

**THE ROOTS OF SUICIDE TERRORISM:
A MULTI-CAUSAL APPROACH**

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ABSTRACT

This study is a theoretical reflection on the causes of suicide terrorism. It is argued that suicide attacks are best understood when analyzed on three levels of analyses: an individual level, an organizational level, and an environmental level. A framework for analysis is introduced, and its value illustrated using examples from the Palestinian, Chechen, and Sri Lankan suicide bombing campaigns. The model can be redesigned as a framework to gauge risk factors for suicide terrorism, rendering the framework valuable from both a theoretical and practical point of view.

INTRODUCTION

On December 15, 1981, a suicide car bombing against the Iraqi embassy in Beirut killed 61 people, including Ambassador Abdul Razzak Lafta, and injured over a hundred others. Together with three more well-known suicide car bombings that took place in the same city in 1983—the April 18 suicide attacks at the U.S. Embassy and the simultaneous October 23 bombings of the U.S. Marine and French Paratroops Barracks—these incidents marked the beginning of the modern phenomenon of suicide attacks. Well over two decades later, suicide attacks have become a modus operandi employed by an increasingly diverse array of terrorist and insurgent groups in a growing number of countries.¹ The 9/11 attacks in particular have highlighted how acts of suicide terrorism have the potential to cause considerable losses of human lives and damage to physical infrastructure, while influencing the course of global events. In order to develop policies vital to national and international security that will meet the challenges posed by suicide attacks—a phenomenon that shows no signs of subsiding in the near future—the need to understand the causes of this tactic appears evident.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce a multi-causal framework for the analysis of suicide attacks based on three levels of analysis—an individual, an organizational, and an environmental level of analysis. Suicide ‘attacks,’ ‘missions,’ or ‘operations’ are the preferred terms used in this study for this particular modus operandi, although I will refer at times to ‘suicide terrorism,’ a common terrorist tactic. The term ‘suicide attacks,’ or suicide includes operations against military installations that are not usually defined as suicide ‘terrorism.’ In addition, the word suicide ‘bombing’ does not

technically describe the 9/11 attacks, where no explosive device per se was used. Suicide attacks are defined here as an operational method in which the very success of the attack is dependent upon the death of the perpetrator.² Such a definition excludes from the present discussion all attacks in which the perpetrator had a high likelihood, yet no certainty, of dying in the course of the attack.³

While many students of terrorism and suicide attacks acknowledge the need that terrorism analysis should be conducted on various levels—including the personal, organizational, societal, or structural level—few researchers have systematically analyzed occurrences of terrorism on all levels, and an even smaller number have attempted to develop an integrated framework for the analysis of the causes of terrorism, let alone suicide attacks.

This paper will introduce preliminary thoughts about a multi-causal framework for the study of suicide terrorism consisting of three levels of analysis: an individual, an organizational, and an environmental level. The argument will be made that suicide terrorism, and terrorism per se, is best understood when simultaneously dissected on these multiple levels.

If sufficiently adaptive, such a multi-level, integrative framework may shed further insight into the causes and characteristics of suicide attacks, but can also serve as

¹ These countries and regions include, but are not limited to, Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Croatia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Kashmir, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkey, the United States, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

² Compare Boaz Ganor, “Suicide Attacks in Israel,” in International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), *Countering Suicide Terrorism* (Herzliyya, Israel, and New York: Anti-Defamation League and ICT, 2002), 140-141; Yoram Schweitzer, “Suicide Terrorism: Development and Main Characteristics,” in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, 78; and Martha Crenshaw, “‘Suicide Terrorism’ in Comparative Perspective,” in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, 21.

³ For a discussion of why attacks in which the perpetrator runs a high risk, albeit no certainty, to die in the attack, should be excluded from the definition of suicide attacks, see Boaz Ganor, “Suicide Attacks in Israel,” 140-143.

a framework for the assessment of risk for the occurrence of suicide bombing in a particular environment. Hence, the contribution of such an integrated, multi-causal framework is not limited to the realm of theory, but extends to the realm of policy-making.

Part I of this paper will introduce the multi-causal framework of analysis. It will provide a brief review over current research into the etiology of suicide terrorism, and will also refer to the question of whether there is a need to distinguish between the causes of suicide terrorism on the one hand, and the causes of non-suicidal terrorism on the other. This brief literature review will be followed by a review of the theoretical foundations of a multi-causal approach to the study of terrorism, and the extent to which such an approach is currently applied. It will be argued that although many analysts seem to acknowledge the need for research on terrorism to take place on multiple levels, few researchers adopt such a method in any systematic way.

Parts II to IV of the paper will discuss the individual, organizational, and environmental levels of analysis in greater detail. Some factors that are often featured in situations where suicide tactics have been adopted will be discussed in these sections. This study makes no particular effort to list likely causal factors that give rise to ordinary, i.e. non-suicidal terrorism. Such comprehensive studies already exist.⁴ The exclusion of variables largely described in such studies shall in no way indicate that factors that may affect the occurrence of terrorism in general do not apply to suicide terrorism as well. On the contrary, since suicide terrorism is defined here as a particular type of terrorist tactic,

⁴ See, for example, Jerrold M. Post, Keven G. Ruby, and Eric D. Shaw, "The Radical Group in Context: 1. An Integrated Framework for the Analysis of Group Risk for Terrorism," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, No. 2 (March-April 2002); and "The Radical Group in Context: 2. Identification of Critical Elements in

most factors generally assumed to contribute to the rise of terrorism also apply to suicide terrorism. Hence, parts II, III, and IV will focus on those factors that are featured prominently in suicide bombing campaigns. Further, the purpose of the discussion in parts II-IV is to illustrate the kinds of variables that the respective level of analysis may contain, not to provide a vast list of possible causal factors for suicide terrorism. In those chapters, the cases of Palestinian, Sri Lankan, and Chechen suicide bombers will be used to illustrate the multiple levels in which suicide attacks occur and need to be understood. The use of these examples serves mainly to illustrate the relevance and utility of a multi-causal model for the study of suicide terrorism.

I: A MULTI-CAUSAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

A discussion of the causes of suicide terrorism begs one question from the outset, namely that of the relationship between terrorism and suicide terrorism. This study considers suicide terrorism to be closely related to “ordinary” terrorism, i.e., terrorism in which the perpetrator’s death is not necessary for the attack to occur. This study concurs with the argument put forward by Martha Crenshaw, namely that suicide terrorism should not be considered a *sui generis* phenomenon because ordinary terrorism and suicide terrorism share many characteristics in common—the main exception being the “motive of individual self-sacrifice and martyrdom.”⁵ Hence, the analytical framework designed here will, with minor adaptations, also shed more light about the causes of non-suicidal terrorism. Unlike a model designed to explain the causes of terrorism at large, however, a

the Analysis of Risk for Terrorism by Radical Group Type,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, No. 2 (March-April 2002);

⁵ Martha Crenshaw, “‘Suicide Terrorism’ in Comparative Perspective,” 21, 25.

model that attempts to conceptualize the roots of suicide terrorism must account for an explanation of self-sacrifice and martyrdom.

Existing research into the causes of suicide terrorism, which is still in its developmental phase,⁶ can be broadly divided into four categories:⁷ individual/psychological approaches, which stress individual level psychopathology, humiliation, despair, or identity issues as the leading cause of suicide attacks;⁸ organizational/strategic approaches, according to which suicide terrorism is used mainly because it has proven to be an effective strategy, militarily and/or politically;⁹ environmental/structural approaches, where most explanations focus on religion, nationalism, or societal factors as the primary conditions giving rise to the phenomenon

⁶ To date, at least ten books have been published on the topic of suicide terrorism in the English language. The books are International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), *Countering Suicide Terrorism: An International Conference* (Herzliya, Israel: ICT, 2001); Joyce M. Davis, *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance and Despair in the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Raphael Israeli, *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology* (New York: Frank Cass, 2003); Barbara Victor, *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2003); Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Shaul Shay, *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004); Ergün Capan, ed., *An Islamic Perspective: Terror and Suicide Attacks* (Somerset, N.J.: The Light, 2004); Anne Marie Oliver and Paul Steinberg, *The Road to Martyr's Square* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah's New Martyrs*, transl. David Macey (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

⁷ This categorization is far from perfect. Few of the researchers of suicide terrorism cited in the following footnotes confine their analysis to narrow explanations of the phenomenon. Nevertheless, they tend to emphasize the importance of certain variables over others.

⁸ See, for example, David Lester, Bijou Yang, and Mark Lindsay, "Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (July/August 2004); Eyad Sarraj, "Suicide Bombers: Dignity, Despair, and the Need of Hope;" Andrew Silke, "The Psychology of Suicide Terrorism," in A. Silke, ed., *Terrorists, Victims, and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences* (New York: Wiley, 2003); Anat Berko, *On the Way to the Garden of Eden* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Miskal/Yediot Ahronot, 2004) [Hebrew]; Mark Harrison, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *Royal United Services Institute Security Monitor* 2, No. 1 (2003); and Vamik Volkan, "September 11 and Societal Regression," *Group Analysis*, Vol. 35 (December 2002): 456-483.

⁹ See, for example, Ehud Sprinzak, "Rational Fanatics," *Foreign Policy* (September/October 2000); Mia M. Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, No.1 (Spring 2004); and Robert A. Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *American Political Science Review* 97, No. 3 (August 2003). The research conducted by Ariel Merari can also be placed in this category. Although a psychologist, Merari, like Sprinzak, regards suicide terrorism to be an "organizational phenomenon." In Assaf Moghadam, "Fletcher Hosts Ariel Merari, Israeli Expert on Suicide Terrorism," *Fletcher Ledger*, 4 February 2002. Available at <http://www.fletcherledger.com/archive/2002-02-04/020402-NfinalSuicideTerrorism.htm>

of suicide attacks;¹⁰ and multi-causal approaches, which emphasize the presence of several causal variables.¹¹

That “single-factor explanations overlook the fact that terrorist behavior is an interaction between individual psychology and external environment,”¹² as David Long wrote, has gained increasing acceptance within terrorism studies. A number of scholars have stressed the need for a multi-level approach at the etiology of terrorism,¹³ but few have attempted to conceptualize such an approach in more or less formal models.¹⁴ In “The Causes of Terrorism,” Martha Crenshaw was among the first scholars to note the

¹⁰ See, for example, Raphael Israeli, *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology* (New York: Frank Cass, 2003); James Dingley, “The Human Body as a Terrorist Weapon: Hunger Strikers and Suicide Bombers” (University of Ulster, 2005—Manuscript under Review); and Nichole Argo, “Understanding and Defusing Human Bombs: The Palestinian Case and the Pursuit of the Martyrdom Complex,” Paper presented at the ISA Annual Convention, Montreal, Quebec, 2004.

¹¹ See, for example, Assaf Moghadam, “Suicide attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Conceptual Framework,” *Project for the Research of Islamist Movements (PRISM)*, May 2002; Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26.2 (February/March 2003); Scott Atran, “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,” *Science* 299 (March 7, 2003), 1534-1539; Michael Taarnby, “Motivational Parameters in Islamic Terrorism,” Centre for Cultural Research Working Paper, University of Aarhus, Denmark, August 2003; Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?,” *Strategic Assessment* 6.2 (September 2003); and Mohammed M. Hafez, *Strategy, Culture, and Conflict in the Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers*, Unpublished manuscript, January 2005.

¹² David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 16.

¹³ See, for example, Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974); David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism*; Scott Atran, “The Genesis of Suicide Terrorism;” and Mohammed M. Hafez, “Strategy, Culture, and Conflict in the Making of Palestinian Suicide Bombers;” and Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, No.1 (February 2005), 34.

¹⁴ Attempts to create integrative and/or interactive models for analysis of terrorist incidents on at least two of the three levels described here have been made by Jacob M. Rabbie, “A Behavioral Interaction Model: Toward a Social-Psychological Framework for Studying Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, No.4 (Winter 1991); Nehemia Friedland, “Becoming a Terrorist: Social and Individual Antecedents,” in Lawrence Howard, ed., *Terrorism: Roots, Impact, Responses* (New York: Praeger, 1992); Donatella Della Porta, *Social Movements, Political Violence, and the State: A Comparative Analysis of Italy and Germany* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Jeffrey Ian Ross, “Beyond the Conceptualization of Terrorism: A Psychological-Structural Model of the Causes of this Activity,” in Craig Summers and Eric Markusen, eds., *Collective Violence: Harmful Behavior in Groups and Governments* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999); Jerrold M. Post, Keven G. Ruby, and Eric D. Shaw, “The Radical Group in Context: 1. An Integrated Framework for the Analysis of Group Risk for Terrorism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, No. 2 (March-April 2002); and “The Radical Group in Context: 2. Identification of Critical Elements in the Analysis of Risk for Terrorism by Radical Group Type,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 25, No. 2 (March-April 2002); as well as the above cited works by Assaf Moghadam and Michael Taarnby. In addition, in a forthcoming textbook, this author has made an attempt to systematically

need to distinguish between three levels of causations—situational variables (such as broad political, economic, or social conditions), the strategy of the terrorist organization, and “the problem of individual participation”—that together render the likelihood of terrorism higher in some situations than in others.¹⁵ Other noteworthy attempts to introduce multi-causal frameworks have been conducted, inter alia, by Jacob Rabbie in his “behavioral interaction model;”¹⁶ by Jeffrey Ross, who linked structural and psychological causes of terrorism in a complex model;¹⁷ and Donatella Della Porta, who integrated environmental and group dynamics variables into a model to describe radicalization processes of social revolutionary groups in Germany and Italy. Perhaps the most elaborate and comprehensive approach to understand terrorist behavior on a number of levels has been designed by Post, Ruby, and Shaw,¹⁸ with the aim of identifying risk of escalation toward political violence. The authors grouped thirty-two variables into four categories: historical, cultural, and contextual factors; key actors affecting the group; characteristics of the group and organization; and the immediate situation. Although the authors have no doubt rendered an impressive service, by their own admission, “the number of indicators is so large, some may well object, as to render the framework impractical and unwieldy.”¹⁹ More studies applying this framework will be needed,

apply a three-level of analysis framework to explore the causes of terrorism. Assaf Moghadam, *The Roots of Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House, 2005--forthcoming).

¹⁵ Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, No. 4 (July 1981), 380.

¹⁶ Rabbie’s model offers a social-psychological framework for examining dynamics of terrorist behavior. Although highly useful, it is questionable whether the average terrorism research is able to disaggregate the plethora of psychological orientations described in this model. See Jacob M. Rabbie, “A Behavioral Interaction Model.”

¹⁷ Jeffrey Ian Ross, “Beyond the Conceptualization of Terrorism.”

¹⁸ Jerrold M. Post, Keven G. Ruby, and Eric D. Shaw, “The Radical Group in Context: 1,” and “The Radical Group in Context: 2.”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98.

however, in order to arrive at a better assessment of the utility of this framework for the analysis of terrorism risk.

That suicide terrorism, like ordinary terrorism, is a complex phenomenon with various facets is more or less widely accepted among suicide terrorism researchers. Shaul Kimhi and Shemuel Even, for example, have concluded from their broad review of the literature on Palestinian suicide bombers that “most researchers tend to agree... that suicide terror is a multi-factorial phenomenon. The various explanations for suicide terror include personal and group motives, environmental conditions, and their interactions.”²⁰ That said, studies of the phenomenon of suicide attacks that are systematic in using individual, organizational, and structural levels of examinations are rare, and many multi-level studies confine themselves to only two levels of analysis.²¹

The distinction of three levels of analysis was introduced by Kenneth Waltz in his examination of the causes of war over fifty years ago.²² Waltz’ three “images,” as he also referred to them, consisted of human behavior, the internal structure of states, and the nature of the international system. Waltz deemed these three levels of analysis central to our understanding of politics, and even “a part of nature. So fundamental are man, the

²⁰ Shaul Kimhi and Shemuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (October-December 2004).

²¹ Two studies, for example, that are focused on the individual and organizational levels only are Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada” and Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (July-August 2004); Meanwhile, Pedahzur et.al. apply Durkheim’s model of altruistic or fatalistic suicide to current suicide bombers, thus utilizing an individual and societal level of analysis in their research. Ami Pedahzur, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg, “Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists,” *Deviant Behavior* 24, No. 4 (July-August 2003).

²² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

state, and the state system in any attempt to understand international relations that seldom does an analyst, however wedded to one image, entirely overlook the other two.”²³

The multi-causal framework for the analysis of the causes of suicide terrorism adopts Waltz’ broad distinction into three images.²⁴ Rather than using Waltz’ second image—the analysis of the state—the present framework understandably focuses on the terrorist or insurgent organization as the unit responsible for the planning and execution of suicide operations. Waltz’ third level of analysis, that of the international system, is replaced in the current framework with an environmental level that emphasizes structural causes.

The first level of analysis, the individual level of analysis (L1), is designed to identify personal motivations of the various actors involved in suicide attacks. L1 should focus not only on the perpetrator of the suicide attack, but should extend to other actors that are part of the terrorist system. As Davis and Jenkins point out, terrorism can be decomposed in a number of systems—including a system of different classes of actors. Viewing terrorism, among many other possible systems, as a system of actors, allows the researcher to distinguish between lieutenants, recruiters, foot soldiers, and the overall population, among other classes of actors.²⁵ Applying such a systems approach to the case of suicide terrorism, the relevant actors whose personal motives are to be scrutinized should include, where information is available, the suicide bomber, the dispatcher, the

²³ Kenneth Waltz, “The Origins of War,” in John Reichart and Steven Strum, eds., *American Defense Policy*, 5th ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 11.

²⁴ Elsewhere, the author has adopted and applied the model to discuss the causes of terrorism at large. Assaf Moghadam, *The Roots of Terrorism* (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House, 2005--forthcoming)

²⁵ Paul K. Davis and Brian M. Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), 30-32.

recruiter, the organization's leader and, where applicable, the spiritual leader or leaders that give religious consent to suicide attacks.

When the system of actors is decomposed, L1 then focuses on the individual motivation of the actor and attempts to identify what reasons led the suicide bomber, the recruiter, the dispatcher, or the organizational and spiritual leader to contribute their particular role to the planning and/or execution of the suicide attack. If sufficient biographical data is available, L1 may also discuss possible psychological motivations of individual bombers—although psychopathologies are not proven to be disproportionately present among terrorists, nor should psychological motivations be considered in isolation.²⁶

The second level of analysis (L2) focuses on organizations. Understanding the nature of terrorist organizations is important because the overwhelming majority of suicide attacks are planned and executed by members of identifiable organizations.²⁷ There is a need to distinguish among individual motives on the one hand and organizational reasons to engage in suicide attacks on the other hand, for a number of reasons. Individuals motivated to carry out a suicide attack are very unlikely to possess the resources, level of operational intelligence, and logistical capacity required to organize a suicide bombing. As stated in a report in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, the organization of suicide attacks “is extremely secretive. The success of the mission depends on a number of elements: level of secrecy; thorough reconnaissance; and

²⁶ For an excellent review article on psychological theories of terrorism, as well as their shortcomings, see Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, No.1 (February 2005): 3-42.

²⁷ Very few exceptions exist, including 15-year-old Charles Bishop, who crashed a light plane into the 28th floor of the Bank of America Plaza in Tampa, Florida, on January 5, 2002.

thorough rehearsals. Secrecy enables the preservation of the element of surprise, critical for the success of most operations.”²⁸ Clearly, most individuals lack these capabilities.

An additional reason for the need to distinguish between individual and organizational motives is that organizations rarely supply suicide bombers from among their own ranks, but will instead opt to recruit individuals from outside of the organization.²⁹ It is certainly uncommon for organizations to send the top leadership and members on the lieutenant levels on suicide missions, and there is no known case in which the leader of an organization that has adopted suicide attacks has himself volunteered to detonate himself in the course of an attack.

Most importantly, a distinct organizational level of analysis is required because organizations have distinct goals and motives—the need to maintain themselves,³⁰ to act in line with ideological prescriptions, or to adopt suicide terrorism tactics out of competition and rivalry with other terrorist organizations.³¹ Terrorist organizations may also choose to adopt a particular tactic, including suicide operations out of strategic and tactical considerations, as will be described in Part III of the paper.

The purpose of the third level of analysis, the environmental level (L3), is meant to uncover the various structural factors and conditions that provide the context for the individual and the organizational levels. Addressing larger structural conditions is key to understanding how individuals and organizations are affected by their political, historical,

²⁸ “Suicide Terrorism: A Global Threat,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 20 October 2000.

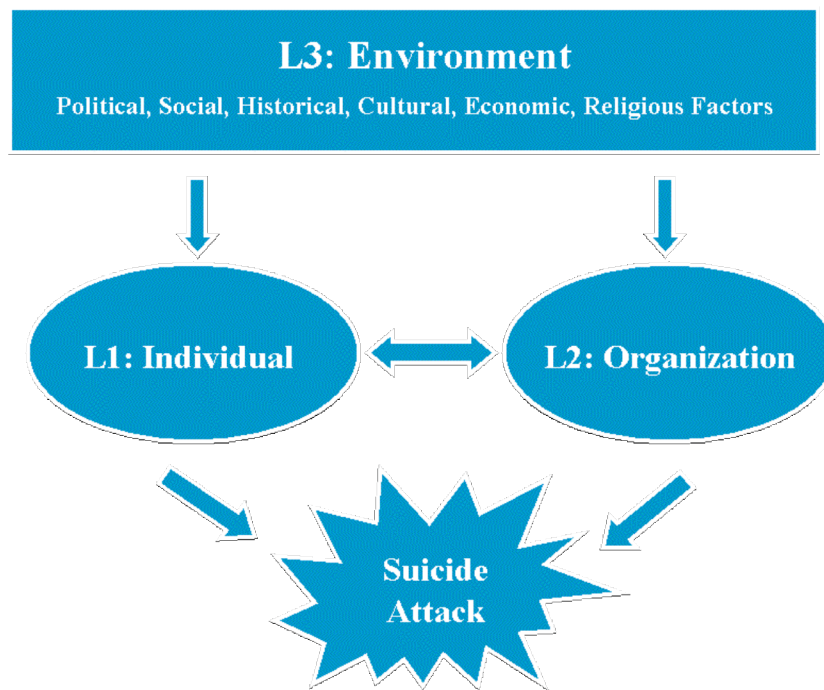
²⁹ This section is based in part on Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada,” 67-69.

³⁰ On the organizational strive for survival and maintenance, see Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), 216; and James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973), 30-36; on the need for terrorist organizations to survive, see Martha Crenshaw, “An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism,” *Orbis* (Fall 1985).

³¹ Mia Bloom, “Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding.”

cultural, societal, religious and economic context. Individuals and organizations do not act in a vacuum, but are affected by the environment in which they live and operate. In the case of suicide terrorism, the environmental aspects that seem particularly important in understanding why this modus operandi is used in some contexts and not in others seem to be societal, historical, and cultural factors. L3 also includes discussions of such factors as political context, economic conditions, and religious factors. There is, however, a general consensus among terrorism scholars that the political, economic, or religious contexts by themselves cannot explain why terrorism occurs in some situations and not in others.

ILLUSTRATION I: THE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS



As stated, environmental factors directly influence the organization and the individual—a situation marked in the above illustration by an arrow leading from L3 to L1 and L2. L1 and L2, meanwhile, also interact with each other. Both L1 and L2 are more proximate to the actual terrorist attack than L3 because planning and execution is conducted by individuals (L1) that are members of identifiable organizations (L2). L1 and L2 are further related to one another for two reasons. First, some of the motivations emanating from the individual and organizational level are identical, because they stem from the same environmental context. A country or region that is known to be very religious, for example, is likely not only to produce many religious individuals, but would also tend to lead many organizations to adopt religious guidelines. Similarly, a certain political context, be it a long-standing conflict or perhaps a nation's struggle for national independence, is also likely to have similar effects on individuals as it will on organizations. A final reason why the individual and organizational level can at times be closely intertwined is that the terrorist or insurgent organization exerts influence on its members in one way or another. Membership in the group itself provides the terrorist with a sense of belonging, purpose, perceived social status, and empowerment that he would otherwise not enjoy. The individual may join the terrorist group because he views the rewards of joining as highly satisfying. Terrorist organizations can also provide the individual an opportunity for excitement, glamour, and fame, as well as a chance of demonstrating his or her courage.

An additional conclusion that can be drawn from this model is that L1 and L2 serve as intermediate units that channel environmental influences (L1) into the terrorist

attack through, on the one hand, individual motivations and, on the other, organizational goals, motives, and ideological guidelines, as is graphically depicted in Illustration 2.

Illustration 2 shows that the three levels of analysis can also be imagined as a feedback system in which the consequences of the suicide terrorist act influence the environment, and thus, through the influence L3 exerts on L1 and L2, individual and organizational motives and decisions of whether or not to engage in suicide attacks.³²

ILLUSTRATION II: THE SUICIDE ATTACK CYCLE

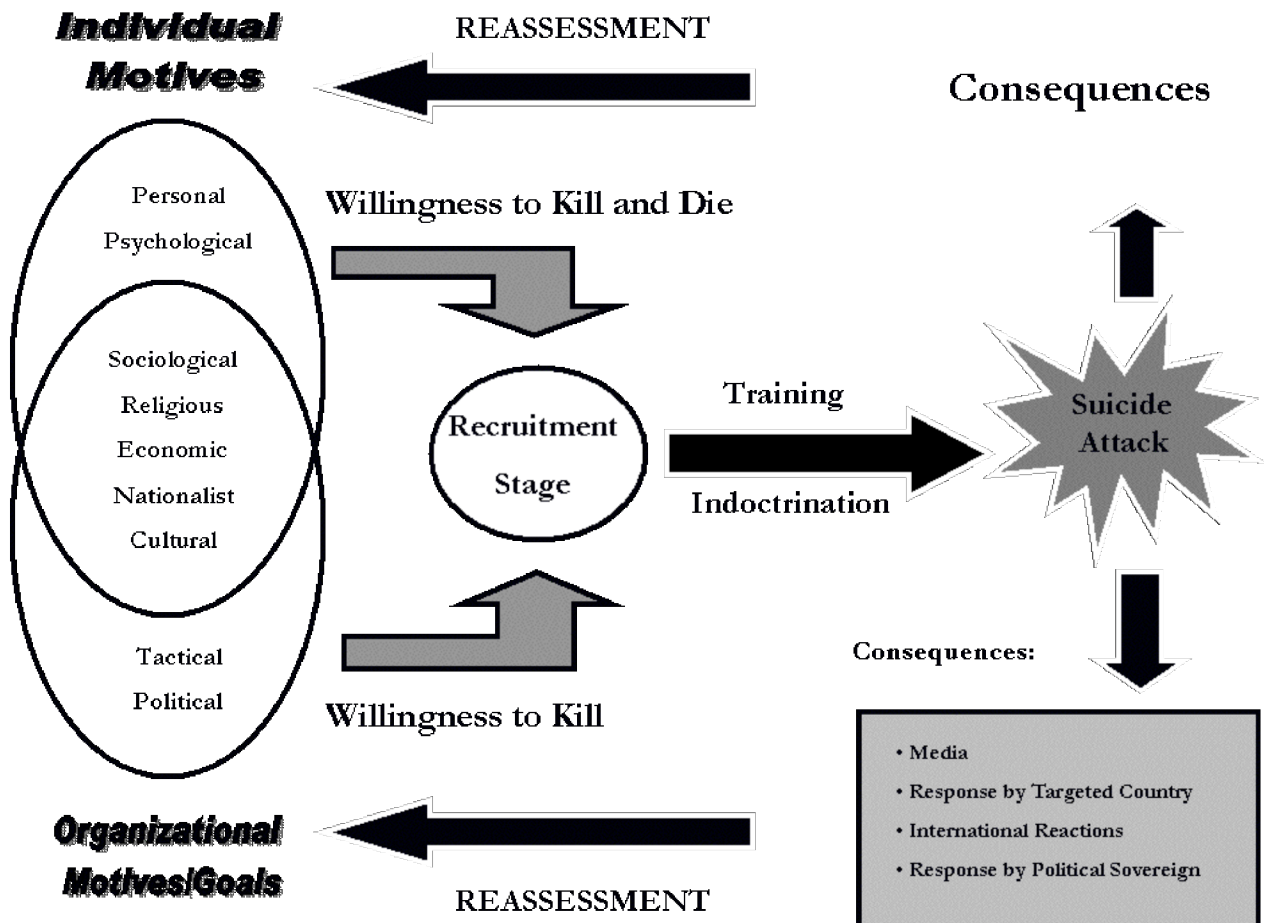


Illustration 2, which can be thought of as the “Suicide Terrorism Cycle,” also graphically illustrates the influence that L3 has on L1 and L2, and shows the area of possible overlap between individual and organizational motives.

Beginning on the left, Illustration 2 shows the individual and organizational levels and the motives and goals emanating from them. On the individual level, personal motives (such as revenge for the loss of a lost one) and psychological motives are particular to the individual and not shared by the organization. On the organizational level, tactical and political motives and goals affect the organization’s decision to embark on suicide attacks. There are several factors in the area of overlap of L1 and L2, and these sociological, religious, cultural, economic, and nationalist motives are the influence exerted by the environment (L3). The organization and the individual must profess a willingness to kill and to die in order for the suicide attack to occur.³³ The individual and organizational motives, influenced in part by the larger environment, converge at the recruitment stage, whence the suicide bomber comes under the purview of the organization.³⁴ After the suicide bombing occurs, the political consequences of the attack are likely to affect the environment. Depending on the consequences of the attack—including the nature of the response of the targeted country, international reactions, or the media—the political and/or social atmosphere may change into a situation that will become more or less encouraging of additional attacks. The

³² Illustration 2 is model expanded from the author’s Two-Phase Model of Suicide Terrorism. In Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada,” 67-69. For another feedback model on the causes of terrorism, see Jacob M. Rabbie, “A Behavioral Interaction Model,” 136.

³³ See Ariel Merari, “The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East,” in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), 192-210.

³⁴ Compare Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada,” 68-69.

environment, in turn, will affect the preferences and motivations of individuals and organizations.

One preliminary conclusion we can draw from the framework of analysis offered here is thus that L1, L2, and L3 interact with each other, and at times are thoroughly intertwined, resulting in synergetic effects. The remainder of this paper will delve more deeply into each of the three levels, using examples from Palestinian, Chechen, and Sri Lankan suicide bombing campaigns.

As a final thought in this theoretical introduction of the framework, the multi-causal framework offered above accepts the distinction between preconditions and precipitants first developed by Harry Eckstein in his analysis of the causes of internal wars. “Clearly no internal war can occur without precipitant events to set it off; and clearly no precipitants can set off internal war unless the condition of society makes it possible for them to do so,” Eckstein wrote in a passage that easily applies to suicide terrorism, a very common strategy used in internal wars today.³⁵ Given the relative unpredictability of precipitants, however—specific events that immediately precede the suicide attack—this framework should be considered in large part a framework of the preconditions of suicide attacks.³⁶

In the subsequent discussions of the three levels of analysis, no attempt is made to provide a comprehensive list of all possible variables of motivations for suicide attacks on the three levels—an undertaking that would be as time and space-consuming as it

³⁵ Harry Eckstein, “On the Etiology of Internal Wars,” in Ivo Feierabend et al., eds., *Anger, Violence, and Politics: Theories and Research* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1972), 13. This distinction was also adopted by Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism.”

³⁶ The framework does not entirely fail to take into account specific circumstances, however. On the organizational level, for instance, terrorist organizations sometimes decide to perpetrate an attack when an opportunity presents itself, i.e. when the chance of a successful strike is high and/or the cost of failure is low.

would be impossible. Many causal factors have been described in previous works by terrorism scholars and there is no need to recount them here. The following discussion simply serves to highlight some motivations and causes that appear to exist across several different suicide terrorism campaigns. The main purpose of the subsequent discussion is not to unearth all the motivations of suicide attacks, but rather to support the argument that an adequate analysis of the causes of suicide terrorism requires an analysis across the three levels. To that end, the cases used in the following serve merely as illustrations.

II: THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (L1)

“According to the first image of international relations,” Kenneth Waltz wrote, “the locus of the important causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man.”³⁷ Similarly, the individual level of analysis into the causes of suicide terrorism offered here is concerned with the attitudes and motives of individuals involved in the planning and execution of suicide attacks. It is important to consider individual motivations because grievances that may give rise to terrorism lead to the use of terrorist violence of only a select few. More commonly, the reasons that lead some individuals to resort to the use of political violence will lead others to react through nonviolent means. Hence, there must be an element of individual decision involved in the genesis of terrorism.³⁸

Ideally, a comprehensive analysis of suicide attacks on an individual level is conducted upon all actors involved in the support, planning and execution of suicide attacks, including the actual bomber, the dispatcher, the recruiter, the organizational leader, and the religious leader (where applicable) who provides doctrinal justifications

³⁷ Kenneth Waltz, “The Origins of War,” 9.

³⁸ Nehemia Friedland, “Becoming a Terrorist: Social and Individual Antecedents,” 88.

for suicide attacks. For reasons of space, however, the current analysis remains limited to the actual suicide bomber.

Individuals who plan, support, or execute suicide attacks are highly unlikely to be influenced by singular motives since “there are probably as many reasons for committing terrorist acts as there are terrorists,” as David Long aptly put it.³⁹ As shown in a study on the motivations of Palestinian suicide bombers, for example, individuals who volunteer for suicide missions are likely to be influenced by several motivations at once. In the Palestinian case, motivations of the suicide bomber have been shown to include any given combination of a number of possible motivations, including the seeking of revenge, the expectation of personal posthumous benefits, the expectation of material or immaterial rewards for family members, religious motives, the struggle for national liberation, or the influence of a widespread culture of martyrdom on the individual.⁴⁰ It is also highly unlikely that any two suicide bombers will decide to execute a suicide attack as a result of the same exact combination of these motivations.⁴¹

Kimhi and Even, who have conducted research on the personalities of Palestinian suicide bombers, have distinguished four prototypes, including that of the exploited suicide bomber—a category that includes adults with personal problems or those seeking to redeem themselves from ‘sins’ such as a love affair outside the family, homosexuality, or collaboration with the Israeli enemy.⁴² Kimhi and Even’s findings thus also corroborate the argument that research into suicide terrorism on an individual level is important.

³⁹ David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism*, 15.

⁴⁰ Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada,” 87.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?”

Personal problems such as the loss of a husband or financial distress seems to be a common feature among Chechen women suicide bombers. One example is Zarema Muzhakhoyeva, one of only a few Chechen women suicide bombers alive. Sitting in a Russian prison ever since her bomb failed to detonate, Muzhakhoyeva's life appears filled with problems: Her home region, Achkoi-Martan, was largely destroyed in the first Chechen war; she left school, pregnant, at age fifteen, and married her boyfriend only to see him killed fighting against Russian troops. Following her husband's death, his family kept her much like a slave. She escaped, later borrowing money from a group of men that demanded from her to pay back with her life. Were she to become a suicide bomber, the group promised, her debts would be repaid and her family would receive some money.⁴³

Muzhakhoyeva's conundrum may sound similar to the background of an ordinary suicide. Most suicide terrorism analysts, however, reject the notion that suicide bombers are similar to ordinary suicides. Most also insist that there is no such thing as a typical profile of a suicide bomber.⁴⁴ The importance of psychological factors among suicide bombers, or other terrorists for that matter, has preoccupied many researchers. Some argue that individual psychological reasons—sometimes generated by the socio-political context—account for the behavior of suicide attackers. Eyad el-Sarraj, for instance, argues that “politically, suicide bombing is an act of absolute despair.”⁴⁵ Based on personal interviews, psychiatrist Anne Speckhard believes that deep personal

⁴³ Viv Groskop, “Chechnya's Deadly ‘Black Widows,’” *New Statesman*, 6 September 2004.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Ariel Merari, “Suicide Terrorism,” in Robert I. Yufit and David Lester, eds., *Assessment, Treatment, and Prevention of Suicidal Behavior* (New York: Wiley, 2004), 431-454. Lester, Yang, and Lindsay take exception to both statements, arguing that before establishing that psychological profiles are impossible, extensive biographies of individuals involved need to be constructed, which has not been done to date. David Lester, Bijou Yang, and Mark Lindsay, “Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, No. 4 (July-August 2004): 283-295.

⁴⁵ Eyad el-Sarraj, “Paradise Waiting: Palestinian Experience in Suicide Bombing,” Paper distributed at the NATO Advanced Research Workshop: Ideologies of Terrorism, Brussels, Belgium, 31 January 31, 2005, 3.

traumatization and bereavement, based on humiliating treatment in part explains the resort of some Chechens and Palestinians to suicide attacks.⁴⁶ Going a step further, Vamik Volkan believes that potential suicide bombers have disturbed personal identities based on prior humiliating experiences that hindered the formation of a healthy identity.⁴⁷

The broad consensus among psychologists and psychiatrists interested in terrorism is that terrorists are not mentally ill. “This failure of mental illness as an explanation for terrorism,” psychiatrist Marc Sageman sums it up, “is consistent with three decades of research that has been unable to detect any significant pattern of mental illness in terrorists.”⁴⁸ Most researchers agree that terrorists, while clearly highly alienated from society, are sane and relatively ‘normal,’ i.e., they do not exhibit a striking psychopathology.⁴⁹

Psychological aspects of the terrorism phenomenon need to be approached with caution, and with a clear understanding of psychology’s limitations in illuminating our understanding of terrorism. Psychological research into terrorism suffers from a number of impediments, as Jeff Victoroff concludes in a recent review article.⁵⁰ None of the psychoanalytical and nonpsychoanalytical theories of terrorism studies conducted has produced any persuasive evidence that terrorists suffer from some of the personality disorders described in them. Psychological theories of terrorism also tend to be subjective and speculative, and all too often make broad generalizations that have not been

⁴⁶ Anne Speckhard, “Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders,” Unpublished Manuscript, January 2005.

⁴⁷ Vamik Volkan, “September 11 and Societal Regression,” *Group Analysis* 35 (December 2002): 456-483.

⁴⁸ Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 83.

⁴⁹ See, for example, C.R. McCauley and M.E. Segal, “Social Psychology of Terrorist Groups,” in C. Hendrick, et.al., *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, Vol. 9 of Annual Review of Social and Personality Psychology (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1987).

⁵⁰ Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist.”

rigorously proven. No terrorism expert or psychiatrist has been able to conclusively identify a common predisposition for terrorism.⁵¹ Nonetheless, psychological factors of terrorism remain an important area of research, and have contributed much to our understanding of terrorism in particular with regard to theories of group processes.⁵² Understanding psychological processes has also proven helpful in describing the process of mental preparation for attacks through mechanisms of moral disengagement, including dehumanization, advantageous comparison, or euphemistic labeling—processes that can also occur, and are in fact reinforced, on a group level.⁵³

One prevailing motive on the individual level that does seem to recur in situations where suicide attacks are practiced is the seeking of revenge, at time reinforced by perceived humiliation, which also seems to be a key motive for terrorism in general.⁵⁴ Kimhi and Even, for instance, identified the individual seeking retribution for suffering as a major prototype of Palestinian suicide bombers.⁵⁵ Eyad el-Sarraj, a Palestinian psychiatrist, believes that “the tribal mentality which urges individuals to avenge defeat to the bitter end even across generations is essential to understanding suicide attacks in the Arab world. Arabs will continue to fight forever if needed as long as their dignity was injured. People are expected and are obliged to join the struggle according to the Arab tribal code. They will only stop if the aggressor will publicly acknowledge his guilt and

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² For a review over the psychology of terrorist groups, see *ibid.*, 30-31;

⁵³ On moral disengagement, see Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement,” in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, 161-191.

⁵⁴ For an argument that revenge is a critical area in the study of terrorism, see, for example, Walter Reich, “Understanding Terrorist Behavior: The Limits and Opportunities of Psychological Inquiry,” in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, 261-279. On humiliation-revenge theory, see especially Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003); and Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco/Harper Collins, 2003). For a useful summary of humiliation-revenge theory, see Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist,” 29-30.

assumes responsibility for his aggression. Arabs will then enter the honourable Solha or peace. But only then.”⁵⁶ Similarly, revenge seems to play a dominant role in the case of Chechen suicide bombers, where retribution is firmly entrenched into the local warrior culture and the ancient code of honor known as *Adat*. There seems to be no shortage of individuals seeking revenge in Grozny and its surroundings where, as Christoph Reuter described it, “one can meet young Chechens every day who will tell you that they have lost a brother, a sister, one of their parents, in the course of the struggle for independence.”⁵⁷ “Russians have, by many accounts, looted, abducted, tortured, and murdered suspected supporters of Chechnya’s independence movement with impunity,” he continues. “The young Chechen survivors vow to avenge every one of these murders, until all the Russians have gone.”⁵⁸ One such avenger was Aisa Gazuyeva, who detonated herself in front of Geidar Gadzhiev, the military commandant of Ursus Martan, southwest of Grozny. Four months earlier, Gadzhiev had brutally murdered Gazuyeva’s husband in front of her eyes.⁵⁹ Revenge also seems to be a strong motive for young Tamils in Sri Lanka to join the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, an insurgent organization whose suicide attack squad—the Black Tigers—are among the most sophisticated and ‘successful’ employers of suicide operations. One young Tamil who lost three brothers in the service of the Tigers, a 22-year old named Mahendran, described his feelings about joining the LTTE’s suicide squads thus: “I am thinking of joining [the LTTE]. The harassment that I and my parents have suffered at the hands of the army makes me want

⁵⁵ Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?”

⁵⁶ Eyad El Sarraj, “Paradise Waiting: Palestinian Experience in Suicide Bombing,” 2.

⁵⁷ Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, 49.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁵⁹ Annette Langer, “Schwarze Witwen: Menschen Töten ist wie Vögel Abschiessen,” *Spiegel Online*, 7 March 2005.

to take revenge.’⁶⁰ The LTTE, meanwhile, exploits the widespread feelings of anger for its own benefit by specifically targeting those families who have lost members to Sinhalese security forces.⁶¹

The expectation of personal benefits in the afterlife that seems to motivate some Palestinian suicide bombers,⁶² such as a guaranteed place in heaven and the eventual reunification with one’s family, does not necessarily apply to other cases of suicide attacks. In the case of the secular Black Tigers, for example, there is no expectation of a posthumous compensation. “A Black Tiger is an... ‘idealist,’” notes Peter Schalk, “whose only satisfaction just before death, during his act of killing, is to have eliminated one obstacle for the realization of [Tamil Eelam],” the aspired homeland.⁶³

An additional motive for the individual that seems particularly relevant to suicide attacks is the notion of identity. Hoffman and McCormick, for instance, believe that individuals choosing to become suicide bombers make decisions based on what the correct course of action is under the circumstances in which they find themselves in, rather than a clear-cut cost-benefit analysis in which they expect returns in the afterlife. This type of rule making, they argue, is connected to one’s identity, which provides the template for interpreting and understanding the world, one’s place in it, and how one responds to external events.⁶⁴ Mark Harrison believes that suicide bombers act mainly out of a need to enhance their identity, their most valuable asset. Continuing to live, he

⁶⁰ Charu Lata Joshi, “Sri Lanka: Suicide Bombers,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 1 June 2000.

⁶¹ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” 259.

⁶² For a discussion of these benefits in the case of Palestinian suicide bombers, see Boaz Ganor, “Suicide Attacks in Israel,” 144-145; and Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada,” 72.

⁶³ Peter Schalk, “Resistance and Martyrdom in the Process of State Formation of Tamil Eelam,” 1997. Available online at <http://www.tamilnation.org/ideology/schalkthiyagam.htm>, last accessed 16 April 2005.

argues, would be tantamount to abandoning one's identity.⁶⁵ For Mohammed Hafez, the suicide bomber, by detonating himself, performs "a duty to one's own values, family, friends, community, or religion. Failure to act, consequently, is perceived as a betrayal of one's ideals, loved ones, country, God, or sense of manhood."⁶⁶

The above discussion of the individual level of analysis of the causes of suicide attacks suggests that individual motives are an important part of the puzzle of suicide attacks that scholars should not ignore. Whenever possible, it has been argued, an L1 analysis should be applied to the various classes of actors in the suicide terrorism system. L1 motivations may include, but are not limited to, personal reasons such as interpersonal relational issues or financial distress; perceived humiliation; and/or the expectation of posthumous benefits or benefits to one's family. Revenge seems to be an important factor in all three cases used as examples in this study. An additional area where further research seems adequate is the relationship between suicide attacks and individual perceptions of identity. Needless to say, the previous discussion is far from comprehensive in listing all possible motivations of individuals engaged in the act of suicide attacks in one way or another. It has served, instead, to highlight some of the reasons that can lead individual suicide bombers to accept suicide missions if approached by organizations, or to volunteer for suicide attacks. Many other factors are clearly at play.

It is also no secret that an individual level of analysis of suicide attacks—or any other level for that matter— does not explain why suicide terrorism occurs in some

⁶⁴ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 252-253. The author thanks Jerrold Post for pointing out the importance of identity issues in the study of suicide terrorism.

⁶⁵ Mark Harrison, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism."

contexts and not in others—a problem that is at the pivot of terrorism studies and well recognized by many analysts.⁶⁷ An awareness that motivations at multiple levels are at play, however, is a useful start into a better grasp of the roots of suicide terrorism. The next section will therefore look at the organizational level of analysis.

III: THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (L2)

The organizational level of analysis (L2) for understanding the causes of suicide terrorism is concerned with the reasons that emanate from the terrorist organization to adopt suicide missions as a *modus operandi*. Analysis on the organizational level is particularly important in the study of terrorism (and suicide terrorism) and its causes because terrorist acts are rarely carried out by individuals acting on their own,⁶⁸ but by individuals who are members of identifiable organizations. Even the most highly motivated potential suicide bomber will, in most cases, lack the wherewithal needed to stage a successful attack. It is for that reason that many analysts regard the role of the group as the most important element in the appeal of suicide terrorism.

Martha Crenshaw, who made enormous contributions to the theoretical development of the organizational approach to the study of terrorism,⁶⁹ has argued that terrorism can be understood as the result of a deliberate choice by terrorist organizations which believe that violence is the best means to advance their political goals.⁷⁰ In

⁶⁶ Mohammed M. Hafez, “Manufacturing Human Bombs,” 13.

⁶⁷ See for example, Marc Sageman, *Understanding Terror Networks*, 91, 95. Sageman refers to this problem as the “fundamental problem of specificity.”

⁶⁸ One particularly well-known exception to that general rule is “Unabomber” Theodore Kaczynski, who acted entirely on his own.

⁶⁹ See especially Martha Crenshaw, “An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Political Terrorism,” *Orbis* (Fall 1985).

⁷⁰ Martha Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Strategic Choice,” in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism*, 7-24.

determining when to stage terrorist attacks, and which particular tactic to use, terrorist organizations may be guided by a variety of calculations. The organization may believe that at a particular moment the cost of an attack is low, or the chances of success are high.⁷¹ The suicide bomber who assassinated President Ranasinghe Premadasa of Sri Lanka, for example, had lived in the capital, Colombo, for three years before carrying out the attack. He was a regular guest at the household of the President, befriending his valet. On May 1, 1993, wearing a suicide belt, the bomber's acquaintance with the valet enabled him to approach the President on his bicycle with no problem. After reportedly being greeted by the valet, the suicide bomber detonated himself, killing the Sri Lankan leader.⁷²

Terrorist or insurgent organizations may also decide to adopt suicide attacks after they have tried a number of other terrorist tactics. Most terrorist groups existed for years or decades before they began executing suicide missions. Some factors connected to the organization may influence the timing of the use of the suicide attack. The organization may possess a rare opportunity to stage a successful suicide attack or it may have a unique opportunity to strike a target of particularly high value, deciding to use a suicide operation to increase the chances of success. This occurred in the case of the Narodnaya Volya's assassination of Tsar Alexander II on March 1, 1881. Following eight previous unsuccessful attempts on the Tsar's life, one of the four Russian revolutionaries who

⁷¹ Compare Martha Crenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches," in David C. Rapoport, ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (New York: Frank Cass, 1988), 44-62.

⁷² Rohan Gunaratna, "Suicide Terrorism in Sri Lanka and India," in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, 106-107.

equipped themselves with bombs on that day decided to detonate the bomb in such close proximity to the Tsar that it would ensure not only his target's death but also his own.⁷³

An organizational level of analysis must be conducted because organizations have motives and goals that are distinct from those of individuals. Organizational motives to commit acts of suicide terrorism revolve, as argued in the introductory part, first around the need for organizational survival.⁷⁴ A minimum degree of violent presence is necessary for terrorist organizations to remain effective. Failure to maintain such a degree of violence will eventually lead to the organization's irrelevance and eventual disappearance as a political force.

The organizational strive to persist and remain relevant is closely related to terrorist organizations' pursuit of political power—a key feature of any terrorist group.⁷⁵ As part of their struggle for power, most organizations that adopt suicide tactics, like those who do not, vie for the support of the local population.⁷⁶ This struggle for market share, Mia Bloom explains, can lead to the adoption of suicide attacks by groups that have not previously used such tactics, especially when various terrorist organizations are engulfed in a struggle to 'outbid' themselves. "With several groups in fierce competition," Bloom notes, "violence becomes the litmus test against which the organizations and individuals measure themselves."⁷⁷ The adoption of suicide attacks by organizations for tactical and political reasons has been noted in the Palestinian case of

⁷³ On the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, see, for example, Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 17-19. It is not entirely clear whether the assassin of Tsar Alexander II should be considered a suicide bomber.

⁷⁴ See Chester Barnard, James Q. Wilson, and Martha Crenshaw, in footnote 30.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, 14-15.

⁷⁶ This characteristic applies especially to more traditional campaigns of suicide attacks such as in Lebanon, Israel, or Sri Lanka. This is less obvious in some current suicide bombing campaigns. In Iraq, for example, some insurgent groups have targeted the local population in an apparent effort to intimidate them. It is questionable whether they aim to win the local support by using such methods.

suicide attacks⁷⁸ as well as in Sri Lanka, where suicide attacks paved the way for the LTTE to distinguish itself from other militant Tamil groups that challenged the Tigers' aspiration to stand at the helm of the resistance movement.⁷⁹ Lebanon serves as an additional example where two Shiite groups, Hizballah and Amal, began to outbid themselves in suicide attacks.⁸⁰

Bloom adds that "if the domestic popularity of the organization using suicide terror increases, we observe an increase in bombings to capture this market share. If the domestic environment supports the use of suicide terror and an insurgent group does not use the tactic, they tend to lose market share and popularity."⁸¹ Anat Kurz, meanwhile, suggested that a reduction in the support for suicide attacks can lead to the decline of the use of suicide operations. She cites the case of the LTTE, where the erosion in the support for the LTTE among the Tamil diaspora, including reduced financial contributions, was one among several factors that brought a temporary halt to suicide attacks in 2002.⁸²

An additional reason why some groups prefer suicide bombing tactics is that they believe that such a *modus operandi* will benefit them in various ways. First, even more than ordinary terrorist attacks, suicide operations are likely to draw attention to a group's

⁷⁷ Mia Bloom, "Devising a Theory of Suicide Terror," Paper submitted at the ISERP Seminar on Contentious Politics, 25.

⁷⁸ Bloom uses the example of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) as a case study to prove this hypothesis. See Mia Bloom, "Palestinian Suicide Bombing: Public Support, Market Share, and Outbidding," *Political Science Quarterly* 119, No.1 (Spring 2004); Ely Karmon similarly argues that the Fatah Al Aqsa Brigades adopted suicide tactics after Hamas threatened its status, in large part due to its use of suicide attacks. Quoted in Christopher Dickey, "Inside Suicide, Inc.," *Newsweek*, 15 April 2002, 26.

⁷⁹ Compare Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," 262.

⁸⁰ Martin Kramer, "Sacrifice and Fratricide in Shiite Lebanon," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 3, No.3 (Winter 1991).

⁸¹ Mia Bloom, "Devising a Theory of Suicide Terror," 25.

⁸² Anat Kurz, "Non-Conventional Terrorism: Availability and Motivation," *Strategic Assessment* 7, No. 4 (March 2005). Available online at <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v7n4p6Kurz.html>, last accessed 16 April 2005.

cause, aided in large part by the extraordinarily high attention such operations enjoy in the media—“the terrorist’s best friend,”⁸³ as Walter Laqueur once described it. In this regard, suicide attacks can be thought of as a form of ‘strategic signaling,’ whereby terrorist attacks are used to communicate a group’s character and goals to the target audience. As pointed out by Hoffman and McCormick, for instance, the LTTE used suicide attacks to signal an image of elitism, professionalism, invincibility, and fanatical single-mindedness to the Sri Lankan government.⁸⁴ Second, suicide attacks, even more than ordinary terrorist attacks, serve the organization’s attempt to create extreme fear in the larger population—a key feature of terrorist attacks. This occurs in part due to the group’s demonstration of the inefficacy of the targeted government, and in part due to the demoralization of the public and law enforcement. Suicide attacks create not only a disproportionately intense amount of fear among targeted populations, but their effect may be particularly traumatizing and long-lasting.⁸⁵ Third, by employing a tactic that involves the death of members of the constituency that the organization purports to represent, the group may believe that it can strengthen support in the international arena.⁸⁶ There is some evidence that outside audiences may sympathize with groups who are using martyrdom tactics, assuming that members of a community willing to sacrifice themselves must have been subjected to particularly gruesome treatment by their enemy,

⁸³ Walter Laqueur, as quoted in Yonah Alexander, “Terrorism and the Media: Some Considerations,” in Yonah Alexander, David Carlton, and Paul Wilkinson, eds., *Terrorism: Theory and Practice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), 160.

⁸⁴ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack” 262.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Amos Harel, “Suicide attacks Frighten Israelis more than Scuds,” *Haaretz*, 13 February 2003; Charu Lata Joshi, “Sri Lanka: Suicide Bombers;” “Young Israelis ‘Traumatized’ by Conflict,” *BBC News Online*, 2 June 2004; Keith B. Richburg, “Suicide Bomb Survivors Face Worlds Blown Apart,” *Washington Post*, 31 January 2004, A15.

⁸⁶ Scott Atran argued convincingly in this regard that ironically, terrorist organizations regard suicide bombers not necessarily as a loss, but as expendable assets whose loss generates a net gain by expanding public support and pools of potential recruits. Scott Atran, “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,” 1537.

thus leaving them with no other option other than to seek death. Indeed, the belief that suicide bombers must act out of desperation if they are willing to sacrifice themselves is at times entertained even by elements of the targeted population.⁸⁷ A fourth benefit of suicide attacks occurs if the organization, as is sometimes claimed, intends to provoke a harsh response by the government, hoping that such a response might heighten sympathies and support for the group's cause.⁸⁸ Indeed, the high lethality of suicide attacks which, on average, kill four times as many people as do other terrorist attacks,⁸⁹ certainly does nothing to restrain governments in their responses to suicide attacks. Terrorist organizations, finally, adopt suicide operations because of a number of tactical benefits. These tactical benefits of suicide operations, such as their great accuracy, high lethality, cost efficiency, and the irrelevance of planning a complicated escape route, among others, have been described in greater detail by other authors,⁹⁰ and there is no need to enumerate them here in full.

This part of the paper has examined possible causes of suicide terrorism on an organizational level of analysis. The goals and motives of organizations have been shown to differ significantly from individual motives. Whereas individual motives are personal, organizational motives are generally strategic and tactical. The above discussion of organizational goals and motives is far from complete, and one can safely assume that there are various other reasons why organizations use suicide attacks that have not been

⁸⁷ Former Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, for instance, declared that “the basic reason for this act [i.e., suicide attacks] is desperation, and the feeling that they have reached a dead end.” Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, “Introduction,” in ICT, *Countering Suicide Terrorism*, 6.

⁸⁸ In his “Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla,” Carlos Marighella suggested just such a strategy. For a copy of the manual, see the appendix of Robert Moss, *Urban Guerrilla Warfare* (London, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1971).

⁸⁹ Bruce Hoffman, “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003.

mentioned here. An additional area into which an organizational level of analysis of the causes of suicide terrorism should delve is the organization's role in training and indoctrinating its members to become suicide bombers. Training and indoctrination are not causes of suicide attacks per se, but are nonetheless generally necessary to produce suicide bombers.⁹¹ As is true for the other parts of this paper, the main purpose of this discussion has been to demonstrate the need to engage in various different levels of analysis when examining the etiology of suicide attacks. The next part of the paper will discuss a third set of conditions, namely environmental factors, which exert influence on both individuals and organizations.

IV: THE ENVIRONMENTAL LEVEL OF ANALYSIS (L3)

The third level of analysis of the causes of suicide terrorism, the environmental level (L3), is concerned with the various structural factors and conditions that affect the genesis of suicide terrorism.⁹² Whereas suicide terrorism is planned and executed by individuals who are members of identifiable organizations (L1 and L2), these two levels are in turn influenced by broader environmental conditions that include the political, social, historical, cultural, economic, and religious context. Clearly, some of these sub-elements of the broader environment are more relevant in some cases than in others. The religious context, for example, is a more important factor to take into account in explaining why some Islamist groups employ suicide attacks than it is in the case of the

⁹⁰ See, for example, Ehud Sprinzak, "Rational Fanatics," 66-67; Boaz Ganor, "Suicide Attacks in Israel," 143-144; and Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Terrorism and Suicide Attacks," *CRS Report for Congress*, 28 August 2003, 8-12.

⁹¹ See, for example, Assaf Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada," 83-86.

⁹² For a more elaborate discussion of the environmental level of analysis and how it relates to the causes of terrorism, see Assaf Moghadam, *The Roots of Terrorism* [forthcoming].

LTTE, a predominantly secular, nationalist organization. The existence of economic incentives for engaging in suicide terrorism are controversial to begin with, and certainly do not explain why Muhammad Atta and his cohorts, most of whom came from affluent backgrounds, engaged in suicide terrorism.

Economic motives, as do most of the structural conditions discussed in this chapter, have at best indirect effects on suicide attacks. Recent studies have shown, for instance, that there is no direct connection between poverty or poor education on the one hand, and terrorism on the other.⁹³ On the other hand, poverty may exert indirect influence on the rise of terrorism: First, poor countries are more likely to serve as or be exploited as safe havens by terrorists; second, poor countries are more likely to undergo ethnic and religious conflict, which in turn may breed ‘homegrown’ terrorism or may attract foreign elements; third, poverty may indirectly affect the rise of terrorism in that the usually more well-to-do leadership levels of terrorist organizations can more easily exploit grievances of economically disadvantaged classes.⁹⁴

Similarly, the political context of a society in which suicide attacks are utilized must be seen as having at best indirect effects. A society under occupation, for example, may have a higher likelihood to employ suicide attacks than a perfectly sovereign, independent state. However, not all societies under occupation have produced suicide bombers, or else we would need to add Tibetans, Kosovars, Cambodians, and other occupied and recently occupied groups to the growing list of suicide bombers. Similarly,

⁹³ See, for example, Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, “Education, Poverty, Political Violence, and Terrorism: Is there a Causal Connection?” *NBER Working Paper* No. 9074, July 2002; Alberto Abadie, “Poverty, Political Freedom, and the Roots of Terrorism,” *NBER Working Paper* No. 10859, October 2004; and James Piazza, “Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism, Poor Economic Development and Social Cleavages,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Spring 2005 [forthcoming].

⁹⁴ This section is based on Assaf Moghadam, *The Roots of Terrorism* [forthcoming].

governmental repression gives rise to suicide terrorism in some cases—repression exists, in varying degrees, in Russia, Sri Lanka, and Israel—but does not have the same effect in Latin America and Africa, where suicide attacks have remained a rarity despite the many examples of brutal authoritarian and dictatorial regimes found on these continents.

Hence, structural conditions that may give rise to terrorism suffer from the same ‘fundamental problem of specificity’ that Sageman described for psychological explanations of terrorism. In addition, however, environmental factors differ from the individual and organizational levels in that they are not directly affecting the rise of suicide terrorism, but require intervening variables. These variables are the individual and the organization, which do not live and operate in a vacuum. L1 and L2 serve as intermediate units channeling environmental influences (L1) into terrorist attacks by means of personal dynamics of the individual on the one hand, and organizational goals and motives on the other hand.

The following discussion will center around only a few environmental factors that seem particularly relevant to suicide attacks in the Palestinian, Sri Lankan, and Chechen cases. There will be a discussion of the political, social, cultural, and historical context, with a focus on the culture of martyrdom, which seems to be a particularly important phenomenon whenever suicide attacks are used systematically. Due to space limitations, the discussion will appear at times superficial, and the religious and economic context, while clearly important, will be left out altogether.

The political and historical context in Israel/West Bank and Gaza, Sri Lanka, and Chechnya/Russia features, in all three instances, a high level of violence as part of a conflict that has ethnic, nationalist, and religious dimensions. All three cases witness the

political and military domination of one group over another. In Sri Lanka, the predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese majority seized power in 1948, after which time it largely refused to share power with the predominantly Hindu Tamils. Civil rights of the Tamils were further curtailed after the proclamation of the republic in 1971, providing a boost to various militant Tamil organizations. After 1983, the Sinhalese army's reprisals against the Tamils increased in their brutality as the LTTE, now at the helm of the Tamil organizations, adopted violent resistance as its tactic. The struggle for a national Tamil homeland is at the center of the conflict, and Sri Lankans oftentimes profess a willingness to die for this cause. Asked why he wanted to become a suicide bomber, one young Sri Lankan, for instance, said that "This is the most supreme sacrifice I can make. The only way we can get our eelam [homeland] is through arms. That is the only way anybody will listen to us. Even if we die."⁹⁵

Chechnya has historically been subjected to many conquests, in particular by its Russian neighbor. Russia's invasion of Chechnya in 1858 and its aftermath decimated the Chechen population in half.⁹⁶ In 1944, ten years after Chechnya became a Soviet Socialist Republic, Stalin accused the Chechens and the Ingush populations of collaboration with the Nazis and deported them to Siberia and Central Asia. Stalin's purges and forced exile killed an estimated one-quarter of the Chechen population and permanently imbued the episode in Chechen collective memory. After 1991, a Russia reluctant to lose control over Chechnya due to the latter's oil resources and strategic importance, invaded its Southern neighbor and former Soviet republic. In the subsequent wars, which have witnessed flagrant human rights violations on both sides, Russian

⁹⁵ Charu Lata Joshi, "Sri Lanka: Suicide Bombers."

troops destroyed several Chechen cities, culminating in the leveling of the capital Grozny in late 1999.

Within the environmental level of analysis, the cultural context of societies in which suicide operations are used is an additional factor to take into account. The case of Chechnya is especially relevant. There, the traditional Chechen code of honor, *Adat*, permits, even prescribes, retribution for the sake of honor. Chechen cultural history is also replete with legends and myths about the prowess of Chechen warriors who heroically fought countless invaders.⁹⁷ This code of conduct has been described by one Chechen mafia boss who stated, “We Chechens keep our secrets, and none of our people will ever talk about them to an outsider. We are also united. But even more important is the fact that we are disciplined and self-restrained... We only use force when necessary but if we give a warning, everyone knows we mean it and they’d better listen. That is why all the other groups, the Russians, the Azeris, the Georgians, and whoever—they all have to pay rent to us, and respect our territory.”⁹⁸

On the societal level, a phenomenon that is not only present in most conflicts where suicide attacks are widely used, but that also appears to be the distinguishing characteristic between suicide terrorism and ordinary terrorism, is what is known as the culture of martyrdom,⁹⁹ well described by Christoph Reuter as a “network of reimagined

⁹⁶ John P. Dunlop, *Russia Confronts Chechnya: Roots of a Separatist Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.

⁹⁷ C.J. Chivers and Steve Lee Myers, “Chechen Rebels Mainly Driven by Nationalism,” *New York Times*, 12 September 2004.

⁹⁸ Anatol Lieven, “Nightmare in the Caucasus,” *Washington Quarterly* 23, No. 1 (Winter 2000), 145.

⁹⁹ For some early discussions on the culture of martyrdom, see Joseph Lelyveld, “All Suicide Bombers are Not Alike,” *New York Times Magazine*, 28 October 2001; Christopher Dickey, “Inside Suicide, Inc.,” *Newsweek*, 15 April 2002, 26; Assaf Moghadam, “Suicide attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Conceptual Framework,” *Project for the Research of Islamist Movements* (PRISM), May 2002, 36-38.

and reawakened medieval myths and popular-culture hero worship. This culture combines modern-day marketing techniques like trading-cards, film music, and video-clips, with a ‘creative’ reinterpretation of theology that lends religious legitimacy to the attackers’ suicides by characterizing them as the noblest form of fearlessness in the face of death.”¹⁰⁰ The concept of martyrdom, however, is not solely a religious but also a secular phenomenon whose roots can be traced to the concept of the hero.¹⁰¹ Martyrdom, in addition, is not merely an act of self-sacrifice that is done for personal reasons, but the self-conscious creation of a model for future emulation and inspiration. The martyr, Crenshaw writes, “expects to impress an audience and to be remembered. For someone whose life otherwise has little significance, transcendent fame can be a powerful motive.”¹⁰²

The culture of martyrdom is particularly pronounced among Palestinians, and manifests itself in various ways, be it a soccer tournament named after a suicide bomber¹⁰³ or a popular drama series about the most famous of Palestinian bomb makers, the ‘Engineer,’ Yahiye Ayyash.¹⁰⁴ Palestinian groups adopted many practices of this cult of death—including the labeling of suicide attacks as ‘martyrdom operations’—from the Lebanese Hizballah.¹⁰⁵ The radical Shiite group, in turn, copied the culture of the martyr

Available online at <http://www.e-prism.org/>; and David Brooks, “The Culture of Martyrdom,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, 13.

¹⁰¹ Bruce Hoffman and Gordon H. McCormick, “Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack,” 253.

¹⁰² Martha Crenshaw, “‘Suicide Terrorism’ in Comparative Perspective,” 26. Christoph Reuter calls this emulation effect the “Werther effect.”

¹⁰³ Itamar Eichner, “Terror Tournament,” *Yediot Ahronot*, 22 January 2003, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Khaled Abu Toameh, “Ramadan Drama Documents Life of Yehya Ayyash,” *Jerusalem Post*, 11 October 2004. For other manifestations of the cult of martyrdom among Palestinians, see Assaf Moghadam, “Suicide attacks in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” 36-38, and Shaul Kimhi and Shmuel Even, “Who are the Palestinian Suicide Terrorists?”

¹⁰⁵ Christopher Dickey, “Inside Suicide, Inc.,” 26.

from revolutionary Iran—including such practices as celebrating the death of the martyr as a wedding.¹⁰⁶

That a culture of martyrdom can also be practiced among secular groups can be seen in the example of the LTTE, whose fallen heroes, especially the members of the Black Tigers suicide squad, are honored and revered after death. Drawing on the Hindu tradition of heroic self-sacrifice, asceticism, and obligation, which are firmly entrenched within Tamil society, the Sri Lankan version of the culture of martyrdom features such practices as the building of holy shrines for the fallen heroes; the establishment of five occasions on its calendar when martyrs are venerated, including Martyrs Day on July 5, when the first Sri Lankan suicide bomber, Captain Millar, detonated himself;¹⁰⁷ radio broadcasts on Martyrs' Day reporting the brave deeds of the Black Tigers; the naming of weapons after the suicide squad;¹⁰⁸ and the euphemistic labeling of the act of dying as “thatkodai” (to give yourself) rather than “thatkolai” (to kill yourself).¹⁰⁹ The LTTE has even composed songs about the cyanide vial, with which every LTTE fighter is equipped, making even the poisonous capsule a subject of the cult of martyrdom.¹¹⁰

CONCLUSION

In his 1972 essay on the etiology of internal war, Harry Eckstein argued that “theoretical reflection can introduce some order into the chaos that internal war studies present. Most important, it can produce useful judgments as to the more economic lines

¹⁰⁶ Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon*, 48.

¹⁰⁷ Peter Schalk, “Resistance and Martyrdom in the Process of State Formation of Tamil Eelam.”

¹⁰⁸ Sabil Francis, “The Uniqueness of LTTE’s Suicide Bombers,” *Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies*, Article No. 321, 4 February 2000. Available at <http://www.ipcs.org/>, last accessed 10 January 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Amy Waldman, “Suicide Bombing Masters: Sri Lankan Rebels,” *New York Times*, 14 January 2003.

¹¹⁰ Peter Schalk, “Resistance and Martyrdom in the Process of State Formation of Tamil Eelam.”

to pursue in empirical inquiry.”¹¹¹ The aim of this paper, to paraphrase Eckstein, was to present some theoretical reflections of suicide attacks with the aim to contribute to more useful scholarly analyses of the phenomenon.

The framework offered here has not uncovered each and every cause of suicide attacks in the cases described here, nor has it attempted to do so. Many crucial variables that play a critical role in understanding the genesis of suicide terrorism have been left out for space limitations. On both the individual and the organizational levels, for example, the role of leadership is a critical variable to examine, as the cases of suicide attacks particularly in the case of the LTTE and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attest, given the centrality of their respective leaders, Vellupillai Prabhakaran and the imprisoned Abdullah Ocalan. Other important variables on the organizational level largely neglected in this study, but nonetheless critical for improving the analyst’s understanding of the terrorist or insurgent organization’s contribution to suicide attacks are indoctrination, ideology, training, and organizational decision making. Similarly, variables of the environmental level that have been overlooked in the present study are the role of religion and economic conditions which, as argued, have no direct effects on terrorism, but may contribute to the rise of suicide terrorism through indirect ways.

Rather than providing an exhaustive list of all variables,¹¹² this study has chosen a few variables for the purpose of illustration. The main goal was to present a multi-causal model as a useful theoretical concept and analytical framework with which to approach the study of the causes of suicide attacks. Clearly, it is not the intention of the author to

¹¹¹ Harry Eckstein, “On the Etiology of Internal Wars,” 12.

¹¹² A study that lists a comprehensive list of variables likely to increase the risk of political violence and that can be mostly applied to the risk of suicide terrorism as well, is Jerrold M. Post, et.al, “The Radical Group in Context: 1,” and “The Radical Group in Context: 2.”

argue that each study of suicide attacks, or terrorism for that matter, needs to be conducted on multiple levels of analysis. Nor should this study be understood as a criticism of monocausal approaches, as studies focusing on one causal variable have immensely contributed to our understanding of the causes of suicide attacks. The purpose of the introduction of this model is rather intended to raise the analyst's awareness of the 'bigger picture' in which the causes of suicide terrorism should be seen.

Beyond the purpose of raising the analyst's awareness to the multiplicity of causes of suicide terrorism, the current framework of analysis has also practical usefulness. First, it can be extended from the study of the *causes* of suicide attacks to an analysis of the *nature* and *characteristics* of suicide attacks. Conducting an in-depth analysis of the particular characteristics of a certain suicide bombing campaign, or employing a comparative analysis of various campaign using multiple levels of analysis, can help uncover certain trends and characteristics that counter-terrorism specialists can in turn use to develop measures to contain this phenomenon.

In addition, this analysis of the causes of suicide attacks can be redesigned as a framework for conceptualizing processes leading to the adoption of suicide attacks based on variables that fall within the individual, organizational, and environmental levels of analysis. A study that utilizes levels of analysis L1, L2, and L3 can thus serve as an examination of possible risk factors that increase the likelihood that suicide attacks will be used in a particular context—an important undertaking that was beyond the scope of this study. In developing such future analyses of risk factors, the analyst's challenge will be to develop models that allow for the specification of the relative weight of the various variables and levels of analysis across certain regions. In order to embark on such an

important study, recognizing the 'big picture' of the causes of suicide terrorism is a crucial first step.