[282] A poll conducted by the Asia Foundation surveyed men and women across Afghanistan on a variety of social issues. One section obtained responses on challenges faced by women in accessing education, employment and women's rights in the political affairs of the community and nation. Figure 6 shows rankings of the most critical problems facing women in Afghanistan. Access to education is viewed as the largest problem in the country, with less than one-third of all Afghan girls in school. In most areas of Afghanistan it is still either too dangerous for women to obtain education or restricted due to the lack of resources reaching rural areas.

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281. "Afghanistan: Taliban impose rule, hefty taxes in Musa Qala district," *IRIN News*, June 28, 2007.

282. One example of this was that few women were able to vote in the 2009 presidential election. Women's voting was one of the main targets of fraud, with female voting stations registering more irregularities than male polling stations. Men would show up to female polling stations with "fistfuls of female voter cards," submitting votes for all the women in the village. In one village of 250 people, 200 women supposedly voted in only three hours. See: "Heidi Vogt, "Fraud Surrounds Women Voters in Afghan Election," *Associated Press*, October 30, 2009.

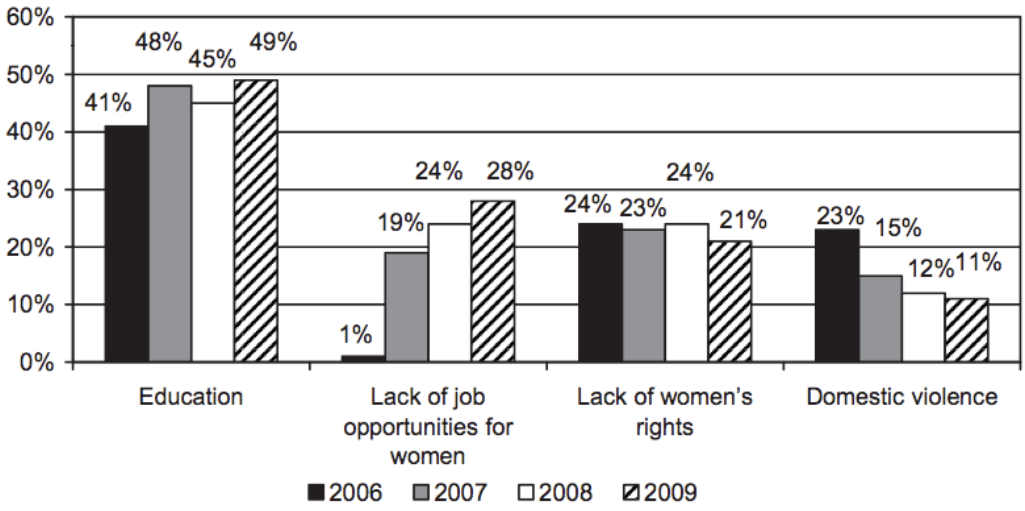

Figure 6. What are the biggest problems facing women in this area today? Comparison between 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009.[283]

Another question asked whether women should be allowed to work outside the home. Figure 7 shows a majority believes they should be able to do so, with a small, gradual decline year over year from 2006. This could represent perceptions of declining security and a reluctance to allow women outside the home. Nearly four-fifths of women (80%) compared to 55% of men believe women should be allowed to work outside the home. Support for this is also higher among youth (71%) between 18 and 24 compared to those over 55 (62%). A similar trend is seen between urban (79%) and rural (64%) residents. These figures show there is less rigidity among the younger, urban generation toward typical traditional ideas of male dominance in the work force.

283. From Ruth Rennie, Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Sen, "Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People," *The Asia Foundation*, Fig. 8.2, 124.

	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)
Women should be allowed to work outside the home	71	70	69	67
Women should not be allowed to work outside the home	27	28	27	29
Refused	1	1	0	1
Don't know	2	2	4	3

Figure 7. Some people say that women should be allowed to work outside the home. What is your opinion about this? Comparison between 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009.[284]

Another question asked whether women should be allowed to vote in elections. 83 percent of the respondents believed that they should. Support for female suffrage was higher among women (88%) than men (79%) and within urban (91%) areas than rural (81%) areas. A follow-up to this question was whether women should decide for themselves or should they receive advice from men (see Figure 8). Nearly a quarter of respondents believed women should seek advice from men prior to voting, while another 19% believed they should decide for themselves but at least seek consultation with men prior to voting.

	2006 (%)	2007 (%)	2008 (%)	2009 (%)
Women should decide for themselves	57	56	58	57
Men should advise them	24	25	22	23
Women should decide for themselves but in consultation with men	19	19	18	19
Don't know	1	1	2	2

Figure 8. If women vote, do you think that women should decide for themselves or should they receive advice from men? Comparison between 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2009[285]

284. From Rennie, Sharma and Sen, "Afghanistan in 2009," Table 8.2, 126.

285. From Rennie, Sharma and Sen, "Afghanistan in 2009," Table 8.3, 128.

A final question this section looks at is whether respondents to the survey are opposed to women representing them in a number of political organizations (see Figure 9). By law, women are to constitute 25 percent of the parliamentary seats in Afghanistan. This has likely had some effect on the perceptions of female participation. Between men and women on this issue, there is little difference—50 percent of men and 53 percent of women have no objection to being represented by women in these institutions.[286]

	Yes (%)	No (%)
a) In National Parliament	48	50
b) In your Provincial Council	48	49
c) In your Community Development Councils	45	52
d) In your District Development Assembly	42	54
e) In your local Shura or Jirga	43	53
Average	45	52

Figure 9. Are you opposed to a woman representing you in the following organizations?[287]

GIRoA has still not fully embraced the western demands of integrating women into society, exemplified by the lack of policewomen in Afghanistan's National Police (ANP). Of the 63,000 police in spring 2006, only 180 were women. Many of these women are given tasks that westerners may consider menial such as cooking, cleaning and making tea for male officers.[288]

286. While there have been openings for women in urban areas of Afghanistan, the more rural areas remain highly conservative and traditional, often relying upon Taliban regulations by default. In 2002, in Gereshk district, Helmand province women were noted as being confined to their homes and playing no part in community policy making. However, some educated women were able to work as teachers for female students where girls' schools existed. See: UNHCR Sub-Office Kandahar, "District Profile on Nahri Saraj District (Girshk)," November 29, 2002.

287. From Rennie, Sharma and Sen, "Afghanistan in 2009," Table 8.6, 132.

288. Due to their low representation in this institution, many women are hesitant to approach ANP to report crimes or Taliban activity. Unfortunately, a valuable intelligence asset is lost due to this cultural conundrum. Andrew Wilder, "Cops or Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police," *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Issue Paper Series* (July 2007), 9.

Like today, women were given more rights under the Soviet-led PDPA regime controlling Kabul then in the sub-district areas of Afghanistan.[289] However, much to the dismay of western critics, women's rights, even in the urban areas, is approached with hesitation so as not to upset the conservative Pashtun base residing in the countryside and providing much needed support to the Taliban insurgency. Providing access and equal rights to women is a controversial and dangerous program undertaken by the international community as it upsets the cultural identity maintained with *purdah* and often enforced by both men and women. Some women look to life under the Taliban as more rewarding and secure than life under the mujahedeen or international occupation. Some women feel the international community is trying to force women to take the *burkha* and *chaddari* off:

> Some of us may take it off once we are ready and our society is ready. To be pressured by the West to take off our chaddari is as bad as Taliban imposing [it] on us [in the first place]. We have the right to choose what to wear.[290]

Other women have reacted with self-mutilation to harsh and unequal treatment imposed on them from their families. Many women are choosing to commit suicide as a result of physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of spouses or family members.[291] Burning is one of the most common means of suicide, a reflection likely of the proliferation of Bollywood films that represent women partaking in *sati*.[292] This is reflective of how little has changed for many women in Afghanistan with the ouster of Taliban. As Ann Jones has stated, "Afghan women of the Kabul elite haven't yet caught

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289. The Democratic Organization of Afghan Women publicized fears of Kabuli women were a mujahideen victory to occur. Magnus and Naby, *Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, 148.

290. Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Afghan Women: Identity and Invasion* (New York: Zed Books, 2007), 37

291. In 2007, almost 500 cases were recorded of women burning themselves to death or disfigurement in order to escape abusive situations. See: Mandy Clark, "Rights Groups say Afghan Women Committing Suicide at Alarming Rate," *Voice of America*, May 27, 2008. In Herat province, there were 93 cases in 2005 and at least 54 in 2006. See: "Afghan Women turn to Suicide by Fire," *Associated Press*, November 18, 2006.

292. An ancient Hindu practice in India (now outlawed) where recently widowed women would throw themselves onto the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands.

up to where they were thirty-five years ago."[293] What rights women have gained over the last eight years are quickly eroding as former warlords and strongmen write gender discrimination into law. [294]

The role of women in Afghanistan has ebbed and flowed as central governments influenced by outside powers attempt to undermine traditional tribal and religious structures. As a result these structures have united during times of conflict to resist central government influence on the cultural identity of Pashtun tribes. In order to protect the character of the women and family (ultimately the man's honor) from the corruption emanating from Kabul, the rural areas have turned toward religious figures and fundamentalism as a means of survival irrespective of linguistic, cultural and tribal differences that have prevented Afghanistan from unifying for thousands of years. Jihad is a rejection of the ills modernity and outside influence brings to Afghanistan. The urban areas influenced by the central government and the forces of modernity are looked upon as bastions of corruption and evil supported by foreign infidels. This narrative has been a central component driving sub-state organizations in Afghanistan.

C. ORGANIZATION AND AGENCY

This section looks at the role and relationship of insurgent organizations in Afghanistan using suicide terrorism. Suicide terrorism is a new phenomenon in Afghanistan introduced by Salafi Jihadist groups. The first IEDs in Afghanistan beginning in 2002 were not particularly efficient—usually leftover ordinance with primitive detonation systems—especially against up-armored vehicles.[295] Even the first suicide attacks were rather crude, with artillery and mortar rounds strapped to the

293. John W. Warnock, "The Status of Women in Karzai's Afghanistan," *Global Research*, April 14, 2009.

294. A law was introduced in 2009 that wives are obliged to have sexual relations with their husbands at least once every four days. The new law allows man to withhold food from his wife if she refuses sexual intercourse; must receive permission from her husband to work; and the father and grandfather are given exclusive custody of her children. See: Sarah Rainsford, "Row over Afghan wife-starving law," *BBC News*, August 16, 2009.

295. Sean M. Maloney, "A violent impediment: the evolution of insurgent operations in Kandahar province 2003—07," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 19, no. 2 (2008): 204; Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 148.

chest.[296] Bombers often detonated too early or too late due to little training or understanding of what they were doing. Much of Afghanistan's IED evolution is due to tried and tested methods in Iraq. IEDs in Iraq became more sophisticated in September 2003, when complex remote-controlled, vehicle-borne IEDS and daisy-chained IEDs using tripwires began to augment straightforward suicide attacks.[297] By 2006, highly sophisticated bombs were being found in insurgent safe houses throughout Afghanistan.[298] The surge of U.S. military troops in Iraq in June 2007, decreased daily attacks there by 42 percent, but at the same time, the number and lethality of IED attacks by Taliban fighters in Afghanistan increased.[299] As Iraqi insurgents found the environment less permissive, many moved to the Afghan front where these tactics were gradually introduced to the battlefield.[300]

Two years prior to the U.S. surge in Iraq, the Taliban were learning new tactics and communication strategies from Iraqi insurgents sponsoring "terror workshops" in Pakistan.[301] Insurgents were instructed to stack anti-tank mines and remotely detonated shape charges under roadways and bridges. The thousands of culverts in Afghanistan became a prime location for insurgents to take out up-armored Humvees and Mine Resistant Armored Personnel (MRAP) carriers, often referred to as "Green Monsters That Spit Fire and Shit White People Out the Back."[302] Insurgents covertly placed simple, but efficient home–made IEDs encased in pressure cookers, water jugs and fuel containers underneath culverts scattered throughout Highway 1 and the other paved or dirt roadways

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296. On 27 January 2004, an insurgent detonated this crude explosive mix next to a NATO convoy. See: H. John Poole, *Militant Tricks, Battlefield Ruses of the Islamic Insurgent* (North Carolina: Posterity Press, 2005), 99.

297. Montgomery McFate, "Iraq: The Social Context of IEDs," *Military Review* (May-June 2005): 37.

298. One bust found 15 bombs in a mosque in Kabul, see: Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov, and Laptop*, 149.

299. Clay Wilson, "Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Iraq and Afghanistan: Effects and Countermeasures," *CRS Report for Congress*, The Library of Congress, Updated February 8, 2008.

300. Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Insurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, No. 2 (2007): 98.

301. Jason Yung, "Afghanistan: The Taliban," *Parliamentary Information and Research Service*, PRB 07-27E, Canada, December 5, 2007.

302. Maloney, "A violent impediment," 213.

in Afghanistan. Tunnels were dug from a distance that would reach the intended area and allow insurgents to position the IED without being detected from overhead surveillance. For suicide attacks in urban areas, militants used pilfered military and police uniforms to blend in during recruitment events or to easily make their way into government buildings.[303] While well-seasoned insurgents and terrorists provided instruction to new recruits, misaligned Pakistani intelligence services also assisted.[304]

The Afghan Taliban developed an urban suicide campaign in the fall of 2005, with support from Al Qaeda-trained, madrassa-recruited refugees from Pakistan.[305] Many of the initial bombers were sloppy as a result of improper training. In 2004, suicide attacks were estimated to have a failure rate of around 60—70 percent.[306] Even up to 2007, suicide attacks were not very successful in killing foreign troops. A study by the Jamestown Foundation found that of the first 22 attacks in 2007, 16 cases claimed only the suicide bomber himself.[307] In 2007, the chief medical examiner in Kabul had shown that three out of five suicide bombers were physically or mentally disabled.[308] While the targets were mostly international forces' convoys or dismounted patrols, the suicide bombers either detonated their explosives prematurely or their bombs failed to penetrate

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303. Amir Shah, "Bombing kills 9 Afghan Soldiers," *New York Times*, September 29, 2005.

304. Analysts within the U.S. government and journalists with significant access to the region agree that elements within the Pakistani ISI were providing direct logistical and intelligence support to the Taliban. While it is not overt Pakistani policy to support insurgents in Afghanistan, there are certainly elements within Pakistan's security establishment that see the Taliban as a hedge against an unfriendly administration in Kabul. However, this miscalculation has brought significant internal calamity to Pakistan, essentially unleashing an uncontrollable Frankenstein. In Pakistan there were 56 suicide attacks in 2008, and 38 in the first half of 2009. A number of attacks have targeted Pakistan's internal security apparatus, religious institutions, and important infrastructure between Afghanistan and Pakistan. See: Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 2008; Congressman Mark Kirk, "Afghanistan: The Rise of the Narco-Taliban," Testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Afghanistan, February 15, 2007; Johnson & Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire," 72; Matthew Cole, "Killing ourselves in Afghanistan," *Salon.com*, March 10, 2008.

305. Johnson and Mason, "Understanding the Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan," 82.

306. Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov, and Laptop*, 149.

307. Bryan Glyn Williams and Cathy Young, "Cheney Attack Reveals Taliban Suicide Bombing Patterns," *The Jamestown Foundation*, February 27, 2007, http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=222.

308. Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson, "Disabled Often Carry Out Afghan Suicide Missions," *NPR News*, October 15, 2007.

the heavily armored vehicles ISAF[309] troops traveled in. However, in terms of psychological impact, the suicide operations were quite successful.[310]

Much of the organization and tactics of the anti-Soviet mujahedeen resemble what we see today for anti-government insurgent groups. The number of actual mujahedeen fighters from 1979 to 1989 fluctuated between 40,000 and 60,000, split among the Peshawar Seven and then into sub-detachments and sub-units throughout Afghanistan.[311] Motivations among the factions and fighters differed, but they all united under the expulsion of foreign forces and the overthrow of the PDPA government.[312] The primary tactical elements of the mujahedeen were combat groups consisting of 15 to 50 men. Mujahedeen were powerless without the material and financial support of foreign powers. One former ISI officer stated: "No matter how brilliant my strategy might be, the implementation depended on the availability of a vast reservoir of cash with which to arm, train and move my forces."[313] In 1980, the resistance force had little more than British Lee-Enfield rifles left over from the Second World War and Kalashnikov automatic rifles made in Egypt. Within a few years, with support from the West, combat groups had machine guns, explosives and anti-aircraft weapons.

Mujahedeen combat groups received guerilla training in Pakistan. These groups relied upon Pakistan and U.S. intelligence services for the latest information on Soviet

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309. International Security Assistance Force or ISAF is the international command headquartered in Kabul providing security assistance to Afghanistan.

310. For example, Dutch ISAF refused to deploy in areas where suicide bombings were widespread. International forces began tightening their force protection procedures and treating normal Afghan civilians as the enemy. In January 2006, after a suicide car bomb assassinated a high-level Canadian diplomat in Kandahar, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) suspended a large number of desperately needed development projects in some of the most critical areas of the province. See: Maloney, "A violent impediment," 210.

311. The Peshawar Seven were united in 1985 and consisted of: Islamic Party (HIH or Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin); Islamic Society (JIA or Jamiat-i-Islami); Islamic Revolutionary Movement (IRMA or Harakat-e-Inqilab-i-Islami); Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan (IUA or Ettihad-i-Islami); Islamic Party (HIK or Hezb-e-Islami-Khalis); National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA or Mahaz-e-Melli Islami); and Afghanistan National Liberation Front (ANLF or Jebh-e-Nejat-i-Melli Afghanistan).

312. For a discussion of each party's motivations see: Lester W. Grau & Michael A. Gress (translated and edited) *The Soviet Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 53–55; Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 137–172.

313. Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin, *Afghanistan The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower* (Havertown: Casemate, 2001), 77.

troop movements. Groups also consisted of terrorist cells of three to five men that would assassinate prominent leaders or sabotage government services. From 1985 to 1987, over 1,800 terrorist or insurgent acts were conducted against the PDPA regime.[314] These attacks were not considered suicide missions since the death of the assailant was not necessarily required for the success of these missions.

The following sections look at the variety of insurgent organizations using suicide tactics in Afghanistan. The current conflict has four main elements: Quetta Shura Taliban, Hezb-i-Islami (HIG), the Haqqani Network, and Al Qaeda, in addition to tribal and criminal elements.[315] These groups also have divergent motivations but are united on the common cause to expel foreign forces from the country and install a legitimate Islamic regime based upon *sharia*. The first four groups are the most organized. They tend to share fighters, conduct missions together and hold refuge in Pakistan where they recharge, train and coordinate future operations. Suicide missions are done by the top four groups, but typically under the auspices of the Taliban.

1. Haqqani Network

The reach of the Haqqani Network is extensive and their ability to wage sophisticated urban assaults threatens to drive the insurgency into a more complex level of warfare. In recent years, the Taliban has experienced internal order and discipline problems that threaten to undermine the insurgency.[316] The Haqqani Network represents a group of highly disciplined fighters and commanders that subscribe to the Quetta Shura hierarchy and their established rules and regulations.[317] The group has deep links in eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan and consistent support from Arab and jihadist networks

314. Grau and Gress, *The Soviet Afghan War*, 70.

315. Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 37.

316. For example, many attacks in the northeast of Afghanistan are conducted by local warlords, criminal elements, and groups unaffiliated with the Taliban, however the Taliban are often blamed for these attacks as they are the easiest explanation for the media and NATO forces. See: Sami Kovanen, "Taliban Movement and Influence in Afghanistan," *Vigilant Security Services Afghanistan*, April 24, 2007.

317. They have been labeled, "the greatest threat to U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan." See: Anand Gopal, "Inside Afghanistan's most dangerous insurgent group," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 3, 2009.

from around the world.[318] Led by Siraj Haqqani, son of the legendary mujahedeen commander, Jaluluddin Haqqani,[319] this group coordinates some of the most spectacular suicide missions seen in Afghanistan.[320] Haqqani operatives are heavily armed with rocket-propelled grenades, assault rifles and explosives-laden vests, and are typically trained in guerilla tactics and urban warfare so as to maximize the kill ratio prior to detonating their explosives. Their attacks are highly coordinated, often involving upwards of 15 individuals attacking a target from different angles and at varying periods of time.[321] Al Qaeda trainers likely teach these types of tactics, but many analysts believe Pakistan's ISI has had a primary role in planning, resourcing and coordinating the operations.[322]

The Haqqani cells are spread throughout eastern Afghanistan and are suspected to have operational capability in Kandahar and southern Afghanistan.[323] The Haqqanis draw support from the Zadran tribe of eastern Afghanistan, located in the P2K region (Paktya,

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318. Anand Gopal, "The most deadly US foe in Afghanistan," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 31, 2009.

319. Jalaluddin Haqqani, now in his late 70s, is still hailed as a hero of the resistance against the Soviets in Afghanistan. He stands out among other mujahideen commanders as never being labelled a warlord and being committed to national sovereignty. He has been characterized as the "main engine in the Taliban movement." See Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Part 3: Through the eyes of the Taliban," *Asia Times Online*, May 5, 2004 and Imtiaz Ali, "The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan," *Terrorism Monitor*, 6, issue 6 (March 24, 2008).

320. The Haqqani Network attempted to assassinate President Hamid Karzai in April 2008 during a military parade in Kabul; other attempts on the President have also been linked to Haqqani. Prior to the April attack, dressed in police uniforms, Haqqani Network operatives led the January 14, 2008 raid on the five-star Serena Hotel in Kabul and the March 3, 2008 suicide truck bombing on the Sabari district headquarters in Khost. Their attacks include diverse delivery systems that include massive truck bombs, donkey-borne IEDs, suicide operatives on foot, motorbike, or bicycle and a variety of disguises to penetrate government installations.

321. On 21 July 2009, fifteen men disguised in burkhas stormed government and security buildings in Gardez and Jalalabad. Using commando-style tactics, the Haqqani operatives fought fiercely to get past security check posts. Once inside the building, the insurgents detonated explosive vests killing at least a dozen people and injuring over twenty.

322. Kim Sengupta, "The Burqa-clad bombers who terrorise Afghanistan," *The Independent*, July 22, 2009; Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," *Survival, The IISS Quarterly* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 15–31; Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov, and Laptop*, 24.

323. "Deadlier Taliban Network Surfaces," *Toronto Star*, February 9, 2009.

Paktika and Khost provinces) and North Waziristan.[324] Senior U.S. intelligence officials suggest there were recently "157 training camps and 'more than 400 support locations' spread throughout the tribal areas and the settled districts of the Northwest Frontier Province" that have been used to indoctrinate, arm, coordinate and carryout suicide attacks on international and Afghan security forces in Afghanistan.[325]

2. Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG)

Originally a political faction of the Hezb-e-Islami party in 1977, it was one of the major mujahedeen organizations fighting the Soviets. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was a favored recipient of resources coming from Pakistan's ISI during the anti-Soviet jihad. Hekmatyar has since arisen as a formidable opponent, allying himself temporarily with Taliban and Al Qaeda forces.[326] His group has significant support in the northeastern provinces of Afghanistan among a wide group of Pashtun tribes.[327] His consistent stance against the corrupt Afghan government and the occupation of international troops brings the support of many Pashtun, Pashai and Nuristani tribesmen with legitimate local and regional grievances. HIG has conducted operations throughout northeastern Afghanistan to include complex attacks on combat outposts, ambushes, and sophisticated suicide operations.

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324. Their operations are typically planned in North Waziristan (in the past, the Manbaul Ulom madrassa, in Dande Darpa Khel, near Miramshah was a focal point for coordinating attacks.) The madrassa was closed in 2002, by the Pakistan government and reopened in 2004. It was then hit with a series of missile strikes on 8 September 2008, killing more than 20, including nine Arab Al Qaeda operatives and six Taliban fighters). See: Bill Roggio, "US, Afghan forces strike Haqqani Network base," *The Long War Journal*, August 30, 2009; Bill Roggio, "Haqqani's main madrassa hit in North Waziristan attack," *The Long War Journal*, September 9, 2008.

325. Bill Roggio, "Cross-border Strike Targets One of the Taliban's 157 training Camps in Pakistan's Northwest," *The Long War Journal*, August 13, 2008.

326. Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," 41. He has also denied links with the said groups: Candace Rondeaux, "Afghan Rebel Positioned for Key Role," The Washington Post, November 5, 2008 In the spring of 2003, the Quetta Shura, Al Qaeda and HIG agreed to unite forces and work together. See: "Summary of Evidence for Administrative Review Board in the Case of Razak, Abdul," The Guantanamo Docket, *New York Times*.

327. *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies*, "Kunar Province: Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HiG)," Monterey, 15 July 2008.

3. The Quetta Shura Taliban

The Taliban represent a puritanical form of Islam combining tribal customs with a strict interpretation of religious law.[328] While the Taliban brought security and justice, they were overly strict in their implementation of it.[329] The Taliban distinguish their movement from GIRoA by labeling this structure and those supporting it *takfir* (an apostate). They characterize government employees as "spies" or "enemies of Islam" and obtain religious authority from self-proscribed mullahs working within the organization. This gives Taliban the ability to wage jihad on virtually anyone including in one case, a mullah who openly prayed against suicide operations.[330] This manner of extreme interpretation is similar to Al Qaeda as discussed in Chapter IV.[331] However, the Taliban have not endorsed female suicide terrorism as an option. Other insurgent groups in Afghanistan have also disregarded the role of women in the insurgency.

The organization is led by a reclusive, but charismatic leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar. In 1996, he arranged a public gathering to view the hallowed cloak of Prophet

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328. Taliban roots come from a minority political group of Deobandi leaders that dissented from the majority Deobandi organization in north India. This group, which eschewed secular nationalism and cooperation with the Hindu majority in India, came to be known as the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam (JUI), a breakaway from the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind. JUI arose out of the 1947 independence of Pakistan where a long debate ensued as to the direction politics would go in that country – a secular or Islamic government. Unlike India, Deobandism in Pakistan took on a much more politicized purpose.

329. As a result of the social problems from a weakened tribal system and lawless mujahedeen warlords, social regulations under the Taliban regime were very strict – long beards and burkhas were enforced, music was prohibited, television, kite flying, and other forms of entertainment were deemed un-Islamic. The leader of the Darul Uloom's Deobandi school, Maulana Ur-Rehman said they "do not preach that women should be forced to cover themselves; we recommend it for their own protection and comfort. Nor do we see television as inherently un-Islamic. We simply dispute its content." While Taliban and their Deobandi roots have similar moral values, their interpretations of topics such as jihad are radically different. Edward Luce, "Teachers of the Taliban," [London edition]. *Financial Times*, November 17, 2001.

330. Rahim Faiez, "Taliban Kills Mullah Critical of Suicide Bombing," *NBC Chicago*, November 14, 2008.

331. The Taliban movement also slightly models that of the Kharijites in the seventh century. The Kharijites believed in simple black and white, right and wrong and followed the idea of "fard' ayn," that all Muslims are obligated to participate in jihad. According to Miriam Cooke, this obligation applied to women within the Kharijites, such as Layla Bint Tarif, one of their venerated warriors. John Esposito says the Kharijites "represent the earliest example of radical dissent in Islam … Combining a rigorous Puritanism and religious fundamentalism with and 'exclusivist egalitarianism,' the Kharijites emerged as revolutionaries." John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41; Miriam Cooke, "Women's Jihad before and after 9/11," in *Terror, Culture, Politics: Rethinking 9/11* ed., Daniel J. Sherman and Terry Nardin, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 168.

Mohammed for only the third time since it was brought to Afghanistan in 1747. This event gave Mullah Omar the title Amir al-Muminin (Commander of the Faithful). Omar was said to have taken his role seriously, often walking the streets to "gauge the problems" of common people, and wearing a perfume blend thought to have been worn by the Prophet Muhammad.[332]

A major influence of the Taliban movement is nationalism. In Afghanistan's history tribal identity has often complemented religious ideology and objectives with revolts under jihad being temporary attempts of tribes or factions to gain power, particularly from illegitimate ruling authorities. Some argue the Taliban are focused on regaining their traditional tribal homeland and that Taliban motivations have been more secular than religious, involving a fight within the Pashtun confederation.[333] However, the Taliban are willing to accept virtually anyone that believes in uniting the Afghan nation against foreign aggression. In this effort, they often draw reference to Afghans' defeat of British invaders in the nineteenth century and the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. To the international community, Taliban brand their image as non-confrontational, drawing distinction between Afghan nationalism and Al Qaeda terrorism stating that they had no connection to the terrorist operations on September 11, 2001.[334]

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332. Juan Cole, "The Taliban, Women, and the Private Sphere," in *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* eds., Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 127.

333. A historical feud questioning the rightful heirs to the monarchy has characterized Durrani and Ghilzai factions in the past. Johnson and Mason argue that the insurgency in 2005 was actually a fight by Ghilzai's to regain their perceived homeland in southern and eastern Afghanistan. The lack of a major Ghilzai representation in President Hamid Karzai's cabinet has been one significant point of recent animosity between Ghilzais and Durranis, leading to calls of illegitimacy, corruption and anti-government support. However, an actual tribal dichotomy among Pashtuns has been questioned by many scholars and refuted by Taliban leadership. Most Taliban leadership in the 2004 Rahbari Shura were of Durrani origin as opposed to Ghilzai. For more on this topic see: Johnson and Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis: A Journal of World Affairs* 51, no. 1 (2006): 71–89; Shahid Afsar, Chris Samples & Thomas Wood, "The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis," *Military Review* (May-June 2008): 58–73; Ashley Tellis, "Pakistan and the War on Terror: Conflicted Goals, Compromised Performances," *The Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 2, 7–32; Guistozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov, and Laptop*, 46–47.

334. On October 7, 2009, they stated: "We had and have no plan of harming countries of the world, including those in Europe … our goal is the independence of the country and the building of an Islamic state." Referring to "occupying the homeland of the religious and proud Afghans" Taliban insist terrorism is being used as a justification to prolong eventual defeat of the United States. "Afghan Taliban say they pose no threat to the West," *Reuters*, October 7, 2009; "Taliban, Hekmatyar urge U.S. to leave Afghanistan or face long war," *Open Source Center*, October 6, 2009.

Another major influence of the Taliban movement is foreign strategic imperatives. This involves two major components with intricate and sometimes unintended interaction often composed of competing elements: states seeking strategic depth and non-state actors seeking chaos. Particularly Pakistan, but also non-state actors such as Al Qaeda and splinter groups that make up the Salafi Jihadi movement have used and enhanced the conflict in Afghanistan in order to perpetuate their own existence. Taliban (and mujahedeen before them) have been used for many years as a proxy force against enemies of the state of Pakistan.[335]

Taliban are provided logistical, tactical and strategic support from foreign nations and the Salafi Jihadi movement. One reason the Taliban do not need female suicide bombers is the steady stream of male recruits coming from religious schools in Pakistan. Pakistani leadership under Zia ul Haq (1977—1988) utilized the Cold War paradigm to spread Islamic fundamentalism throughout Pakistan. Thousands of madrassas, used to impart Deobandi resistance ideas, were built with Saudi and U.S. money. After 9/11, there were over 15,000 madrassas in Pakistan.[336] The influx of three million Afghan refugees kept the madrassas busy educating and providing a legitimate social function to Pakistan.[337] Some schools, however, radicalized students and built armies of militants to be used against Pakistan's perceived threats.[338]

Elements of the Pakistani military establishment and their intelligence service (ISI) are well known to have provided the Taliban with the intelligence to launch the deadly Indian Embassy bombing in Kabul in 2008.[339] Many argue that Afghanistan has

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335. Coll, *Ghost Wars;* Rashid, *Taliban*; and Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game."

336. Luce, Edward, "Teachers of the Taliban,"[London edition]. *Financial Times*, November 17, 2001.

337. Significant social benefits are derived from the establishment of religious schools in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan. See: Masooda Bano, "Beyond Politics: the Reality of a Deobandi Madrasa in Pakistan," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 18, no. 1 (2007): 43–68.

338. One Madrasa Haqqaniya, near Peshawar, trained many of the top Taliban leaders. See: Metcalf, "Traditionalist Islamic Activism," 13.

339. Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "Pakistanis Aided Attack in Kabul, U.S. Officials Say," *New York Times*, August 1, 2008.

been a strategic "prize" of which India and Pakistan has been fighting over for years.[340] In the classical sense of a security dilemma, each move made by one side in Afghanistan, provokes a counter move by the other. As a measure against India, Pakistan conducted an experiment in "social engineering" that fundamentally marginalized and dismantled the traditional tribal elements in Pakistan and Afghanistan, supplanting them with radical Muslim extremists.[341]

Some authors contend that Pakistan resides in a parallel state and operates with similar strategic dilemmas as Israel—fearing enemies on both sides of its borders.[342] Lieutenant General Hameed Gul, head of the ISI during the anti-Soviet jihad explained the reason for using foreign Muslim radicals: "We are fighting a jihad and this is the first Islamic international brigades, the West has NATO, why can't the Muslims unite and form a common front?"[343] Among these fighters were Arabs, Chechens, Uighurs, Uzbeks, Turks and Filipino Moros. However, suicide was not an encouraged tactic in mujahedeen cells. Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf commanded the ISI's Afghan Bureau, supplying, training and planning mujahedeen cells and their operations in Afghanistan. He states that none of his Pakistani staff were encouraged to commit suicide if caught by the enemy, rather to die fighting if this was the only option available.[344] Understanding the Taliban in Afghanistan, one must look at their roots in Pakistan and the perpetual state of conflict the nation has been in since its inception.[345]

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340. Robert Kaplan, "Behind the Indian Embassy Bombing," *The Atlantic*, August 1, 2008; and Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game."

341. Johnson and Mason, "No Sign Until the Burst of Fire," 33; and Matthew Cole, "Killing ourselves in Afghanistan," *Salon.com*, March 10, 2008.

342. Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 204.

343. Rashid, *Taliban*, 129.

344. Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan The Bear Trap*, 114.

345. As discussed earlier, this provided a means for Pakistan to undermine the growing Pashtun nationalism seen on both sides of the border and becoming a thorn in the side of both Afghan and Pakistani rulers. Leon B. Poullada, "Pushtunistan: Afghan Domestic Politics and Relations with Pakistan," *Pakistan's Western Borderlands: The Transformation of a Political Order*. ed., Ainslie T. Embree (Delhi: Vikas, 1977), 126–151.

Evidence suggests significant material support has gone to the Taliban from elements within the Pakistan ISI;[346] other evidence suggests Arab trans-national terror networks,[347] Al-Qaeda, and even Iran.[348] Some argue that recent empowerment of the Taliban (as early as 2003) were likely inspired by the U.S. preoccupation with operations in Iraq. This forced India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to reassess their regional strategic positions of safety and to align accordingly.[349] Karzai turned to India for support, giving space for at least five Indian consulates in Afghanistan, accepting US$600 million in aid, and allowing a unit of the Indian military, the Border Roads Organization, to rebuild portions of the Afghan highway system.[350] Pakistan reacted by providing supplies, intelligence, and refuge to the Taliban, however their efforts at controlling the Taliban has since become more of a problem than a solution with the increased attacks against Pakistani military, intelligence, and civilian institutions.

The other component of foreign influence involves the relationship with non-state actors. While many Taliban are experienced fighters and practitioners of irregular warfare, and some Taliban members had fought the Soviets as mujahedeen in the 1980s, the Taliban as an organization were not trained or experienced in waging an insurgency. Part of the answer lies with support provided by Al Qaeda and foreign fighters transferred from Iraq.[351] The anti-Soviet jihad allowed a number of foreign jihadists to train, socialize and experience war with Pashtuns. Afghanistan provided battlefield preparation

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346. Johnson and Mason, "No Sign Until the Burst of Fire," 72; Barnet Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* vol. 86, no. 1, (January 2007): 57–78; Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," 15–32; Giustozzi, 24.

347. "The Taleban Adopt New Tactics," *Voice of America*, March 30, 2007.

348. Brian Todd, "Coalition: Taliban have Iran arms," *CNN World*, May 31, 2007.

349. Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," 18.

350. "India hands over strategic highway to Afghanistan," *The Hindu*, January 23, 2009. There are also five Indian metals and mining companies competing for mining rights for the largest iron ore deposit in Hajigak, 130 km west of the capital Kabul. "5 Indian firms in shortlist to exploit Afghan iron ore mine," *Rediff Business*, July 4, 2009.

351. Al Qaeda trainers and fighters are routinely killed on the Afghan front. In August 2008, al Qaeda leader Abu Gharib al Makki, a key figure provided weapons and explosives training to insurgent units, was killed by Afghan forces in Farah province. In October 2009, three al Qaeda trainers working with Taliban forces in Herat were killed in a joint operation involving Afghan and NATO forces. See: Matt Dupee, "Saudi al Qaeda commander killed in Afghan clash," *The Long War Journal*, September 2, 2008; Bill Roggio, "Three al Qaeda trainers killed in western Afghanistan," *The Long War Journal*, October 6, 2009.

for the global jihad and as Hafez argues, "a template for mobilizing Muslims in defense of Islamic causes."[352] Initially the stated goal of the Taliban was to rid Afghanistan of the chaos the various Mujahedeen factions brought to the country, but as their territorial control expanded, they changed their explicit goal to transforming the country into "'a pure Islamic Emirate' as a prelude to achieving wider regional objectives."[353] Al Qaeda used kinship and jihadi ties to Pashtuns in the region in order to ensure a place of refuge and coordination for future anti-West operations.[354] This has strategic significance for the Taliban. First, Afghanistan offers non-state actors refuge from counterinsurgency forces in Iraq and an area to share their knowledge of sophisticated IEDs, guerilla tactics and suicide missions with young Taliban that have limited training compared to what their fathers had received in Pakistan.[355] It also brings more recruits from abroad, particularly those who can be sacrificed as suicide bombers. However, it can also bring consequences, such as behavior considered inappropriate to Taliban objectives of winning over the population.[356] Ayman Zawahiri once tried to persuade Mullah Omar to allow girls education, basic schooling and even combat training in Afghanistan. He used the example of Malalai who fought against the British in the nineteenth century. Omar refused saying the "presence of women at the fight or among soldiers would lead to a breakdown in discipline."[357]

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352. Mohammed M. Hafez, "Jihad after Iraq: Lessons from the Arab Afghans," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32, no. 3 (February 2009): 77.

353. Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Surviva*, (New York: I.B. Taurus, 2006), 222.

354. Amin Tarzi argues that Al Qaeda operations against U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, and the destruction of the Buddha statue in Bamyan province in 2001, were attempts at creating discord between the Taliban regime and the western world. Al Qaeda needed a fragile and recluse Afghanistan in order to use it as a base for worldwide operations. If Afghanistan participated in the popular gas pipeline project or actively sought out international recognition, this would upend Al Qaeda's long-term objectives in Afghanistan. See Amin Tarzi, "The New-Taliban," in *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan* eds., Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 305.

355. Brian Williams, "Return of the Arabs: Al-Qa'ida's Military Role in the Afghan Insurgency," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 3 (February 2008): 22–25.

356. Acid attacks and beheadings, while having an effect on spreading fear and a perception of insecurity, tend to anger Afghani civilians. One acid attack in Kandahar, initiated by a criminal cell was quickly refuted by Taliban representatives. AFP, "Taliban militants arrested in acid attack on Afghan girls," *CNN*, November 25, 2008.

357. "Women and Terror: Al Qaeda's new Recruits," *Newsweek*, December 12, 2008, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10315095/site/newsweek/.

Since the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Quetta Shura Taliban has attempted to regain a semblance of internal order and discipline among its commanders and fighters.[358] It has been faced with significant rifts over the years, fissures between regional commanders, and faces the emerging threat of criminal entrepreneurs with less than political interests at stake. The Taliban released a new code of conduct in May 2009, "Rules and Regulations for Mujahedeen" that provided a catalog of weak points, vulnerabilities and fears emanating from the Taliban's top echelon of leadership. Suicide attacks were addressed in rule 41, stating the following guidelines for conducting an attack:

- The attacker must be fully educated of their mission;
- Attacks must only target high ranking people;
- Civilian deaths must be avoided, and;
- Suicide attacks must be approved by Taliban provincial authorities.

The issuance of strict guidelines in conducting suicide attacks suggests the Taliban fear losing control over these types of operations. Attacks coordinated by rogue insurgent cells risk being sloppy, maiming more civilians than government personnel, and turning the tactic into a competition between rival organizations for popular support or financial assistance from outside donors.[359] They also risk being used by criminal syndicates as a way to protect illicit drug production and smuggling from government and international interdiction efforts.[360] This order from the Quetta Shura is an effort to regain control

358. While the Taliban draws resources and power from other groups, it also risks losing legitimacy, discipline and control. Part of the power emanating from the insurgent campaign is that the organization is loosely structured and nearly resembles an acephalous movement due to the military incompetence and reclusive nature of the leader, Mullah Omar. Instead the movement has taken on an independent character that is often undisciplined, non-hierarchical and unorganized in terms of an overall strategy. Unlike other insurgent movements like the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the sudden death of this charismatic leader would not end the insurgency. This is indeed a controversial point that would require a separate paper to explain, however it can be assumed that the second in command, Mullah Berader, a highly competent and organized deputy to Mullah Omar, would easily take the helm were Omar killed.

359. In northeastern Afghanistan, severing ears, lips and noses from captured civilians has become a common insurgent trend, particularly among foreign fighters and non-Taliban insurgent factions in Kunar and Nuristan. Beheadings, once a common recreation of Mullah Dadullah, have been frequently denounced by Mullah Omar as a form of execution. "Insurgent abuses against Afghan civilians," *AIHRC*, December 2008; "Taliban chief orders change in mode of executions," *IRIN News*, February 4, 2008.

360. Examples include four suicide attacks targeting counternarcotics personnel and their headquarters in Helmand and Nimroz (Zaranj) so far this year. In 2008, the UNODC tallied 78 fatalities caused by mine explosions, gun attacks, and suicide bombings against eradication teams and counternarcotics personnel; an increase of 75 percent from 2007. "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008," *UNODC*, (August 2008), 19–20.

over the monopoly of terrorism in Afghanistan as well as to rein in on those brutal acts, which they see as over the top and harmful to their image.

The brutal nature of suicide bombings leaves a sting in the side of many Afghans. When suicide missions go awry, Taliban typically deny responsibility in the attack and try to blame coalition forces for the violence. Recent surveys show suicide bombings have little support among Afghans. 89 percent believed suicide attacks were unjustified in 2007.[361] A recent Gallup poll found that 85 percent of Afghans disapproved of suicide bombing and another 90 percent found it un-Islamic.[362] Concern with public disapproval is apparent in the organization, and one of the reasons women are not part of these operations.

4. Women's Role in the Organization

Women did not play an active role in the anti-Soviet Jihad, however there were instances of their involvement. Some women fought and served as commanders in the Revolutionary Defense Group militias. One female warlord, Bibi Ayesha,[363] otherwise known, as "the Pigeon" was commander of a band of 150 men in the Nahrin district of Baghlan, northern Afghanistan. She fought against Soviets, Taliban and the Karzai government, dismissing the idea that women could not fight in battle: "It makes no difference if you are a man or a woman when you have the heart of a fighter."[364] But even Ayesha, a Tajik, conformed to Pashtun culture, insisting a male relative accompany her into battle, with at least four of her sons having fought alongside her.

Another example, that of Nahid, a woman who helped coordinate a protest march in April 1980 stood out as an example for years to come. The march in Kabul was in response to the 27 December 1979, Red Army invasion of Afghanistan. Nahid approached an officer in the Afghan Communist Party, calling him a coward:

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361. Campbell and Shapiro, "Afghanistan Index."

362. Gallup Consulting, "C-IED Media Survey," Gallup, Inc., May 16, 2008.

363. Bibi Ayesha is also the name of the daughter of Abu Bakr and one of the wives of the Prophet Mohammad.

364. Ayesha was disarmed by the United Nations Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups program in 2006. Tom Coghlan, "Afghanistan's feared woman warlord," *BBC News*, March 16, 2006.

> Since you are incapable of defending your honor you are not a man any more. Here, take my veil, put it on your head and give me your weapon. We women will be better at defending this country than you are.[365]

Nahid's bravery became a symbol of female resistance to occupation, such as women who fought alongside men in Nuristan. The Nuristan Front newspaper said that women "offered their blood for the Islamic revolution like red tulips at springtime."[366] Women believed that they would be offered equal status to men once the Afghan resistance had ended, instead persistent conflict swept away any opportunity at equality and the mass movement of Afghan liberation turned into a prison of religious authority.[367]

As participants of the anti-Soviet jihad, most women played supportive roles to mujahedeen. There was an important role for non-combatants to fill, to include political activity, writing and supporting front line fighters. Women sheltered and hid mujahedeen traveling through villages, stood watch in the evening as mujahedeen slept. Women would tend to soldiers by cooking, cleaning clothes or dressing wounds. They would clean, oil and repair weapons. They would also serve as couriers, carrying weapons, radios and supplies from safe havens to the front. They would even wash and care for the dead, preparing them for burial and often mother orphaned mujahedeen children.[368] It was also incumbent upon women to carry out vengeance in accordance with tribal code, when no man of the family was able or alive to reclaim the honor of the family. In Pashtunwali it is incumbent upon the wife of the slain male to take vengeance.[369] One woman, after seeing many in her village killed by Russians, pleaded with her brothers to

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365. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh (ed.), *Songs of Love and War: Afghan Women's Poetry* (trans.) Marjolijn de Jager, (New York: Other Press, 2003), 39.

366. Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan Under Soviet Domination* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1982), 125.

367. Eric Hoffer writes, "the adherents of a rising movement have a strong sense of liberation even though they live and breathe in an atmosphere of strict adherence to tenets and commands." This is an important concept when looking at the temporarily relaxed spaces offered women in insurgencies. These spaces are rarely opened longer than the conflict lasts. Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951), 32.

368. Pashto proverbs hail the role motherhood: "Paradise is under the feet of a mother" and "The angel of blessing does not put his foot in a home with no women." Anna M. Pont, *Blind Chickens and Social Animals*, 82.

369. Edwards, *Hereos of the Age*, 59.

get her a bomb so that she could destroy a tank and become a "shaheed," however they refused since the obligation for vengeance became the brothers'.[370]

In the Taliban era, women's role in jihad is much less active and supportive. Since the Taliban, were in many respects, a reaction to the chaos under mujahedeen resistance and rule, the Taliban advocated very strict policies for interaction between men and women. In tribal society, women act as peace brokers or part of the mobilization effort during conflict. However, as previously addressed, the Taliban undermined tribal mores with a strict puritanical interpretation of women's role in society. Years of Taliban rule and a generation of youth indoctrinated in madrassas created an environment where women had little role outside the home. One of their largest spaces for involvement, which Taliban had little control over, were women's networks or solidarity groups. These groups provided women the ability to work together toward survival strategies, coping mechanisms and income-generating activities.[371] Unlike other insurgent actors this thesis has examined, women's agency in Afghanistan was not found within the Taliban organization and a martyrdom identity for Pashtun women has thus far been deemed inappropriate by the organization and society.

D. THE MARTYR IDENTITY

One should not be surprised that religion played such a strong role in unifying the Afghan resistance. Christianity has and continues to be a motivating factor in western militaries. The hero who confronts evil in order to save the honor of his people has been a common mythology advanced by many societies. A look at some of the war posters created during the two World Wars show that religion is often exploited to encourage soldiers to fight. During the great wars of the twentieth century, states utilized pre-existing traditions, narratives and memories embodied in a variety of cultural tools and representations in order to instill an obligation of sacrifice for the secular nation. An overwhelming theme found in war propaganda during World War I and II was the

370. Deborah Ellis, *Women of the Afghan War* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2000), 50.

371. Women's networks developed informal schools, health clinics, legal advice, and donations to the poor and a number of other social services otherwise absent from the Taliban government. See: Elaheh Rostami-Povey, *Afghan Women: Identity & Invasion* (New York: Zed Books, Ltd., 2007), 28–30.

preoccupation with religious symbols glorifying sacrifice, death and resurrection packaged in the immortal veneration of the nation's martyrs. Heroes were connected with the glorious age of Christianity and given eternal life through the nation's institutionalization of the aesthetics of sacrifice and death.[372] These same notions have been present in crafting a cult of martyrdom in Afghanistan. One who is sacrificed for the cause is venerated as a hero and given the title martyr or *shaheed*. In the Afghan jihad, commanders would never claim mujahedeen had been killed in battle; instead they would report that fighters had become *Shaheed*.[373] Even those who fought and lived were honored as *Ghazi* in poems and martyrologies.[374]

The martyr identity in Afghanistan has been linked with both religious and secular ideals and traditions. Afghans are proud of their ability to defeat foreign invaders from Alexander the Great to three victorious wars over British troops in the nineteenth century. These events are typically linked to present actions as a continuation of the heroic mujahedeen. Today's martyr, like the past, is composed of economic, political and social grievances wrapped in the moral language of jihad. Most true believing Taliban believe there will be "an ultimate divine victory for their jihad" similar to what they experienced against the Soviets.[375] One method by which Taliban spread the martyr identity is through traditional Afghan story telling and narratives. Thomas Johnson's study of Taliban night letters has shown that this has remained a consistent medium since the anti-

372. For examples of this western aesthetic, see: Anne-Louis Girodet de Roucy-Triosson, *Ossian Receiving the Ghosts of the French Heroes* (1802); Constantino Brumidi, *Apotheosis of Washington* (1865); Alonso Earl Folinger, "The Greatest Mother," *Red Cross Poster*, Library of Congress (1918); James Aulich, *War Posters: Weapons of Mass Communication* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2007); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford University Press, 1990); Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda From the Ancient World to the Present Day* (Manchester Univeristy Press, 1995).

373. Yousaf and Adkin, *Afghanistan The Bear Trap*, 33.

374. A *Ghazi* is one who wages a *ghazawat*, or a victorious raid. It is a term of recognition. See: Magnus and Naby, *Afghanistan: Mullah, Marx, and Mujahid*, 35.

375. "Afghanistan: Taliban propaganda effective among Pashtoons," *IRIN News*, 1 August 2007.

Soviet jihad.[376] This "resistance literature" has enabled mujahedeen and Taliban to voice absolute opposition through jihad to foreign occupation and corrupt Afghan leaders.[377] The linking of Afghan narratives has had an influence in mobilizing divisive tribes for peaceful or violent means.[378] Poetry and songs have also been very important methods of transferring information in a highly illiterate, rural society. Part of oral traditions, these have equally important roles in describing family, tribal and national history, delivering religious and moral messages and sharing news of the urban and far away places most rural Afghans never come in contact with.

Women have played an important inspirational role as purveyors of information in Afghanistan through artistic expression, particularly during times of crisis and in support of mujahedeen. Malalai is one oft-cited example of Pashtun heroism among women.[379] Another is Rabia Balkhi, a famous female poet of the tenth century which the Taliban have given respect to.[380] The Taliban, like the anti-Soviet mujahedeen, use poetry as a means to transmit their sacred cause as one that is a legitimate defense of the Afghan nation against foreign invaders on a crusade against Islam. The poetry often refers to Western desires to embarrass and humiliate pious and humble Afghan Muslims,

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376. Night Letters or *Shabnamah* are letters or leaflets posted on public spaces to warn Afghans against cooperating against the government or foreign occupiers. They also present warnings to stay away from particular roads, schools or other projects coordinated by international institutions. They intimidate, threaten and provide information to locals. See: Aryn Baker, "Deadly Notes in the Night: How the Taliban is using a new kind of terrorist threat to intimidate Afghans," *Time*, July 5, 2006.

377. Thomas H. Johnson, "The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters)," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (September 2007): 319.

378. Johnson writes that narratives, "have an effect on our capacity to recall events, motivate action, modulate our emotional reactions to events, cue certain heuristics and biases, structure our problem-solving capabilities and ultimately influence our very identity." Johnson, "The Taliban Insurgency," 319. See also: Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univeristy Press, 1996).

379. Malalai is a Pashtun heroine who fought in the Battle of Maiwand near Kandahar in 1880. She is well known throughout Afghanistan for rallying Pashtuns to fight the British, using her veil as standard and shouting the following *landay*: "Young love, if you do not fall in the battle of Maiwand, By God, someone is saving you as a token of shame." See: Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 410–11.

380. Balkhi wrote love poetry in Persian. She died after her brother cut her throat for infidelity and it is said she wrote her last poem in her own blood. When the Taliban captured Mazar-e-Sharif, they protected her tomb from desecration. See: Rostami-Povey, *Afghan Women*, 16.

but the main intent of the poem is to awaken Afghans to their plight and motivate them to participate in jihad.

These oral transmissions were predominant, particularly in refugee camps in Pakistan, where many displaced clans and individuals traveled to safety. One form of poetry, called *landay*, is often used in conversation as a means to drive a point home, but typically used by women as a form of expressing positive and negative emotions in response to themes of love, honor and death.[381] *Landay*, like other oral traditions, are reactive to the structural constraints of conflict and occupation, having an influential role in the behavior of mujahedeen. While Majrouh's study concludes women's *landay* were less religious than male poetry, the common themes pressured men to join the fight. The *landay* presented in Majrouh's study illustrate women focused not purely on religious jihad, but also resistance against occupation and foreign aggression. *Landay* were often sung to motivate sons to join the fight for it depended upon the survival of the next generation as illustrated below:

> Son, if you desert our war; I shall curse everything and also the milk of my breasts.[382]
>
> May you perish on the field of honor, my beloved! So that girls will sing your glory each time they haul water from the spring.[383]

In terms of supporting jihad, this may be the most influential role women played. Sacrificing her men becomes her jihad and may even necessitate her participation on the battlefield.[384] Other *landay*, sung by young girls or wives addressed men's need for sexual relations. While women had little influence in the public sphere, they had significant roles in the home. Their ability to withhold sexual relations from men was a

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381. Literally meaning "the short one," landay is a poem consisting of two verse lines of nine and thirteen syllables, absent of rhyme. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, *Songs of Love and War*, ix–xvi.

382. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, *Songs of Love and War*, 67.

383. Ibid., 16.

384. Audrey C. Shalinsky, "Women's Roles in the Afghanistan Jihad," International Journal of Middle East Studies 25, no. 4 (November 1993): 661–675.

form of power. In these *landay*, a coward would never be seen by his lover the same way again:

> Go first, my lover, to avenge the martyr's blood; Before deserving the refuge of my breasts.[385]
>
> A martyr is like lightning that glitters and is then snuffed out. He who dies at home does nothing other than defile the bed.

Landay were also a way to remind men of their honor and duty to defend the family and village from outside aggressors.

> Oh my love! If in my arms you tremble so; What will you do when a thousand lightning bolts flash from the clash of swords?[386]
>
> May you be found cut to pieces by a trenchant sword, But may the news of your dishonor never reach my ears![387]

They made clear that men were not alone in the fight. Women followed their men and supported their bravery throughout:

> With my own hands I have sent you off to die, And then I climbed onto the roof to see you brave the first volley of guns.[388]

Poetry, storytelling and night letters are all traditional means of passing information on in Afghanistan. These methods are supported by twenty-first century technology that links rural narratives to the urban. Taliban utilize low-tech FM radio transmitters and broadcast their own radio program, "Voice of Shariat" on the back of pickup trucks throughout Afghanistan.[389] The broadcasts are said to focus on government corruption, the Koran, jihad and other religious programs, but omit references to suicide attacks. Bluetooth technology however has spread music and videos

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385. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, *Songs of Love and War*, 16.

386. Ibid.

387. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, *Songs of Love and War*, 17.

388. Sayd Bahodine Majrouh, *Songs of Love and War*, 17.

389. "Taliban Hits Airwaves in Southeastern Afghanistan," *NPR*, August 3, 2007.

on martyrdom operations in a viral fashion throughout southern Afghanistan.[390] An additional tool used by the Taliban is the Internet. In June 2009, an online version of Voice of Shari'ah was launched via the Taliban Pashto-language website *Shahamat.*[391] The service streams news, commentaries, poetry and martyrologies, and is updated twice daily.[392] This acquisition of twenty-first-century technology shows an organizational acceptance of modern technology by the Taliban and the influence of Salafi Jihadist strategy, which has been using a variety of multi-media formats for their efforts to spread a culture of martyrdom.

Suicide training camps in Pakistan are often filmed and the DVDs distributed to cities in Afghanistan. The influence of Al Qaeda is apparent with Arabic songs, beheading-style executions, and frequent subtle connections between the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, including appearances of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in the videos.[393] The path of jihad is the main theme of these films. One film shows a young suicide bomber identified as Noor Aslam, presenting his personal statement:

> Friends, our religion is being desecrated, but you and me are asleep at home. Our sisters and mothers are dishonored and raped. They are forced to have sex with dogs and pigs, but you and me are asleep comfortably in our homes.[394]

He then explains the sacrifices the prophets of Islam made and how all Muslims must also make sacrifices. "Therefore friends, rise! I am also ready to sacrifice my life for Allah. One has to die one day anyway. What would you tell Allah if you die on your

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390. Bluetooth is a method of file transfer from computer servers to cell phones that allows one to hear music or view videos and photos. The author has listened to a CD of Bluetooth music files in Pashto acquired by researchers with the *Program for Culture and Conflict Studies*, Naval Postgraduate School.

391. Shamat or "valour" can be seen at www.shahamat.org.

392. "Afghanistan: Taliban Launch New Radio Station in South," *Xinhua*, August 8, 2009.

393. Mark Drummett and Bilal Sarway, "DVD role in Afghan insurgency," *BBC News*, February 21, 2006; also see Tim Foxley, "The Taliban's propaganda activities: how well is the Afghan insurgency communicating and what is it saying?" *SIPRI Project Paper*, June 2007.

394. Released by Tehrik-e-Taliban, the Pakistani based Taliban movement also known to train and dispatch up to 1/3 of suicide attackers in Afghanistan. "Pakistani Taliban Release Video of 'Revenge' Suicide Attacks," *Open Source Center Report*, July 21, 2009.

deathbed at home?" These martyrologies have similar structure and themes to those Al Qaeda released in Iraq.

Key to this emerging technology within the Taliban organization is the absence of female voices and perceptions. While Taliban claim to be defending the honor of women in their resistance, they have not opened an opportunity for women to participate in the jihad. Even under the anti-Soviet resistance, mujahedeen allowed women to support the jihad with resistance literature and oral narratives venerating the heroic martyr. Under the Taliban jihad, female representation in even supporting martyrdom ideology has not been found. Instead, as Shukira Barakzai, an MP in the Afghan parliament has said, they have mixed *Sharia*, Pashtunwali, politics and self-interest to create an information campaign that rivals "the futile metaphor 'hearts and minds' chanted by U.S. officials."[395]

E. SUMMARY

After thirty years of conflict in Afghanistan, insurgents and their tactics have changed. The Taliban have evolved into an amorphous movement that takes on a variety of resistance narratives dependent upon local conditions. With the influx of foreign fighters from Iraq and the refuge Pakistan brings, it has become increasingly difficult to pinpoint who the Taliban are and subsequently what influences them. Today's Taliban are involved with illicit narcotics production and smuggling, criminal enterprises and a number of non-ideological operations that threaten to undermine the moral narrative of their resistance. Fighters influenced by entrepreneurial gains and foreign Salafi Jihadists have become a less disciplined movement

Culture and religion are powerful structures influencing the behavior and tactics of insurgents. However, the influx of foreign insurgent organizations like Islamic Jihad Union, Chechens, Arabs and the Salafi Jihadi movement threaten to undermine cultural structures that have traditionally prohibited female involvement in the insurgency.

395. "Afghanistan: Taliban propaganda effective among Pashtoons," *IRIN News*, August 1, 2007.

Foreign actors may be more prone to act upon short-term material gains via risky military tactics and less concerned with cultural inhibitors that threaten the strength of social support.

For over 30 years, Pakistan, with the help of foreign states, has radicalized and exploited religious schools, using the students as proxies against the Indian threat. This has backfired on Pakistan as the Taliban, radicalized by the Global Jihadi Movement, have turned on the state and civilian institutions. Salafi Jihadis preaching an individual obligation to jihad have compelled many Pakistani and Afghan youth to become suicide bombers. Their influence on the Taliban organization is apparent in the evolution of strategy and tactics, however these have yet to include the introduction of women as martyrs.

This section described the factors behind the insurgency in Afghanistan and why there has been a relative absence of female suicide bombers in the region. Among the factors influencing insurgent behavior are a permissive social and geographic environment that gives insurgents freedom of mobility; an enduring presence of strict cultural institutions that define acceptable behavior of individuals, organizations and society; and an absence of female participation in the culture of martyrdom that defines insurgent actions and narratives. The following section will develop these notions further, analyzing and comparing the structural conditions derived from each case study.

VI. ANALYSIS, FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

In Chapters III through V, each case was presented in isolation, describing the historical and structural characteristics behind each insurgency and associated actors. Each case revealed that tactics do not fully explain the appearance of female suicide bombers; rather an appreciation of structural considerations such as norms, institutional barriers, and the dynamics of conflict also influence the agency of actors. This section will develop upon the cases by comparing each against the propositions introduced in Chapter I. This comparative analysis identifies characteristics that affect insurgent military strategies in Afghanistan, particularly the propensity to use female suicide bombers. There are three primary findings from this analysis that sufficiently explain the low propensity for female suicide bombers in Afghanistan. First, a permissive social and geographic environment in Afghanistan gives insurgents freedom of mobility and resistance; second, the power of a strict culture restricts female participation in Afghan society and insurgent organizations; and third, the pronounced absence of a female culture of martyrdom to open space for women to participate in insurgent actions and narratives. These three factors are developed below followed by policy recommendations in assessing insurgent military strategy.

The dependent variable in all three propositions was whether insurgent groups used female suicide bombers. Indicators of this were the presence of female bombers and some level of societal support preceding or following usage. The results showed that groups in Sri Lanka and Iraq did use female suicide bombers, while groups in Afghanistan have not.

A. PROPOSITION I

The first proposition is focused on insurgent freedom of movement and ability to receive refuge and support that allows the group to conduct violent actions. The independent variable is a non-permissive security environment for insurgents. Indicators include: a geographical and social environment that fail to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions; consistent external support provided to insurgent

organizations; and high success of counterinsurgent / terrorist forces. The more effective counterinsurgents are, the less permissible an environment will be for insurgent groups to operate, thus making female suicide bombings a tactic worth using in order to provide time, space, and recognition. A permissive security environment includes social and cultural acceptance of insurgent behaviors such as suicide bombings. External support to insurgents also provides essential resources making deferment of female suicide bombing more likely.

Table 2 offers clear patterns that less permissive environments reflect insurgent usage of female suicide bombers. In the cases we find that the LTTE, Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Mujahedeen and Quetta Shura Taliban (QST) all had safe havens outside the range of counterinsurgent reach. However, LTTE and AQI both lost grip of, or were in fear of losing, their safe havens at certain times and subsequently increased the use of female suicide bombers. At times when the LTTE position of power was threatened, such as during parliamentary elections in 2000, or during periods of counterinsurgent surges, female suicide bombings were used as a means to create space for Tamil separatists and prevent counterinsurgent incursions onto LTTE territory or their power structures. For AQI, increased counterinsurgency operations in 2006 and 2007, bled the organization of many male recruits, and drove groups out of established safe havens in important urban environments, compelling the organization to support female bombers. This became especially pronounced in 2008, when female suicide bombers reached the highest level in Iraq with 32 killing themselves.

In the case of mujahedeen in Afghanistan, they were never in threat of losing their safe haven, which consisted predominately of rural villages and mountainous terrain outside the reach of Soviet forces that predominated district and provincial capitals.[396] The QST exist in the same security environment, with the same freedom of movement along the Pakistan border that mujahedeen of the 1980s had. Mujahedeen and QST have never had to deal with the structural constraint of counterinsurgent forces like AQI and

396. Marshal Akhromeyev commented in 1986, "We control Kabul and the provincial centers, but…we have lost the battle for the Afghan people." See: Michael Dobbs, "The Afghan Archive: Secret Memos Trace Kremlin's March to War," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1992, A1.

LTTE have. Insurgents in Afghanistan have had significant freedom of mobility and the capability to move across a porous border to find refuge, resources and training.[397] This freedom of movement opens the range of military options for Afghan insurgents, making female suicide bombers a less urgent tactic.

Table 2. Proposition I

Propositions	Variable		Indicators	Iraq	Sri Lanka	PDPA	GIRoA
Generally, the less an insurgent organization finds the operational environment permissible, the more likely it will rely upon female suicide bombers as a tactic.	Dependent	Insurgent organizations use of female suicide bombers.	Use of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
			Societal support of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
	Independent	A non-permissive security environment for insurgents	A geographic environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions	Y	Y	N	N
			A social environment which fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions	---	N	N	N
			External support provided to insurgent organizations is consistent	N	N	Y	Y
			Success of counter-terrorist / insurgent organizations is high	Y	Y	N	N

The second indicator of the independent variable is a social environment that fails to offer refuge and support for insurgent mobility and actions. Of all the indicators in Proposition 1, this is the weakest. All cases displayed some level of support from internal social groups at some point during the conflict. The LTTE were an ethno-linguistic representative of the Tamil population which predominately resided in the northeast portion of Sri Lanka—the area where LTTE was headquartered. They also had an even larger diaspora in the southern region of India. In Tamil Nadu and the northeast of Sri Lanka, LTTE were able to seek refuge as needed and had a relatively consistent social network to support their operations. For AQI, they initially had support of ethnic-Sunni tribesmen and ex-Baathists disenfranchised by the new structural composition of the

397. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy," 101–109; Guistozzi, *Koran, Kalishnikov, and Laptop*, 110–114; Johnson and Mason, "Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template," *Military Review* (November-December 2009): 1–14.

government—a Shia-dominated and non-Baathist populated regime that threatened the livelihood of Sunnis. In the short term, AQI filled the security void by being a constant scourge to counterinsurgent forces. However, they lost a great deal of internal support once Iraq established the Awakening Councils, essentially arming Sunni men against AQI. The brutal nature of Zarqawi also drew many Islamic fundamentalists away from the Iraq conflict, even creating a wedge between Osama bin Laden and the action of AQI. This indicator was therefore marked as inconclusive. For the mujahedeen and QST, rural Pashtun villages provided a significant level of support to these insurgents.[398] Some Pashtun tribes such as the Ishaqzai and Noorzai in Helmand have provided support to Taliban due to grievances with the government, other tribes in Nuristan and Kunar provinces provide support to Taliban or HIG to protect gem and lumber markets in those regions.[399]

The third indicator of the independent variable is consistent external support. This indicator shows that those groups who lost a significant level of external support also turned to women as perpetrators of extreme violence. In the case of LTTE, they had a large Tamil diaspora in Tamil Nadu that provided political sway to policy circles in New Delhi, which helped originally empower the LTTE as an Indian proxy against the non-compliant Sinhalese-dominant government of Sri Lanka. LTTE lost New Delhi support in 1987 when Rajiv Gandhi signed an agreement with Sri Lanka to support its fight against Tamil separatists. While LTTE set up organizations around the world to support the Tamil independence movement, these provided inconsistent resources. By 2001, the LTTE was labeled a terrorist organization and lost most of its international recognition. Externally, AQI filled its recruitment rolls with foreign-born jihadists from a number of Middle East and Eurasian countries. They also received resources, moral and social support from foreign-based clients. Outside Afghanistan, support has come from states such as Saudi Arabia, U.S. and Pakistan at various times in the conflicts as was

398. It should be noted that local support in all these cases refers to support that may or may not be derived from intimidation and threats of violence.

399. On Helmand province see: Jeffrey A. Dressler, "Afghanistan Report 2: Securing Helmand: Understanding and Responding to the Enemy," *Institute for the Study of War* (September 2009); for Nuristan and Kunar provinces see: Michael Moore and James Fussell, "Afghanistan Report 1: Kunar and Nuristan: Rethinking U.S. Counterinsurgency Operations," *Institute for the Study of War* (July 2009).

previously discussed in Chapter V. While this support has ebbed and flowed, it remained relatively constant in providing mujahedeen and QST the necessary resources to continue fighting.

The fourth indicator of the independent variable looks at the success of counterinsurgent forces. The results of this indicator suggest that those groups facing weak or inconsistent counterinsurgent operations are less in need of female suicide bombers. LTTE and AQI both experienced strong and consistent counterinsurgent operations against their organizations, providing significant threats to the survival of each. In 2006 and 2007, pressure on AQI was higher than previous years, threatening the structure and viability of the organization. A turn toward female suicide bombers ensued as male recruit numbers were reduced. Similar pressures were placed on LTTE throughout their existence causing a retaliation and effort to create space between insurgents and counterinsurgents. Female bombers provided this ability as it forced counterinsurgents to reassess their force protection measures, tactics and strategy. In the case of Afghanistan, counterinsurgents have never truly threatened insurgent operations. Mujahedeen and Taliban networks have easily been able to replicate lost fighters from an endless field of male recruits in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Afghan insurgents have also utilized sophisticated IED and ambush tactics with significant success.

This proposition developed that in these countries where the dependent variable was present (Iraq and Sri Lanka), there was also a geographic environment and possibly a social environment that failed to offer refuge and support to insurgent actions and mobility, that external support to the group was not consistent, and the success of counterinsurgent operations was high. Where the dependent variable was not present (Afghanistan), there was both a geographic and a social environment that offered refuge and support to insurgent actions and mobility, a consistent level of external support and limited success of counterinsurgent operations.

All of these indicators together suggest female suicide bombing is a tactic that depends upon structural constraints on insurgent actions and mobility. When the organization's position of safety is threatened to a certain point then alternative military strategies become crucial. When the geographic and social environment fail to provide

safe havens and refuge, when external actors remain inconsistent suppliers of resources and recruits, and when counterinsurgent forces are strong adversaries, the insurgent organizations face a unique dilemma requiring alternative military strategies, such as female suicide bombing.

While this proposition addresses a critical component of what tactics to use to ensure organizational survival, it does not fully address structural factors individuals, organizations, and society live under as they make decisions. Proposition II develops this idea and brings a more nuanced approach to understanding how organizations choose female suicide bombers for more than just tactical motivations.

B. PROPOSITION II

The second proposition is concerned with the structure of state institutions and how they generally affect organizational and individual agencies in regards to female participation with state and sub-state institutions. The independent variable in this proposition is structural processes that inhibit female participation in the state and further sub-state insurgent involvement. Indicators of structural influence on female agency are derived from a number of social characteristics such as grievances toward the government or international forces, a lack of employment and education opportunities for women, the failure of political institutions to recognize and address insurgent grievances, a subsequent rejection of the institutions provided by the state, and the influence of sub-state or international structures such as cultural codes of conduct and religious fundamentalism on the agency of organizations. Of the five indicators of this variable, three were found to have positive attributes in each case studied, while two involving participation with insurgent organizations were positive in Iraq and Sri Lanka and negative in Afghanistan. Generally, it's found that if space is provided to women in the public sphere, it becomes easier for insurgent groups to establish a similar sphere for women in the group, especially one that involves violent political action.

Table 3. Proposition II

Propositions	Variable		Indicators	Iraq	Sri Lanka	PDPA	GIRoA
Generally, if structural conditions inhibit female participation in the state and further participation in sub-state insurgent organizations, the insurgency is more likely to produce female suicide bombers.	Dependent	Insurgent organizations use of female suicide bombers.	Use of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
			Societal support of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
	Independent	Structural processes that inhibit female participation in the state and further sub-state insurgent involvement	High level of societal grievances focused on structural conditions	Y	Y	Y	Y
			Structure that fails to provide employment and economic opportunities for women	N	N	Y	Y
			Structure of government fails to further political participation of women	N	N	Y	Y
			Structural processes increase female support or participation in insurgent organizations	Y	Y	N	N
			Insurgent organizations are recruiting women	Y	Y	N	N

The first indicator of the independent variable is the presence of a high level of societal grievances focused on structural conditions. This indicator produced positive results in each case study. A condition apparent in all cases is a sudden and detrimental change in the governing structure and grievances associated with that change. Independence in Sri Lanka placed the majority Sinhalese in authority over the minority Tamil population. This change of power brought a number of institutional modifications to benefit the dominant Sinhalese and marginalize the minority Tamil. Ethnic outbidding resulted from the Official Language Act and other constitutional measures that made economic and livelihood opportunities difficult for Tamils drew many to seek assistance outside the official government structure. The LTTE arose as a reaction to these structural barriers imposed by the state. The Tamil organization filled the security and services void left open by the repressive measures of the "Sinhalese-only" state.

In Iraq, a similar change occurred, but on sectarian lines. The collapse of the Baath regime and change of government to a democratic state brought long-oppressed Shiites to the governing stage and left the Sunni minority in a self-help disposition. Historical narratives and civil strife emphasized the reality of sectarian division and prevented national institutions from truly forming. Iraq ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, adding to civil grievances. The fear of Shia domination was

significant enough to encourage former Baathists and Sunnis to resist. This stew of sectarian anger was a critical component for Al Qaeda to capitalize on. The organization was able to recruit many foreigners and locals under the banner of saving Iraq from the occupation of infidels and the imposition of false Islam. Al Qaeda rallied women to support their efforts first as background advocates of jihad, and then, when the situation became critical, as frontline fighters martyring themselves for the cause.

Afghanistan, however presents a different set of structural grievances. While there was a change in power structure in 2001, with the ousting of the Taliban regime, there was not a significant shift in ethnic or sectarian power. A variety of Pashtun tribes were represented in the new government as well as other ethnic groups such as Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazara. This government was legitimized by centuries old praxis—the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Grand Council (*Loya Jirga*). Moreover, ethnic fragmentation, a recent phenomenon in Iraq and Sri Lanka, has been the norm in Afghanistan.[400] Thus the insurgency in Afghanistan is focused more on ideological grievances without strong backing from ethnic or sectarian lines. Afghanistan's corruption ranking is one of the worst in the world (see Table 4). For this reason, the Taliban and Mujahedeen have found temporary unity through political Islam and a moral narrative of jihad against corrupt central governance supported by foreign infidels. This narrative in both conflicts became reality to many rural Pashtuns who viewed foreign troops as occupiers and insolent to their culture—particularly, imposing controversial western norms such as equal rights for women. Under both insurgencies, grievances were similarly focused on a corrupt political regime imposing secular, immoral rules that were in opposition to traditional values.

The second and third indicators of the independent variable focus on a structure that fails to provide employment, economic and political opportunities for women. The indicators reflect positive rankings for Afghanistan and negative rankings for Iraq and Sri Lanka. Generally, Iraq and Sri Lanka had structures providing women access to

400. Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Thomas H. Johnson, "Democratic Nation Building in the Arc of Crisis: The Case of the Presidential Election in Afghanistan," in *Critical Issues Facing the Middle East: Security, Politics, Economics* ed., James A. Russell, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 125–146.

education, jobs, and the political process. In comparison, while Afghanistan had laws offering female participation in these institutions, the social code, having a stronger role than the central government, had established structures inhibiting women's access to the same institutions. In the three cases we find a variety of development indicators providing relative insight to each conflict region. Table 4 displays overall development indicators in each conflict region.

Table 4. Comparison of Conflict Regions

	Sri Lanka[401]	**Iraq**	**Afghanistan**
Level of Freedom[402] (on scale of 1-7, with 1=most free, and 7=least free)	4 (Partly Free)	6 (Not Free)	5.5 (Not Free)
Political Rights[403] (on scale of 1-7, with 1=most free, and 7=least free)	4	6	5
Civil Liberties[404] (on scale of 1-7, with 1=most free, and 7=least free)	4	6	6
Regime Type[405] (ranked from full democracy to authoritarian out of 167 countries, 1=most democratic, 167=least democratic)	57/167	112/167	135/167
Failed State Index[406] (ranked out of 60 countries; 1=most failed, 60=least failed)	22	6	7
Corruption Perception Index[407] (out of 180 countries; 180=worst)	92	178	176
Human Development Index (HDI)[408] (out of 182 countries ranked; 182=lowest)	102	Not available	181

401. These indices are within the last five years and thus in the case of Sri Lanka, are not the best reflection of conditions that brought Tamils to resist discrimination on the part of Sinhalese. These issues are developed in detail in Chapter III.

402. "Freedom in the World 2009," *Freedom Watch*.

403. Ibid.

404. Ibid.

405. "Index of Democracy 2007," *The Economist Intelligence Unit*.

406. "Failed State Index 2009," *Foreign Policy* June 22, 2009.

407. "Corruption Perception Index 2008," *Transparency International*.

408. *UNDP*, "Human Development Index 2009."

Gender Related Development Index (GDI) as compared to HDI[409] (the greater the gender disparity in basic human development, the lower the GDI relative to HDI; out of 155 countries, 155=worst disparity)	36	Not available	155
Female life expectancy at birth (in years, 2004)[410] (out of 190 countries ranked; 190=lowest)	77.9 (18 / 190)	71.8	43.5 (189 / 190)
Adult Literacy Rate (females, 2004)[411] (out of 145 countries ranked; 145=worst)	89.1% (65 / 145)	64.2% (Not ranked)	12.6% (145 / 145)
Combined Primary, Secondary and Tertiary gross enrollment in schools, female to male ratio (2004)[412] (out of 175 countries ranked; 175=worst)	69.9% (68 / 175)	52.1% (Not ranked)	35.4% (175 / 175)

In most of the categories above, Afghanistan and Iraq duplicate each other, whereas Sri Lanka reflects a higher level of development. In terms of freedom, political rights, civil liberties and democracy, Afghanistan and Iraq score very low whereas Sri Lanka scores higher. Comparing these indices for Sri Lanka with the case study displays some variance in Tamil perceptions and the overall level of development. The case study indicated that Tamil economic and political opportunities were severely restricted when Sinhalese took power and subsequent years following. Within twenty years of Sinhalese taking power, the government developed a system of ensuring Tamil separation from Sri Lanka. Tamil participation in state jobs, education, businesses, and military recruitment all declined significantly. Over time, LTTE exploited these grievances and rallied women to participate in the organization. One problem with these indices is that they do not reflect Tamil economic and political situations, but are reflective of Sri Lanka as a whole. While these numbers are supportive of the argument, the more relevant indicators are those expressed at the qualitative level in the Sri Lanka case.

409. *UNDP*, "Human Development Index 2009."

410. Ibid.

411. Ibid.

412. Ibid.

Afghanistan and Iraq have similar rankings in the above table, but Iraq's recent history under Saddam Hussein reflected a secular society where women were given equal rights to participate in government and private institutions. The sudden change in government structure post–2003 created a system where these institutions were severely weakened. The emergence of sectarian and religious cleavages has restricted women's participation in economic and political endeavors, but to a lesser extent than Afghanistan.

The fourth and fifth indicators of the independent variable focus on responses to grievances, namely whether structural processes increase female support or participation in insurgent organizations and if women are being recruited into these organizations. The indicators reflected positive results in Iraq and Sri Lanka and negative results in Afghanistan. In Iraq and Sri Lanka, victimization, a lack of security and development opportunities, and the close proximity of the conflict to daily life, generally inspired women to create networks that were supportive of the insurgency. These networks recruited within ethnic or sectarian communities were directly affected by the conflict. Becoming a part of these women's groups gave women opportunity and space that was otherwise limited by the structural constraints of conflict and ethnic differentiation. Women joined these groups as a reaction to violence experienced by an "other" identity. By supporting male fighters or volunteering themselves, women became witnesses practicing political freedom through the identity of reactive, and sometimes violent, politics.

Gender–related indices provide a compelling comparison among the three cases. Afghanistan is ranked among the lowest in the world in all four categories related to gender development, whereas Iraq and Sri Lanka are ranked in the middle or higher on the scale. This presents a significant finding in relation to gender development and female participation in conflict. In societies where opportunity and agency for women is limited, their involvement in insurgent organizations is also limited. The Afghanistan case has shown that the strict cultural identity of Pashtunwali mixed with elements of Islamic fundamentalism has limited the role of women in both the anti-Soviet jihad and during the Taliban resistance against GIRoA. These structural factors have had a critical influence in the low development rankings scored for Afghanistan. On the other hand,

while Iraq is not ranked among the other nations, the scores it acquires are substantially higher than Afghanistan and nearly match Sri Lanka, particularly in female life expectancy and literacy. These higher scores match the structural conditions in Iraq that have historically given women a relatively greater position in their society and the ability to participate in insurgent organizations. If space is provided to women in the public sphere, it becomes easier for insurgent groups to establish a position for women in the group, especially one that involves violent political action.

This proposition developed that grievances toward the governing structure were existent in all cases, but were present in different contexts, i.e. ethnic, sectarian and traditionalist / religious. It also indicated that political and economic opportunities for women were present in Iraq and Sri Lanka, but generally absent in Afghanistan. Finally, the proposition indicated that in these countries where the dependent variable was present (Iraq and Sri Lanka), there was also a combination of grievances, political and economic opportunities and women's support and participation with insurgent organizations as well as an active effort to recruit them into the organization. Where the dependent variable was not present (Afghanistan), grievances were present, but political and economic opportunities were generally absent, as well as female support and recruitment with insurgent organizations. Therefore, a sufficient cause for the absence of female suicide bombers has been a strict culture restricting female participation in Afghan society and insurgent organizations.

C. PROPOSITION III

The third proposition is concerned with whether the martyrdom ideology arises as an individual, organizational and societal identity that embraces female participation. The independent variable of this proposition is the presence of a sub-culture of martyrdom with women's involvement. Indicators include cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerate women as martyrs, individual women or organizations openly endorsing martyrdom, an effort to reframe the traditional role of women in combat from one that is supportive of male actions to one that actively participates in political violence, and legitimate authority figures endorsing female martyrdom

operations. Table 4 outlines the results developed in each case study. Iraq and Sri Lanka were found to have positive results for all indicators, while Afghanistan had negative results.

Table 5. Proposition III

Propositions	Variable		Indicators	Iraq	Sri Lanka	PDPA	GIRoA
Generally, if a sub-culture of martyrdom incorporates women, then there will be a higher propensity for women to engage in suicide missions.	Dependent	Insurgent organizations use of female suicide bombers.	Use of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
			Societal support of female suicide bombers	Y	Y	N	N
	Independent	A sub-culture of martyrdom with involvement of women.	Cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerates women as martyrs	Y	Y	N	N
			Individual women or women's organizations openly endorse martyrdom	Y	Y	N	N
			Traditional rules defining the role of women are temporarily relaxed or adjusted	Y	Y	N	N
			Legitimate leaders endorse female participation in martyrdom operations	Y	Y	N	N

In the three case studies we find that LTTE, AQI, Mujahedeen and QST all utilized and enhanced an existing martyrdom identity. They all used intellectual leaders, cultural themes and historical narratives to mobilize segments of the population to support the insurgency and the group's underlying values. However, where the ideology of martyrdom diverges is in the explicit use of female operatives.

The first indicator looks at cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerate women as martyrs. In the case of the LTTE, their use of female martyrs became the example for insurgent groups around the world to follow. There were short-term, tactical incentives to using female bombers, which the group took advantage of. There were also long-term incentives as the group harnessed existing societal grievances and expressed them through female bombers. The cult of martyrdom was an individual, organizational and societal reaction to years of Tamil frustration. This ritual act provided

a connection to the past that made female participation seem like a continuation of a once lost Tamil existence. They compared women to ancient goddesses within Tamil and Hindu culture, giving the act of martyrdom and its representative a god-like quality. LTTE implemented holidays, cemeteries and memorials for women that sacrificed their lives and used them as examples for young and old to follow.

The second indicator includes individual women or organizations openly endorsing martyrdom. This indicator was positive in Iraq and Sri Lanka and negative in Afghanistan. As developed in the case study, there is a lack of female organizations supportive of the insurgency in Afghanistan. A critical component of any female martyrdom campaign is the organization of women in support of the cause. Unlike Sri Lanka and Iraq, Afghanistan lacks a sufficient women's movement that is supportive of the Taliban and their insurgency. While the LTTE had a well-leveraged and entrenched female soldier movement and Al Qaeda had a small, but localized and intense movement in Iraq, the Taliban lack any sufficient female movement and are highly discouraging of such. The anti-Soviet mujahedeen had some women integrated into their movement as foot soldiers, similar to what the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan may have in Afghanistan today, but neither have allowed women to participate in martyrdom operations in Afghanistan and the Taliban have not shown interest incorporating women in the organization.[413] For anti-Soviet mujahedeen, well-disciplined units did not utilize suicide-bombing operations, preferring sophisticated guerilla attacks that encouraged survival for subsequent attacks. Since men did not encourage suicide operations themselves, women were not authorized either. An Afghan woman taking this kind of action would require substantial support from her kinship network lest she dishonor the family by acting outside the traditional social structure, in which case it is unlikely she would have Taliban support. Iraq and Sri Lanka had a much less rigid kinship structure and a more fluid identity based upon ethnic and sectarian ties.

413. An Uzbek woman with the IMU was killed in 2009 in Kunduz province in northern Afghanistan. She was found with an automatic rifle and ammunition slung across her chest. See: "Militants, including woman, killed in Afghan ambush-summary," *Earth Times*, August 28, 2009.

The third indicator looks at the effort to reframe the traditional role of women in combat from one that is supportive of male actions to one that actively participates in political violence. This indicator was positive in Iraq and Sri Lanka and negative in Afghanistan. In both LTTE and AQI cases, restrictions were loosened as the organization needed more recruits and society perceived greater oppression from the state and its institutions. The roles of women in both cases were temporarily redefined so that these violent acts could be undertaken. In both cases, rhetoric is an important tool to elegantly convey the relevance of female martyrdom to the cause.

The LTTE use of religion in their struggle has been similar to Islamic fundamentalist organizations' use of jihad. Like LTTE, AQI and affiliated groups have constructed a sophisticated ideological framework behind female martyrdom so that it may be considered acceptable to participants, supporters and spectators alike. AQI's use of martyrologies has been equally prolific but more technologically advanced due to the global nature of the resistance movement that requires a "virtual" arena for jihadists to tap into.

Each insurgent group has generally invoked martyrdom along gender specific lines. Women are supporters of men who are the foundation of resistance fighters, but when necessary, women will be called upon to protect the "womb" of the nation. Thus a woman must fulfill her "motherly duty" to protect the young and vulnerable. Whereas all groups utilized women in supportive roles, and the LTTE and AQI preceded their use of female suicide bombers by first giving women supportive assignments, the Afghan insurgents generally restricted women from participation greater than combat support and they have yet to sponsor female suicide bombers. In many ways, martyrdom is an extension of one's role in society. To Pashtun insurgents, the role of women in Afghanistan is generally to remain at home and support and encourage their husbands and family in jihad.[414]

Women's agency is not supportive of female martyrdom in Afghanistan. The structure of Pashtun society discourages female martyrdom because their agency is

414. Audrey C. Shalinsky, "Women's Roles in the Afghanistan Jihad," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25, no. 4 (November 1993): 661–675.

generally controlled by the role they play in the family. Women are obligated to care for sons and daughters, husbands and other family members, lest they risk losing the honor of the family. Upholding this honor is the most critical role a rural woman has. It is generally the role of men to take part in violent jihad or obtain vengeance, with the obligation transferring to women if there are no male members in the family able to carry vengeance out. However, women are generally not encouraged to sacrifice themselves and those cases where they have (such as Malalai), it is generally used to inspire men to fight. In Afghanistan, women are obligated to support the martyr, and through this support, she is venerated.[415] Still, unlike the insurgencies in Sri Lanka and Iraq, Pashtun women generally do not have a distinguishing and unified opposition to another ethnic or sectarian group. Their support for the anti-Soviet jihad has been distinguished as anti-invasion or anti-occupation. Today, Pashtun women cannot be identified as opposed to any particular ethnic or sectarian group in Afghanistan and are generally supportive of the role the United States is playing in Afghanistan, particularly in providing opportunity for women outside traditional tribal structures.

The fourth indicator includes legitimate authorities endorsing female martyrdom. This indicator was positive in Iraq and Sri Lanka and negative in Afghanistan. The Iraq and Sri Lanka studies showed that various organizations and leaders in society helped create and endorse narratives defining women's engagement in martyrdom. These figures, whether charismatic leaders, religious figures or cultural icons, provided the necessary authoritative stamp for a dangerous tactic. Part of the calculus involved with incorporating this risky tactic is ensuring it meets societal approval. While women in Sri Lanka and Iraq had conservative gender relations, neither was as strict as those in Afghanistan. The structures that define male and female relations in Afghanistan are so rigid, that it makes approaching a woman outside of the clan, particularly difficult for Taliban, Al Qaeda or another group. Approaching a woman for recruitment could potentially dishonor the family and tribe and thus insurgent groups are less likely to do so. Suicide attacks are already discouraged upon and wholly considered illegitimate in Afghan society, so a female bomber would be even more unpalatable and ultimately

415. Audrey C. Shalinsky, "Women's Roles in the Afghanistan Jihad," 674.

counter-productive to Taliban propaganda. Female suicide bombing can be a liability for insurgent groups attempting to prove their legitimacy to the public, particularly when women have such a sacred and hallowed role in the public sphere and the target of these attacks turn out to be Pashtun men. Finally, a female suicide bombing campaign has never been endorsed by legitimate authorities in mujahedeen or QST circles due to the strict cultural boundaries between men and women.

This proposition developed that those countries where the dependent variable was present (Iraq and Sri Lanka), there was also a combination of positive indicators from the independent variable including cultural narratives, discourses and propaganda that venerates women as martyrs, individual women or organizations openly endorsing martyrdom, an effort to reframe the traditional role of women in combat from one that is supportive of male actions to one that actively participates in political violence, and legitimate authority figures endorsing female martyrdom operations. Where the dependent variable was not present (Afghanistan), these indicators were also not present. Therefore, the pronounced absence of a female culture of martyrdom in Afghanistan has been a sufficient cause of their low propensity in the Afghan insurgency.

D. SUMMARY

This thesis argues there are clear tactical and material advantages to using female suicide bombers. All the organizations looked at in the three case studies had similar material motivations for using this tactic, however they did not all choose to use female suicide bombers. Since the Afghan Taliban has not implemented a female suicide bomber campaign this thesis sought to understand what factors influenced Taliban military decisions outside of tactics. It was assumed that realist strategies provide limited explanatory power for why a group decides to use this tactic, and that a constructivist approach looking at structural conditions affecting the agency of sub-state organizations provides a better explanation for the emergence of this tactic.

Afghanistan provides a unique environment for studying the intersection of structures, agency and organizations and how these relate to the absence of a female martyrdom campaign in this region. There are three primary findings from this analysis

that together, sufficiently explain the low propensity for female suicide bombers in Afghanistan. First, a permissive social and geographic environment in Afghanistan gives insurgents freedom of mobility and resistance; second, the power of a strict culture restricts female participation in Afghan society and insurgent organizations; and third, the pronounced absence of a female culture of martyrdom to open space for women to participate in insurgent actions and narratives.

While martyrdom operations are a weapon for insurgent groups, they are also social constructs inspired by surrounding circumstances, values and ideology. Organizations certainly choose their tactics based on the incentives they will bring, thus a rationalist model is applicable; however, more is at stake than just material gains. Organizations are re-crafting the idea of who they are—equal opportunity martyrs—which in turn, influences their identity and associated behavior. While Al Qaeda has represented a small, but substantial pattern in bringing women into the insurgent mix, and LTTE has been one of the foremost examples of this, Taliban have not. Taliban, like their mujahedeen counterparts of the 1980s, have structured their organization to ensure women have a limited role in insurgent activity.

While constructivism provides an excellent method for understanding the evolution of insurgent tactics, it can also provide the context for understanding how those groups may evolve toward non-violent, political options. As identities evolve based upon culture and history, norms and understandings can influence agency toward non-violent approaches.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

The implications in this thesis are significant toward understanding the current conflict in Afghanistan as well as future insurgencies the United States may become involved with. Determining the propensity of social group evolution toward female suicide terrorism is a difficult, but essential task. While insurgent groups are relegated by the structure of culture, religion and other social constructs in society, the threat is always apparent that they may break social codes for material incentives. The thesis provides a framework for understanding how a constructive understanding of past conflicts proves

fruitful for understanding current and future insurgent tactics. But it draws short of predicting whether the Taliban or associated groups in Afghanistan will utilize female suicide bombers. Like most constructivist models, it fails to address uncertainty and how fringe groups may adopt this tactic regardless of the social structures determining agency. It also fails to address the level at which structures unsuccessfully influence individuals, organizations and society. How much of a permissible environment do insurgents need without being sufficiently threatened? How strong do economic or political institutions need to be to override traditional social structures such as Pashtunwali? How influential does a culture of martyrdom need to be for women to engage in suicide terrorism? These are questions that future research can help address.

Future research could also focus on modeling the potential of a female suicide bomber campaign with a game theoretical approach, measuring the payoffs of implementing such a campaign. Also, a thorough study of women's networks in Afghanistan would provide useful background for future engagement efforts. Afghan women are just as vulnerable to becoming suicide bombers if space is opened for their participation in insurgent organizations. Finally, assessing the weight of particular structures and their relative impact in each insurgency could provide a useful framework when assessing the evolution of violence in a conflict.

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