

Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)

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Foreword

In Afghanistan, suicide attacks are a new phenomenon. Before the assassination of Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9th 2001, the notion that suicide might be used to kill others was considered alien. Indeed, when such attacks began appearing with regularity in 2005 and 2006, the community's initial response was to reject the possibility that Afghans themselves might be involved.

As this study notes, suicide attacks are no longer entirely alien to any place or any people. Worldwide the number of terrorist groups employing them has grown over the past twenty-five years. In some of the world's conflict areas they have come to be widely accepted, and even supported, by populations who might once have recoiled at the idea. Afghanistan has yet to reach such a stage; with luck it never will. The question for all who want peace – and this is the question that led me to suggest in early 2007 that UNAMA undertake this study – is whether we can prevent that from happening. I hope the findings of this study will have relevance for any country facing this scourge. With a sevenfold increase in such attacks between 2005 and 2006, and even higher levels in 2007 (103 as of end August 2007 against 123 for the whole of 2006), Afghanistan is certainly in need of answers.

During 2007 UNAMA has worked to raise awareness of the impact that Afghanistan's current conflict is having on civilians and to ensure that everything possible is being done to protect them from harm. I am highlighting suicide attacks through this study because, to a greater extent than with any other form of warfare we are witnessing, the victims (around 80 percent) are civilian. Even this figure understates the problem. The immediate victims of a suicide attack are those who are killed or wounded, their families, and their friends. However, the target of such attacks is also society as a whole. Suicide attacks traumatize entire communities, undermine popular faith in institutions of the state, provoke responses that limit freedoms, and intimidate populations into a sense that hopes of peace rest only with the providers of violence.

Perhaps the most tragic element of this whole phenomenon is the bomber himself (so far in Afghanistan there are no 'herselfs'). To gain insights into the minds of such

people, and the networks behind them, UNAMA researchers interviewed more than two dozen people arrested in failed attacks, or on suspicion of being involved. The results are detailed in Chapter VI. Some denied being suicide attackers; others did not. The overwhelming impression was that these were mere foot soldiers, some willingly involved, but several clearly duped or coerced. This impression is further borne out by recent reports of young children being recruited for suicide missions. Populations in Afghanistan, as well as across the border in Pakistan, where much (but not all) of the recruiting and training happens, clearly need to be protected from such callous exploitation. The use of children, in particular, suggests that the groups responsible for their 'recruitment' are seeing a need to employ increasing extremes of barbarity.

The final chapter of this study contains recommendations. I hope these will be acted upon, and that this study in itself is not the final word on the matter, but the start of a wider exploration of what we can all do to protect Afghanistan, its neighbours, and the world, from this true problem from hell.

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Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan

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Executive Summary

This study presents the main findings of UNAMA's comprehensive inquiry into the phenomenon of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. This study places suicide attacks in Afghanistan in the context of their occurrence in other countries and eras, identifying ways in which suicide attacks in Afghanistan differ from attacks elsewhere. It details available information about the backgrounds of the attackers and the sources of support they enjoy, both in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan. This report describes the human cost borne by civilian victims and identifies several policy implications as well as mitigating strategies.

Main Argument

While Afghanistan's first suicide attack occurred on 9 September, 2001, the tactic remained rare until 2005. Since then, the suicide attack has become increasingly commonplace in the Afghan theatre. While suicide attackers elsewhere in the world tend not to be poor and uneducated, Afghanistan's attackers appear to be young, uneducated and often drawn from madrassas across the border in Pakistan. They are also - fortunately - relatively inept at this tactic, managing to kill only themselves in many instances. Suicide assailants in Afghanistan and their supporters seem to be mobilized by a range of grievances. These include a sense of occupation, anger over civilian casualties, and affronts to their national, family, and personal senses of honour and dignity that are perpetrated in the conduct of counterinsurgency operations. Some attackers are also motivated by religious rewards and duties.

Support for the tactic and for the Taliban remains relatively low and geographically constrained, but those who do support the Taliban cite their ability to provide security as the main reason for doing so. While groups using the tactic appear almost exclusively to target national and international security forces, their victims are overwhelmingly civilians. Afghanistan's civilians - not the national and international security forces - have borne the brunt of these attacks.

Expedient action is needed to deny insurgents success in their suicide attack campaign. This will require immediate and long-term intervention in the conduct of counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan. It also entails extending the authority of an Afghan government that enjoys widespread legitimacy among its citizens together with an ability to provide justice and rule of law for its war-battered people.

Suicide attacks in Afghanistan will likely be resolved within the context of the overall insurgency, with an increased reliance upon non-military interventions. This will most certainly require the constructive engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours.

Conclusions, Policy Implications and Recommendations (from Chapter 6)

Given the minimal and geographically constrained support base for anti-government elements, insurgents can be denied success in their employment of suicide attacks through appropriate policy initiatives. The task at hand is to craft a series of interventions that will reduce both the supply of suicide attackers and facilitators as well demand for the same.

- Immediate efforts are needed to diminish perceptions of a foreign military occupation:
 - all forces engaged in counter insurgency operations must reduce civilian casualties and conscientiously work to uphold the dignity and honour of Afghans, to avoid provoking outrage in the population and a ready supply of volunteers for jihad;
 - Afghan national security forces must be supported increasingly to assume responsibility for the provision of more effective security; and
 - means must be found to engage other Muslim countries to support security and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

- Military approaches alone may have only marginal short-term impacts. Immediate political efforts are needed to undermine, contain and reduce the insurgents' support base. This will require the Afghan Government to:
 - meet the demands of the population whose concerns and frustrations might otherwise drive them to embrace the armed resistance;

- reduce corruption, oversee fair judicial processes and focus on the provision of basic public services; and
- engage all relevant civil society groups - including religious authorities - to build a consensus against suicide attacks and their perpetrators. However, for such civil society actors to step up, their safety must be ensured.
- Eliminate suicide attacks cells through a combination of law enforcement, military operations and political engagement:
 - efforts must be made to compel volunteers to reject violence and adopt more constructive strategies; and
 - insurgents should be encouraged to express their grievances through political and democratic means.
- Address the cross border dimension of suicide attacks in Afghanistan by bolstering.
 - Pakistani support to eliminate domestic enablers for the insurgency in Afghanistan, to address militancy within its own borders, to reform governance in the tribal areas and to invest in development; and
 - international encouragement to both Pakistan and Afghanistan to embark upon a process through which all outstanding bilateral concerns are addressed and eventually resolved.

Chapter Summaries (1-5)

Chapter 1. Introduction

This report explores the occurrence of suicide attacks in Afghanistan from several points of view. It first presents an overview of the literature on suicide attacks generally, allowing one to discern ways in which suicide attacks in Afghanistan resemble or differ from suicide attacks in other countries. It presents detailed analyses of incident data collected by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security, as well as information about the attackers and the various sources of support they enjoy in

Afghanistan and further afield. It also details the human costs of this tactic and concludes with a discussion of policy implications and recommendations. The information cut-off date was 30 June, 2007.

As explained in more detail in this chapter of the report, the terms “suicide attacks” or “suicide missions” are used interchangeably in preference to the term “suicide terrorism.” While multiple definitions of terrorism exist, usually the *sine qua non* of a terrorist attack is the perpetrators’ explicit focus upon non-combatants or civilians. In Afghanistan, anti-government elements target combatants in the vast majority of cases, even if the casualties are predominantly civilian. Suicide attacks differ from other insurgent tactics in that the success of a suicide mission is solely contingent upon the death of the attacker in the same operation.

Chapter 2. Suicide attackers: dying to win or dying to kill?

Suicide attacks have emerged as an increasingly common and potent insurgency tactic since the simultaneous assaults on U.S. and French troops in Beirut in October 1983. Their strategic appeal to insurgents, and consequent growth, is not difficult to explain. As a form of psychological warfare, suicide attacks leave populations feeling helpless against unidentifiable assailants and diminish their confidence in the state’s ability to protect them. They also dispense with the need to plan and execute the assailants’ extraction after an attack and, if successful, offer greater group operational security because the attacker cannot be caught and interrogated.

Studies of suicide attackers in different theatres have identified a number of patterns that are reflected to varying degrees in Afghanistan. Although suicide attackers are generally better educated and less likely to be poor in most societies, this is not the case in Afghanistan, where they have tended to be impoverished and either under-educated or uneducated. The groups responsible for planning attacks often use ritual and ceremony commemorating acts of martyrdom to create a cult of veneration around successful suicide attackers. Such individual recognition, however, is largely absent in Afghanistan. Greater resemblance between Afghanistan and other theatres is evident in the presence of international military forces, an armed campaign against them, and a

difference in religion between the majority of foreign forces present and the population at large.

Enabling environments include poverty, which, though correlating weakly with suicide attackers themselves is often associated with weak states that can be exploited as safe havens by terrorists and are more likely to be affected by ethnic and religious conflict. Another factor is the degree of public support for suicide attacks, which depends upon attackers' targeting choices and the perceived concern of the state or occupier for civilian life. Suicide attacks may be seen as restoring an "intimacy of violence" against an adversary that often relies upon air power.

Ending the foreign forces' presence may not necessarily be the motivation for groups employing suicide attacks. Islamist militant groups are increasingly using suicide attacks against regimes that are seen as Western proxies. Autocratic Muslim states are much more likely to be targeted than either free or partly free Muslim states, suggesting that democratization may have a mitigating effect that tends to reduce the use of suicide attacks.

Chapter 3. Suicide attacks in Afghanistan: analysis of incident data

While the very first suicide attack occurred on 9 September, 2001, when Al Qaeda suicide operatives posing as journalists assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud, suicide bombings only came to prominence in Afghanistan in mid-2005. Only five attacks occurred between 2001 and 2005, when they escalated unexpectedly to 17 attacks over the course of the year. In 2006 there were 123 actual attacks, and in 2007 there were 77 attacks between 1 January and 30 June. Suicide missions now form an integral part of the Taliban's strategy.

Employed by the Taliban as a military technique, suicide bombing – paradoxically – has had little military success in Afghanistan. While 76 percent of all suicide missions target international and Afghan military forces, the greatest impact of suicide bombings has been on civilian bystanders and the Afghan people as a whole. A total of 183 Afghans – 121 of whom were civilians – were killed in suicide bombings in the first half of 2007. The lives of others have been negatively affected by the consequent impeded progress in reconstruction and development that has come about as a

result of mitigating measures that the Government and organisations have had to implement. At the same time, given the spotlight suicide attacks have drawn in media and public attention, they have contributed to alienation of the people from Government, since both the state and its security forces are perceived to have failed to ensure the necessary safety and protection.

While Kandahar, Kabul, and Khost have seen the most suicide attacks, other areas of Afghanistan have experienced increasing levels of suicide attacks as well. This reflects the stated interest of insurgents in destabilising the entire country and attracting widespread publicity at low cost. Since September 2006 insurgents have increasingly relied on Body-borne Improvised Explosive Devices (BBIED), perhaps because statistically they are more lethal in Afghanistan than those which are Vehicle-borne (VBIED) – the other main delivery mechanism. Available data show that in 2007, security forces have been a great deal more successful at interdicting attacks, than in the previous two years. As of 30 June, 36 attackers were neutralised and 34 devices seized – an enormous increase compared to 2006. At the same time security forces have had to deal with many more attacks, leaving the final number of attacks for just the first 6 months of 2007 substantially higher than in 2005 and 2006. Suicide attacks are most likely to continue to be focussed in or around urban centres.

Chapter 4. Who are Afghanistan's suicide attackers and their supporters?

Little is known about the identity and motivation of suicide bombers in Afghanistan. Evidence gathered from prisoners interviewed in Pul-e-Charki prison and from other sources suggests that they differ markedly from those in other conflict areas. They appear to be young (sometimes children), poor, uneducated, easily influenced by recruiters and draw heavily from madrassas across the border in Pakistan. Their motivation seems to be drawn from a range of issues, including religious rewards and duties. Secular drivers such as a perception of occupation, security, ethno-nationalist motivation, as well as communal and personal concerns including dishonour and humiliation, are also influential.

The tribal areas of Pakistan remain an important source of human and material assistance for suicide attacks in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Afghan dimension of

the problem is undeniable. In a comprehensive attempt to understand how support for suicide bombing grows or diminishes, this chapter reviews public opinion polls related to suicide bombings and support for the Government, the Taliban, the United States and the wider international presence. It is important to note that the most popular motivation for supporting the Taliban was the belief that they can bring security to Afghan communities, although overall public support for the Taliban remains astonishingly low.

With respect to suicide attacks, when asked if they are launched in defence of Islam, only eleven percent of respondents believed that they are always or sometimes justified. This figure can be compared to the Pew Foundation's measurement of levels of support for suicide attacks in numerous other Muslim countries. While no trend can be depicted in Afghanistan, the number as such is relatively lower than many other countries and is comparable to the level of support found in Pakistan (nine percent).

Chapter 5: The human rights dimension: the impact of suicide attacks on Afghan communities

The impact of suicide attacks ranges far beyond the death of the immediate victim. The phenomenon strikes fear into the heart of the population, killing and maiming innocent civilians and limiting their enjoyment of basic human rights. Children are particularly affected, especially Afghan girls, who already struggle to realise their rights. Afghan victims express complete incomprehension at the decision of suicide attackers: "It was like they tried to kill the children." In the aftermath of attacks, unexpected medical fees and psychological trauma compound families' losses.

The profound socio-economic consequences of suicide missions affect even peaceful areas of Afghanistan. The unpredictability of attacks curtails business activities. An attack in Kunduz in May 2007 forced shoppers to avoid markets, curtailing freedom of movement. Fear of suicide attacks means that parents keep children at home, and adults lose opportunities to expand their sources of income as well as access to essential public services.

The chapter explores how, despite special protection under international law, boys in both Afghanistan and Pakistan have been coerced into suicide missions. Despite the stated commitment of the Taliban not to use boys without facial hair, school children in

Tank, Pakistan were convinced to join the jihad with promises of adventure. Tactics and incentives ranging from the outright abduction of boys to persuasion involving promises of material gain ('motorcycles and cell phones') are used to 'recruit' children from poor and uneducated households. Another sad fact that comes to light is that children, who are inquisitive, curious and often attracted by the presence of military forces, are frequently among the victims of suicide attackers.

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1. Introduction

Despite thirty years of warfare, Afghanistan never experienced a suicide attack until 9 September 2001. During the ravages of the Soviet occupation, the warlords' struggle for domination, and even during the Taliban period, Afghans never undertook such operations. When the first suicide attack took place on Afghan soil, it was executed by two Arab Al Qaeda operatives.

Posing as television journalists, they secured a meeting with the Northern Alliance Commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, at Khwaja Bahauddin. The assailants detonated their bomb while conducting a mock interview with the commander, the leading active adversary of the Taliban and its leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. Massoud, along with his secretary and security chief, was killed. Having no experience with suicide attacks in Afghanistan, his security detail had not suspected that anyone would conduct a suicide operation against the commander.

Massoud's assassination was the first in a series of events that again thrust Afghanistan into the centre of international attention, and opened a new chapter of armed conflict in the war-torn country. Two days later, on 11 September, Al Qaeda operatives hijacked and crashed two planes into New York City's World Trade Centre Towers, bringing about their complete destruction. A third plane smashed into the Pentagon and a fourth plane, with an unknown target, was brought down over Pennsylvania.

The footage of the collapsing towers replayed for weeks in media worldwide, simultaneously enthralling and horrifying those who watched. Those depictions, perhaps more than any others before or since, dramatically illustrated Brian Jenkins' famous aphorism that "terrorism is theatre."¹

The suicide missions at Khwaja Bahauddin and those in New York and Washington were intimately related. Al Qaeda deliberately timed Massoud's assassination to precede the attacks in the United States. Anticipating a US military response, Al Qaeda assassinated Mullah Omar's arch foe in order both to secure Osama bin Laden's relations with his Taliban protectors, and to eliminate the United States' most obvious partner in any retaliation that they might carry out on Afghan soil.

On 7 October 2001, the United States launched Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and quickly ousted the Taliban regime. In December 2001, the United Nations (UN) issued United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 which authorized the deployment of a multinational force, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in and around Kabul to help stabilise Afghanistan and create conditions for peace. ISAF's mandate was extended to all of Afghanistan in October 2003, under UNSCR 1510.²

Notwithstanding the early successes of OEF and ISAF, and concomitant optimism that the Taliban had been vanquished, over the next five years, suicide attacks gradually became a part of insurgent violence in Afghanistan. While there was one in 2001 and none in 2002, in 2003 two attacks were launched, and there were three attacks in 2004. In 2005, the Taliban re-emerged as a serious threat to peace and security in Afghanistan, with 17 suicide attacks taking place throughout the year. By the end of 2006, the figure had risen to 123 suicide attacks.³

As of June 30, 2007, the analytical cut-off point for this report, there had been 77 suicide attacks in Afghanistan, the most lethal being one that occurred in Kabul on June 17, when an assailant boarded a bus full of Afghan police trainers. In total, the attack claimed the lives of 24 persons and injured 35 others. This had been the sixth attack in as many days.⁴ Should this trend continue the year end total for 2007 will far exceed that of 2006. Anti-government elements, including Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) among others, all now seem to be executing suicide attacks in Afghanistan and are eager to claim responsibility for these attacks and to encourage "recruits" to undertake such missions.⁵

Considerable dispute persists over the identity of the attackers, with some analysts contending that they are now overwhelmingly Afghan, even if foreigners such as Arabs and Pakistanis were involved in the early attacks. Others still insist that the attackers are primarily foreigners or Afghans who have spent much of their lives in Pakistan. However, it is undeniable that Afghans provide necessary support to suicide cells within Afghanistan, such as safe houses, training facilities, and in many cases explosives. But it is equally undeniable that much of the logistical infrastructure for the recruitment, training, and movement of attackers is based in the territory of Afghanistan's eastern

neighbour, Pakistan.⁶ Notably, Pakistan's tribal areas, especially North and South Waziristan, remain an important arena where activities comprising recruitment and training for attackers, as well as furnishing of explosives and equipment are believed to be concentrated.

Data collected by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security in Afghanistan (UNDSS) suggests that while some of these recruits are Pakistani nationals, others are Afghan refugees settled in Pakistan. This research, conducted through interviews with field office staff, international military personnel, along with Afghan officials and analysts in Pakistan, indicates that some of these recruits, especially young children, appear to be taken away by force for operations in Afghanistan.⁷

Without dedicated efforts to eradicate this recruitment drive in the Pashtun belt of Pakistan, it will be difficult to reduce the supply of suicide attackers and deter the groups who deploy them. This does not absolve Afghan and international authorities of their responsibilities to interdict and deter potential attacks and attack cells. Even if sanctuaries in Pakistan are routed, the structural issues that compel groups to employ suicide attacks may not abate unless the political, social and governance concerns of insurgents and the communities who support them are redressed.

While it may seem counter-intuitive, anti-government elements in Afghanistan employ suicide missions to secure several objectives. Through the use of suicide missions, they aim to compel Americans and the citizens of ISAF-contributing countries to pressure their governments to leave Afghanistan. They also hope to cast doubt upon the ability of the Afghan Government to provide security for its citizens. They use these attacks to bolster their popular support or, at a minimum, to eliminate opposition to them. Finally, by employing this tactic, they also garner additional recruits and funding for their suite of operations.

Evidence suggests that these efforts are bearing only limited success. While polling data suggest that there are fewer Afghans who believe their country is going in the right direction, and more who believe it is in fact going in the wrong direction, Afghans remain committed to the belief that the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 was a positive development.

While support for the Taliban is very limited, those who do support them tend to cite their ostensible ability to provide security as the main reason for this support. Religious and ideological motivations are less frequently cited as reasons for supporting the Taliban.⁸ Suicide attacks, along with other insurgent activities, have also disrupted the ability of ISAF, the Coalition and even the United Nations to interact with the local population and to win what Brian Williams calls “the race to bring security to contested provinces.”⁹

The increased use of suicide attacks in Afghanistan is a matter of urgent concern. These attacks, along with other insurgent activity, threaten the lives and the quality of life of Afghans, and impose enormous human costs upon this war-torn society.¹⁰ Moreover, anti-government elements effectively employ this terrifying tactic to increase the level of insecurity among Afghans; to diminish their confidence in the Afghan Government; and to deepen resistance to ISAF operations, Coalition Forces and other international entities in Afghanistan.

Security officials with UNAMA have found alarming evidence to indicate that local insurgent commanders increasingly fail to distinguish among international military forces, international aid organizations and the UN.. This failure to distinguish UN activities from other international operations increases the likelihood that UN programs may be undercut and constrained by insurgent activity.¹¹

An obvious and urgent task presents itself: the Afghan Government and the international community must mobilize their resources to prevent the success of suicide missions implemented by anti-government elements in Afghanistan.

To some extent, anti-government operations have been fuelled by mounting civilian casualties resulting from Coalition Forces and ISAF operations, particularly as a result of air strikes. As will be discussed, air strikes and their predictably heavy civilian losses have been shown to galvanize support for suicide attacks in other theatres such as Israel, Palestine and Chechnya; they require thoughtful analysis and consideration in Afghanistan. Between January and June 2007, roughly as many Afghan civilians were killed by ISAF and Coalition forces as were killed by insurgents.¹² These civilian casualties inflicted by foreign forces have angered the Karzai government and have caused deep resentment among Afghans.¹³

The Taliban, in the use of suicide missions, has been careful not explicitly to target civilians per se. To date, the overwhelming majority have been “hard targets,” comprising the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police and Coalition and ISAF forces. However, examination of their targeting alone is deceptive. Despite their declared targeting objectives, Taliban suicide attacks have resulted in massive civilian casualties. UNAMA has evidence that the Taliban placed children and women in bomb-packed vehicles with the objective of deflecting suspicion from it, thereby allowing a suicide attacker better access to his target.¹⁴

In its use of suicide attacks, the Taliban seeks to appear to be sensitive to civilian losses while showing zero concern for civilian loss of life in many of its actual operations, which have included the spraying of schools and students with bullets, the kidnapping and killing of civilians, bombings, small arms attacks and the like.¹⁵ Brian Williams reports that in at least one suicide incident, the Taliban even issued an apology for its “collateral damage.” As such, Williams has argued that “the real contest for the hearts and minds of the local population for 2007 may well hinge on the competing sides’ “collateral damage” statistics.”¹⁶

The onset of suicide missions in Afghanistan and related adverse developments are of immense importance to the United Nations’ operations in Afghanistan and to international efforts to stabilize and rehabilitate the country. To understand the emergence of this unsettling phenomenon and its implications for the Government of Afghanistan’s stability, and its ability to provide security, governance and rule of law to its citizens, UNAMA has carried out this analysis of suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

In undertaking this study, UNAMA hopes that it will help the international community appreciate the importance of this dangerous development. The report will hopefully serve to inspire the community towards impeding efforts by anti-government elements to foster a culture of suicide missions in Afghanistan, thereby preventing these elements from gaining support among the Afghan people.

A Note on Terminology: Suicide Attack vs. Suicide Terrorism

This report uses the terms “suicide attacks” and “suicide missions” interchangeably, justifying some exposition of these terms. A suicide attack is distinguished from other

kinds of attacks in which the perpetrator dies (e.g. “high risk missions”) principally by the attacker’s ultimate objective. In a suicide mission, the attacker deliberately and with premeditation uses his or her body to carry and deliver explosives with the explicit intent to attack, kill and maim others, with the supreme aim of dying in that attack. Unlike other forms of political violence, the success of a suicide attack is solely contingent upon the death of the attacker in the same operation.¹⁷ An attacker who kills himself or herself after an operation is not a suicide operative, nor is an attacker who undertakes a mission with the remotest expectation of surviving. Even if the attacker manages to kill only himself or herself, the mission is indeed a success by the perpetrators as the assailant has attained the status of martyr for his or her cause.¹⁸

The terms “suicide attack” and “suicide mission” are preferable to another popular term, “suicide bombing”, because some attacks that are called “bombings” do not actually use a conventional explosive device, such as the 9/11 Al Qaeda use of jetliners as weapons. However, so far virtually every suicide incident in Afghanistan has been a suicide bombing. This report avoids the term “suicide terrorism,” which generally refers to a specific application of the suicide attack. While multiple definitions of terrorism exist, usually the *sine qua non* of a terrorist attack is the perpetrators’ explicit focus upon non-combatants or civilians. For example, the U.S. Department of State, in its *Country Reports on Terrorism*, defines terrorism to be a “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents.”¹⁹

This lack of solid definitions has been identified by UN agencies as a challenge preventing effective action against terrorism and its perpetrators. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) notes that UN member states have no agreed-upon definition of terrorism and the resulting lack of agreement on a definition of terrorism “has been a major obstacle to meaningful international countermeasures ... [Furthermore, if] terrorism is defined strictly in terms of attacks on non-military targets, a number of attacks on military installations and soldiers' residences could not be included in the statistics.”²⁰

These definitional challenges are relevant to Afghanistan, because anti-government elements employing suicide missions have nearly exclusively targeted

Afghan leadership, personnel in the Afghan National Police, the Afghan National Army as well as Coalition Forces and members of ISAF.²¹ This is yet another justification for using the terms “suicide attacks” or “suicide missions” in preference to “suicide terrorism.”

There is disagreement within societies, governments, non-governmental organizations and of course among militant groups, about who is a “non-combatant target”. For example, in some countries, police are considered to be civilians, while in Afghanistan, police are widely considered not to be civilians, since they take part in military operations. There are similar differences of opinion with regard to other categories of state employees such as diplomats, intelligence operatives, civilian employees of the Ministry of the Interior, and the like. Often insurgents consider these targets to be legitimate, even if human rights organizations and other international organizations disagree.

Organization of this report

The remainder of this report will be organized as follows: the next chapter presents what is known about suicide attacks generally, with particular reference to suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

The third chapter describes what is known about the incidence of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, drawing from empirical data collected by both UNAMA and UNDSS [UN Department of Safety and Security]. This chapter will identify important trends in targeting, including the frequency and location of attacks as well as the type of weapon employed (e.g. body borne or vehicle borne). It will also present trend data on success rates as well as technical innovation. Where possible, it will discuss the efficacy of interdiction measures in Afghanistan.

The fourth chapter explores what is known about the attackers themselves and their logistical support, as well as popular support for insurgent objectives and tactics in Afghanistan. The fifth chapter treats the impact of suicide missions in Afghanistan from the unique perspective of the human cost involved.

The report concludes with a sixth chapter, recommending mitigation strategies that are aimed not only to deter suicide missions, but equally, if not more importantly, to diminish support for these attacks within the population.

2. Suicide attackers: dying to win or dying to kill?²²

Modern suicide attacks were inspired by two simultaneous suicide assaults that took place on October 23, 1983 in Beirut. The first batch of attackers smashed their bomb-laden truck into a U.S. Marines compound in Beirut, levelling the massive reinforced concrete structure and killing 241 U.S. military personnel and injuring another 100 persons. Forty seconds later, a second team rammed their suicide vehicle into a French peacekeeping compound near central Beirut, killing 58 soldiers and wounding another 15 persons. While there were similar strikes against Israeli occupation forces in Tyre earlier in November 1982 and against the U.S. Embassy in Beirut later in April 1983, the political import of those simultaneous assaults on the Marines and French peacekeeping forces presaged the end of Western military presence in Lebanon, galvanized wider opposition to international presence, and encouraged increased violence against foreign targets in Lebanon.²³ It is impossible to overstate the importance of those twin attacks and their tactical and strategic success. They offered an important object lesson to other terrorist groups, prompting them to introduce suicide attacks into their repertoire of violence and ushering in the contemporary era of suicide attacks.²⁴

Since the 1980s, suicide attacks have accounted for fewer than 4 percent of terrorist incidents worldwide, but they have accounted for 29 percent of the injuries and 29 percent of the fatalities.²⁵ A number of groups, such as Basque Fatherland and Freedom (ETA), the Armenian Revolutionary Army, or the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), have made only episodic use of the tactic while other organizations, such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) and numerous other Islamist groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban, have made extensive use of it. Suicide attacks have occurred throughout the Americas, Europe, Russia, Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.²⁶ While historically a wide array of religious and secular organizations throughout the world have employed suicide attacks to satisfy a range of objectives, in recent years the field of suicide attackers has increasingly been dominated by armed Islamist groups. Between 2000 and 2004, there were 472 suicide attacks in 22 countries, killing more than 7,000

persons and injuring tens of thousands. Most of these attacks were perpetrated by Islamist groups.²⁷

Suicide attackers are intended to be the ultimate “smart bombs.” They inflict terror by moving among his or her targets, calculating the optimum time and place for maximum carnage, signalling to their adversary a willingness to do anything to achieve the aims of the group. As such, suicide attacks are considered to be a form of psychological warfare that leaves the target population feeling helpless, vulnerable, and painfully aware that they cannot identify and stop the attacker before the killing begins.²⁸

This also makes suicide attacks spectacularly macabre “theatre” in which even failed suicide attacks garner media coverage, captivating and horrifying the target population, denigrating public confidence in the state’s ability to provide security, and propagating images of the attacker’s martyrdom. In Afghanistan, suicide attackers often manage to kill only themselves. Yet even these attacks, which are operational failures, attract the attention of the media which, in turn, confers upon them some measure of success. Surely a conventional (non-suicide) attack that was so ineffective would not draw such attention.

The death of the suicide attacker becomes a form of political theatre wherein the reaction of the audience is as significant as the attack itself. As early as 1974, Brian Jenkins declared that “terrorism is theatre” and explained how “terrorist attacks are often carefully choreographed to attract the attention of the electronic media and the international press.”²⁹ The media predictably responds with unconstrained enthusiasm, unable to ignore “an event ... fashioned specifically for [the group’s] needs.”³⁰

While this is true of terror tactics generally, it is even more so for suicide missions in the age of new information technologies and media. Bruce Hoffman has noted that as a result of these new media technologies, “terrorist media capabilities have evolved to a point where they can now control the entire communication process by determining the content, context, and medium over which their message is projected toward precisely the audience (or multiple audiences) they seek to reach.”³¹ This has prompted a number of scholars to note that the suicide mission has particular utility as a weapon of psychological warfare, whose primary target is not actually those who are killed, but those who are unlucky enough to witness it and/or survive it.³²

Surely part of the gruesome allure of suicide missions throughout the world is their lethal nature: they tend to be deadlier than other forms of violence used by non-state actors. On average, shootings have three victims and remote-controlled explosions have seven. A suicide attacker with an explosive belt harms or kills on average 81 persons. When the attacker is driving an explosives-packed car, the average number of victims is 98.³³ This lethality is due in part to the perpetrator's ability to choose the time and location of the attack. When measured by the ratio of victims to insurgents killed, suicide attacks in Afghanistan are not the most lethal instrument of violence employed by non-state actors. However, given the targets against which suicide attackers are generally used, they are likely the most effective option available to insurgents. Suicide missions are also less complex than other tactics because they require no exit strategy for the attacker. For non-suicide assaults, planning and executing the assailants' extraction after an attack can be one of the most complex operational challenges.³⁴

The successful suicide attack obviates this planning requirement. A successful suicide mission affords greater operational security because the attacker cannot be caught and interrogated. If the attack succeeds, the perpetrator is dead and cannot repudiate their act as sometimes happens with ordinary militants. Few things are as ignominious as a militant turned peaceful politician who renounces his or her past and disavows the legitimacy of his or her militant group.³⁵ Equally important, the sponsoring group can depict the life and death of the martyr in any way that suits the organization because the individual is incapable of countering posthumous propaganda and attributed qualities or intentions. Finally, suicide attacks have proven to be one of the most cost effective and efficient weapons systems employed by terrorist and guerrilla groups alike.³⁶

While there is some debate surrounding how "inexpensive" suicide attacks are to execute, there can be little doubt that the cost borne by the attacking organization is far less than costs imposed upon its target. Perhaps one of the more expensive terrorist attacks was Al Qaeda's coordinated assault on New York and Washington on 11 September, 2001. The U.S. Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States estimated that the 9/11 attacks cost between \$400,000 and \$500,000 to execute.³⁷

Some suicide attacks in Afghanistan using vehicles are estimated to have cost upwards of \$100,000 – with recruitment, facilitation, training, and safe houses all

accounted for. At the other extreme are body-borne suicide bombs launched by Palestinians, which according to Bruce Hoffman, may cost a mere \$150 to execute.³⁸

This chapter seeks to provide a brief review of the burgeoning literature on suicide attacks, laying out the empirical basis for the increased utilization of suicide attacks throughout the world generally and hopefully providing some insight into their occurrence in Afghanistan. Firstly, this chapter lays out what is known or believed about the backgrounds of suicide attackers in general. The second section describes three levels of causality that best explain the genesis of suicide attacks, looking specifically at individuals, groups and their environment. The third section examines the type of regime that tends to be targeted by groups employing suicide missions. The fourth section concludes this chapter. Where appropriate, this chapter will draw out the similarities and dissimilarities between suicide attacks in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Who are the suicide attackers?³⁹

Following the 9/11 attacks, commentators frequently opined that there was an urgent need for increased education and expanded aid programs that would, they reasoned, curb terrorism. U.S. President George Bush explained that “we fight against poverty because hope is an answer to terror.”⁴⁰ Similar sentiments were offered by then Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, who said that “The misery of people caught in unresolved civil conflicts or of populations mired in extreme poverty, for example, may increase their attraction to terrorism.”⁴¹ Yet a consistent body of research demonstrates that the linkages between terrorism and poverty are at best tenuous or indirect. Numerous studies of suicide attackers in different theatres find that they are generally better educated and less likely to be poor relative to the average person in their societies.⁴²

There is also a scholarly consensus that persons do not lend support, much less volunteer, for suicide missions as a result of *absolute* conditions of political repression, poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. Rather support and volunteerism tends to occur when there is a *convergence* of political, economic, and social trends that result in diminished opportunities relative to what an individual expects. This is referred to as

“relative deprivation” and is believed to generate social and individual frustration which groups can exploit. There is long-standing empirical evidence that better educated persons experience this deprivation more acutely. Since educated people typically earn more than the uneducated, this may also help explain why many high-profile terrorists tend not to be poor or under-educated relative to the communities from which they originate.⁴³

Another form of deprivation that has been shown to be important in terrorism is the distinction between egotistical deprivation—where an individual feels deprived of his or her own position within a group—and fraternal deprivation where one feels that his group has been deprived relative to other groups. Researchers have found that this latter form of perceived deprivation accounts more consistently for discontent among minorities than the former.⁴⁴ This notion may also explain why actual operatives tend not to be deprived in absolute terms relative their communities.

However, suicide attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan provide important counter-examples. As discussed in the fourth chapter, in Afghanistan (as well as Pakistan) many suicide attackers are poor, under-educated or uneducated, and often recruited from religious schools (madrassas). The distinctive background of these suicide attackers may be due to historical and idiosyncratic reasons. For example, suicide attacks in Pakistan emerged from groups with strong sectarian origins, who in turn were tightly associated with specific Deobandi madrassas hostile to Shi’a Muslims.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban may be resorting to recruitment from madrassas because the Taliban themselves have strong links to Pakistan’s Deobandi religious schools. As such, historically Taliban-affiliated madrassas are likely to afford ready access to students. The Taliban are likely to have influence in directing ideological worldviews promulgated at pro-Taliban madrassas, and they are likely to have sway over specific teachers and administrators to encourage children and young adults to consider volunteering, with various degrees of persuasion and coercion, for suicide missions.

While the jury is still out on the correlations among poverty, education and willingness to join an insurgent organization which promulgates suicide missions, providing educational access and economic opportunities tend to limit support for terrorism generally and suicide missions in particular.⁴⁵ It is entirely possible that while

interventions to improve educational access and socio-economic status may have little immediate or direct affect upon the supply of militants, efforts to reduce economic hardship and increase educational opportunities tend to diminish the support insurgent groups enjoy.

By relieving economic difficulties and enhancing educational opportunities (as well as other quality of life issues), the population may increasingly reject the legitimacy of militancy committed on its behalf—even if such interventions do not significantly diminish militant appeal in the short term.

Explaining suicide attacks: motivations of individuals, groups and their enabling environments

There are three levels of causal analysis which serve to explain the occurrence of suicide attacks. The first level concerns the individual attacker; the second examines the group into which he or she is recruited; and the third considers a wide array of environmental and situational variables.⁴⁶

Individual motivation to undertake suicide missions

The individual level of analysis is intended to ascertain the personal motivations of the various persons involved in the execution of a suicide attack. This includes, but is not limited to, the attacker, other group members such as leadership and cadres, recruiters, dispatchers, spiritual leadership and others who are involved in setting conditions for consent to and legitimacy of such attacks.⁴⁷

Studies of Palestinian suicide attackers suggest that they are influenced by several motivations simultaneously. These motivations may include revenge, a belief in posthumous rewards, expectation that their family will receive material and immaterial benefits after their successful attack, religious impetus, and a belief that they are advancing the liberation cause.⁴⁸ Another important personal motivation is the belief that “martyrdom operations” are an inescapable obligation (fardh’ain) that trumps all other secular obligations.⁴⁹

Suicide attacks also afford the attackers both the opportunity to punish the enemy and to execute God's command to demand justice. They also provide the attackers with a coveted privilege to redeem themselves and demonstrate their worth to their peers. Being selected for such a mission is in essence an endorsement of the attacker's moral character and dedication to both spiritual and secular goals.⁵⁰ Other scholars note revenge as an extremely important redemptive motivation which may include retaliation for a lost loved one, humiliation and oppression, or other forms of inflicted loss, injury and trauma to the attacker or those with whom he has bonds of affection or affiliation.⁵¹

Demonstrating the linkages between individual, group and societal motivations are the rituals and ceremonies that venerate suicide attackers. These are often arranged by the group that organized the attack, along with the organization's champions. In accompanying "celebrity" rituals, groups and the community often disseminate posters, paint public murals, distribute pamphlets, and utilize websites and public displays to honour and publicize both the martyr and his or her sacrifice. Sometimes public amenities such as a well or a town square are dedicated to the martyr.⁵²

Of equal importance to these public cultural displays are the symbols deployed in the last will and testament videotape of the attacker. These are invariably replete with recourse to religious symbolism and include images of guns and bombs symbolizing the attacker's newfound empowerment against the enemy who once humiliated the attacker or the attacker's community.⁵³

In Afghanistan this public culture of celebrating suicide attackers as martyrs has not developed to nearly the same extent; and while videos of assassinations are commonplace, video-taped wills of attackers are very rare.⁵⁴ Because these rituals, ceremonies and practices are critical to the founding and maintenance of a culture that venerates and even sustains suicide attacks and their perpetrators, attention and care is needed to retard or preclude the development of such a culture in Afghanistan.⁵⁵

Group motivation to utilize suicide missions

The second level of analysis focuses on the motivation of organizations undertaking suicide missions.⁵⁶ Groups are important because most individuals who are motivated to

execute such missions are unlikely to have the resources, adequate operational intelligence, and logistical wherewithal to successfully execute a suicide attack on their own.⁵⁷ Groups serve several critical functions that enable the production of suicide attacks, which would be beyond the capabilities of ordinary individuals.

Groups serve as the locus for recruit indoctrination, screening out unstable or otherwise undesirable candidates, and placing them into small and close-knit cells and devising practices to ensure operational security. Groups mobilize their resources to create a collective identity based upon various notions of “fictive kin” on whose behalf members become willing to sacrifice themselves. Groups are effective at mobilizing resources to compel the individual to disengage from morality as defined by the government and mainstream society and to engage with morality as defined by the groups.⁵⁸ Groups also provide a unifying message that conveys a religious, political or ideological goal to their various followers, not all of whom have the same personal motivations to be in the group.⁵⁹

In a study explaining the appeal of suicide attacks to groups, Robert Pape argued that organized groups use suicide attacks strategically in the prosecution of a larger campaign waged to achieve specific political objectives. One of his most important observations is that the genesis of most suicide attack campaigns in his database can be accounted for by three developments: an occupation (real or perceived), an armed rebellion against that occupation, and a difference in religion between the occupier and the occupied. As such, the religious nature of the groups who use suicide attacks offers little explanatory power for its use; rather the difference in religions espoused by the occupier and occupied.⁶⁰

In the views of insurgent groups and their supporters all three of these criteria are satisfied in Afghanistan and, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter, both those who support these attacks in Afghanistan and those who have sought to conduct suicide operations in Afghanistan, cite occupation by foreign forces and related issues, such as civilian deaths at the hand of international military forces, honour abuses, and humiliation, as justification and motivation.

Pape also found that the groups in his dataset generally used suicide missions to target democracies whose electorate, cowering from the suicide campaigns, would force a

change in government policy. Groups were only able to achieve marginal success at least in part because groups can generally use suicide attacks to inflict only marginal, not debilitating, punishment upon their target state. For this reason the state is most likely to surrender only modest goals rather than compromise core national interests.⁶¹

Turning to the situation in Afghanistan, while insurgents seek to destabilize the state and foster a sense of insecurity among Afghans, they also seek to target the voting electorates of the various countries who contribute troops to the international military presence in Afghanistan.

There have been a number of critiques and refinements of Pape's work, which are also germane to this study. Assaf Moghadam (among others) argues that Pape underestimated the role of religion - and Islam in particular - in the execution of suicide missions due to his analytical methods and data handling.⁶² Because Pape classifies suicide attacks as campaigns (which he never clearly defines), he counts several attacks as one attack. For example, the 9/11 attacks are classed as one attack, even though there were three distinct targets. This is an important methodological shortcoming because religiously motivated groups—and Islamist groups in particular—employ concerted, multiple attacks. If one disaggregates these “clustered” attacks, Islamist and other religious groups account for a much larger share of suicide missions than Pape's accounting methods suggest.⁶³

Pape may have also downplayed the role of religion even in ostensibly secular groups like the LTTE, whose ethnic identity as Tamil Tigers is inextricably linked to their Hindu religious background, in contra-distinction to the Sinhalese Buddhists, which are the majority religious group in Sri Lanka, and against whom the LTTE operates. Moreover, LTTE leadership is venerated by the group's members, as is the LTTE's cult of slain heroes. Bloom and others have argued that the dedication of an LTTE cadre to its supreme leader Velupillai Prabhakaran “is no less than a member of Al Qaeda to the Global Salafi Jihad.”⁶⁴ Bloom has also noted a similar trend among the members of the Marxist PKK, who obsessively venerate its leadership, Abdullah Ocalan.⁶⁵ The important conclusion to make with respect to purportedly secular groups is that they too construct martyrdom cults that are essential to their suicide operations, even if their goals are secular or nationalist.

Finally, there is evidence that religion may also be extremely useful to group efforts to recruit, retrain and select personnel for missions. Religion provides recruits with forms of motivations and rewards that will always exceed secular punishments or opportunities and religion provides a solid basis for the formation of fictive kinship among activists.⁶⁶ For all of these reasons, scholars have challenged Pape's efforts to downplay the role of religion in the perpetration of suicide missions. Bloom succinctly summarizes this problem: "While it is a mistake to assume that only religious groups use suicide terror, it is equally faulty to view suicide terror as devoid of any religious content."⁶⁷

There are other benefits that groups derive from using suicide attacks. For instance, suicide attacks create support among outside audiences and generate sympathy for their cause. Outside audiences presume that because attackers seemed to have no recourse other than taking their own life, they must have been subjected to excessive, sustained and inhumane treatment. The notion that suicide attackers act out of desperation is often shared among some segments of the target population. Some groups explicitly anticipate that the target state will brutally retaliate in the wake of a suicide attack. By provoking such an attack, popular sentiment turns even further against the state and rebounds to the suicide group's advantage.⁶⁸ This observation is also likely to be relevant to Afghanistan. Anti-government elements often seek to provoke Afghan security forces or the international military to over-react, in hopes of turning the local population against national and international forces and deflecting criticism of the militants.

Suicide attacks also help groups accrue new recruits, obtain financial and logistical support to carry out fresh attacks, and maintain group morale. The willingness of a group member to die for the cause renews the belief, within and outside the organization, of the group's moral superiority and dedication to the cause and to their constituents. The willingness of the attacker to die demonstrates, both within and without the group, the moral superiority of the group over the adversary and advances the belief that victory is inevitable in some future time frame.⁶⁹ Perversely, for all of these reasons, suicide attacks confer particular credibility to the group and advance the group's public

relations agenda.⁷⁰ This prompts groups to engage in a bloody competition to broaden their political base among the population, while narrowing that of rival organizations.⁷¹

This is why, for example, multiple groups claim responsibility for a particularly “successful attack” and this has prompted groups to introduce the videotaped attacker’s “will”. Once the attacker identifies his group, other groups cannot claim the credit. Unfortunately when suicide groups compete, an ever escalating spiral of violence can result. So far in Afghanistan, there is little evidence that different anti-government factions are competing with each other in this way. However, this situation merits very close monitoring.

Enabling environments

The third analytical level considers environmental and situational factors, including political, historical, cultural, religious and economic circumstances, that condition the genesis of suicide terrorism in a given society.⁷² While the act itself is commissioned by individuals who are members of groups or cells, both individuals and groups are influenced by these broader environmental characteristics. Clearly some of these environmental concerns are more relevant than others when explaining particular manifestations of suicide attacks. For example, religion may be of greater importance for Islamist militant groups’ use of suicide missions than it is for the more staunchly secular groups. This review of current literature on the subject concentrates on those factors which may be most salient for Afghanistan.

As noted, extant scholarship demonstrates that there are very weak linkages between suicide attacks and poverty.⁷³ However, poverty may have indirect effects. Poor countries, which often tend to be weak states as well, are more likely to be exploited as safe havens for terrorist and militant groups as evidenced by Afghanistan under the Taliban. Poor countries are also more likely to be affected by ethnic and religious conflict, which in turn may foster the genesis of domestic terrorism and may even attract foreign elements seeking to exploit this unrest for their own purposes. As noted above, poverty may also assist militant groups’ leadership, who are often more affluent than

their cadres in their recruitment efforts, in that recruiters can exploit the grievances of the economically underprivileged.⁷⁴

Political factors may also have, at best, an indirect effect upon the genesis of suicide attacks. As we discuss below in greater detail, while a country or region under occupation (or perceived occupation) may be more likely to produce suicide attacks than a sovereign or independent state, as Pape noted, not all societies experiencing an external military presence in fact produce suicide attacks (e.g. Tibetans, Kosovars, Cambodians). Similarly, governments with oppressive policies may also encourage the commencement of suicide attacks within their borders, but not all repressive regimes produce suicide attacks.⁷⁵

As suggested throughout this report, public support enjoyed by suicide attackers and their groups comprises another important environmental consideration, related to domestic politics. Popular support is likely to vary depending upon who the groups target (e.g. civilians, military personnel and bases, infrastructure, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, etc.) and the perceived legitimacy of attacking those targets. Notably in Palestine and Afghanistan, survey data show that even publics which once completely eschewed suicide attacks condemn it less over time or, in the case of Palestine, eventually find such attacks acceptable.⁷⁶

Strategies and counter-terror policies pursued by the target state may precipitate shifts in public opinion about the legitimacy of suicide attacks. In the case of Palestinian support for suicide attacks, the Palestinian public seemed to embrace the tactic, even against civilians, in response to Israel's policy of "targeted assassination" through the use of helicopter gun-ships, which often exacted significant civilian loss of life. As Bloom suggests, Israeli disregard for civilian loss of life signalled to Palestinians that civilians are "fair game." The use of airpower is particularly problematic because it conveys a sense of security to the state by allowing it to attack from safe heights while creating victims within the population who encounter it on the ground. In contrast, suicide attacks on civilians re-introduce what Mia Bloom calls "the intimacy of violence," which may in some measure account for the support it enjoys following state use of air power against militants. The use of air assets has had similar effects in other theatres as well. In Chechnya the use of airpower (helicopter gun ships and aerial bombardment) in the

second Chechen war coincided with a rise in popular support for suicide terrorism, just as it did in the second Intifada in Palestine.⁷⁷ These data proffer a cautionary tale for Afghanistan, where civilian casualties from the use of international airpower remain a pressing concern for the Afghan government and a wide array of human rights organizations.⁷⁸

Where do suicide attacks occur: does democracy and occupation matter?

Many scholars have sought to refine Pape's assertion that suicide groups target democracies and some of these studies are important for the Afghanistan theatre. While scholars generally agree that attacks contained in Pape's dataset support his claim that the majority of suicide attacks have occurred in the context of liberation struggles to expel an occupying force, in more recent years Islamist militant groups are increasingly using suicide attacks against pro-Western moderate Muslim regimes in hopes of replacing them with more extremist Islamist governments. In some cases, Muslim states are targeted by Islamist militants because they actively cooperate militarily with Western powers and with the United States in particular. Saudi Arabia has experienced numerous suicide assaults by al Qaeda operatives, nearly all of which were in protest against Saudi Arabia's policy of economically and militarily working with Western states.⁷⁹

Wade and Reiter, using a database that is more comprehensive than that of Pape, found that type of government *per se* has little (statistically significant) correlation with the occurrence of suicide attacks when the country in question has no religiously distinct minorities at risk. (Examples of a minority at risk include Hindus in predominantly Buddhist Sri Lanka, Muslims or Sikhs in predominantly Hindu India, Ahmediyas or Shia in predominantly Sunni Pakistan.) They did find a very weak correlation between regime type, numbers of distinct minorities at risk and the probability of suicide attacks. For autocratic states, the probability of experiencing such attacks diminishes as the numbers of distinct minorities at risk increase. This is probably because autocratic states are willing to mobilize increasing coercive powers against such minorities as they become more numerous and therefore more destabilizing to the core interests of the state. For partly free states, more so than fully free states, the likelihood of experiencing suicide

attacks increased dramatically with the number of distinct minorities at risk. This differs somewhat from Pape's thesis that democracies writ large are more prone to terrorism than non-democracies.⁸⁰

This discussion has import for Afghanistan in several respects. In Afghanistan, there is an active international military presence which some Afghans see as unwelcome and even view explicitly as occupation.⁸¹ Pape's work demonstrates the importance of occupation among other factors in the genesis of suicide attacks in particular. These forces comprise high-value targets for the anti-government elements. It is tempting to conclude that withdrawal of these forces may precipitate a diminished incidence of suicide attacks. However, the literature cited above argues against such a choice. Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai accords with their description of a targeted moderate Muslim leader. Indeed, attempts to assassinate him as well as attacks against the Afghan Government and its civilian and military institutions underscore this view. Even if international troops withdraw or decrease in number, anti-government elements are likely to focus their efforts even more on Afghan Government targets. The simple removal of the "foreign presence" alone may be inadequate to mitigate the incidence of suicide attacks.

According to our analysis Afghanistan is considered to be a "partly free state"⁸² and has several identifiable ethnic groups, including Hazaras, Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Pashtuns.⁸³ It is this latter group, the Pashtuns, who populate the ranks of the Taliban and other anti-government elements.⁸⁴ This comports with Wade and Reiter's findings that partly free states with larger numbers of distinct at risk minorities have a higher likelihood of experiencing suicide attacks than fully free or even autocratic states. They also found that Muslim states, compared to non-Muslim states, are much more likely to be targeted by suicide attacks. Autocratic Muslim states in particular are much more likely to be so targeted than either free or partly free Muslim states. This finding suggests that democratization may be a strategy for stemming suicide attacks in Muslim countries.⁸⁵ Given these findings, perhaps the best path towards mitigation of suicide attacks is expanded democratic structures.

Finally, Wade and Reiter found that one of the factors most ably to predict whether or not a suicide attack will take place in a country is whether or not the country

has experienced them in the past. This suggests a possible contagion effect for suicide attacks in a given country; it also stresses the importance of proactive measures to keep a country free of suicide attacks.⁸⁶ This finding too is of significant import for Afghanistan, as it may presage suicide attacks for some time to come unless the underlying causes are effectively and comprehensively redressed. For countries that are at risk, this finding suggests that preventative efforts are richly warranted.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this chapter makes it clear that there is no single explanation for the genesis of suicide attacks in a conflict zone. This reality should compel states and their allies in civil society to embrace complex policy and remedies in pursuit of a solution to suicide attacks and seek mitigation efforts that work at all three levels of causality: individual, group and society. However, it must be said that there is little evidence that popular support for suicide missions can diminish without the realization *in some measure* of improvements that either meet or render irrelevant the basic goals of the suicide groups and their supporting communities.⁸⁷

This demands urgent appreciation of the motivations and dynamics of the three noted levels of causality, active efforts to permit and to encourage more desirable substitute behaviour (i.e. political participation), and innovation of new policies that discourage suicide attacks. The latter is likely to involve difficult policy decisions that satisfy in some measure the demands of anti-government elements, or find creative ways of satisfying the demands of their community which diminish its support for suicide missions.

3. Suicide attacks in Afghanistan: analysis of incident data

Despite the fact that Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict for over 30 years, suicide attacks came to prominence only in mid-2005. The Afghan mujahidin commanders never used suicide attacks against the Soviet forces, nor did the Taliban and the Northern Alliance use it against each other. In fact, the first suicide attack occurred on 9 September, 2001 when Al Qaeda suicide operatives, posing as journalists, assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud. According to data collected by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Afghanistan, there were no suicide attacks in 2002 and then two and three respectively in 2003 and 2004. Unexpectedly, the incidents of suicide attacks escalated throughout 2005, ending with seventeen attacks for the year.

In 2006, there were 123 actual attacks and as of 30 June, 2007, there were 77 attacks. Anti-government elements have embraced suicide missions as a part of their repertoire of violence in Afghanistan, as evidenced by the fact that suicide attacks are now weekly events. While many observers have suggested that suicide attacks in Afghanistan derive from or are abetted by the practice of suicide attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan has not seen the onset of sectarian suicide attacks that are pervasive, as in the case of Iraq, and even Pakistan, despite having an important Shi'a minority that comprises between 10 and 15 percent of Afghanistan's population.⁸⁸

Analysts and the media have puzzled over the sudden rise of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Afghans quickly claimed that suicide attacks are not "consistent with Afghan culture" and foreigners were blamed initially for these attacks. However, the expansion of suicide assaults has compelled analysts to believe that while the practice may have begun as an imported tactic, the suicide mission has become an integral part of the Taliban's strategy, using locally recruited attackers as well as those from outside the country.

The chapter analyzes suicide event statistics on both actual and suspected suicide attacks to exposit trends and to develop projections for future use of the tactic in Afghanistan. Because this chapter utilizes data collected by UNDSS, it first describes the definitions and methodology employed by UNDSS. It next provides an overview of suicide attacks in 2007. This chapter also presents UNDSS analyses of the timeline and

frequency of events, targeting trends and victims, as well as an overview of suicide attack techniques in Afghanistan. It details findings from UNDSS analyses of geographical occurrence of suicide attacks and discusses UN involvement in these attacks. It concludes with a summary of main conclusions and projections.

Definitions and Methodology

UNDSS tracks the occurrence of suicide attacks closely because it is a very important and adverse development that impinges upon efforts both of the international community to stabilize Afghanistan, and of the Afghan government to provide security for its citizens. Thus, suicide attacks comprise an important indicator of the changing nature of insecurity in the country and they have impacts upon the UN family and donors and their ability to execute their missions in the country. Tracking these events is a core part of the mission of UNDSS, since the chances of direct or collateral injury or damage to the UN increase as suicide attacks become more prominent. For these reasons, UNDSS has compiled and maintains a database of suicide events in Afghanistan that it updates when new, or amended, information is received. For example, casualty figures are updated as more accurate information is received or when injured persons succumb to their wounds.

In contrast to this approach, the various print, broadcast and electronic media all report suicide attacks sometimes mere minutes after incidents, often providing details and casualty figures based on first reports. These local accounts of events are often recorded in public and private databases without adequate verification. Initial media reports of the same event may not be updated later. The same is true of targets where subsequent information indicates that the initial report may have been incorrect, and another entity now appears to have been the actual target. For these reasons, UNDSS data may differ from that stored in databases derived from popular accounts (e.g. The MIPT Knowledge Base, the International Institute for Counterterrorism, START Global Terrorism Database, etc).

Given the differences between UNDSS data and other familiar databases, exposition of how suicide events are classified or defined for the purposes of this chapter is in order. As described above, a suicide event is one in which the attacker has no expectation of survival. Attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) during which

the attacker does not intend to die are excluded from this assessment. Similarly, it does not consider as a suicide case an instance where the attacker, while setting up or preparing a normal IED, is killed through negligence or other factors. However, cases where a attacker is killed while preparing what is clearly a suicide bomb (i.e. vehicle-borne IED (VBIED), body borne IED (BBIED), or motor-cycled conveyed vehicle-borne IED (VBIED [MC]), are counted as suicide events. Also counted are cases where a suicide device, according to the same criteria, is found before detonation. These events are included in the UNDSS-Afghanistan database, because the device would have been used imminently in a suicide attack. Simply finding a cache of explosives is not enough to include the event in the database; the test of intent to commit one's life to the attack is required. Suicide events are therefore either actual or failed attacks or clearly identifiable as potential events.

Overview of suicide attacks for 2007

According to the above criteria, there were 77 attacks between 1 January and 30 June 2007, and 34 other potential suicide attacks. Although these have occurred in all but the Central Highlands Region (CHR⁸⁹) and the Northern Region (NR⁹⁰), the focus has remained on the Southern Region (SR⁹¹), the South-Eastern Region (SER⁹²) and the Central Region (CR⁹³). Notably, the UN considers both the CHR and the NR to be low risk/permissive environments for its program delivery, while most provinces in the SR are considered to be extreme risk/hostile environments. Most provinces within SER are also considered to be high risk/volatile environments. In the CR, there is considerable variation across provinces and areas within provinces that range from low risk to high risk areas.

In 2007, attacks in the Eastern Region (ER⁹⁴), which only experienced two attacks throughout 2006, now equal those in the Western Region (WR⁹⁵), with seven attacks to date. The WR retains and shares its position as the fourth in terms of prevalence of suicide attacks. The UN considers most provinces of the ER to be extreme risk or high risk areas whereas provinces within the WR are judged to be mostly low risk or medium risk areas.

Figure 1 : All Suicide Attacks 2005 – 2007 (30 June)

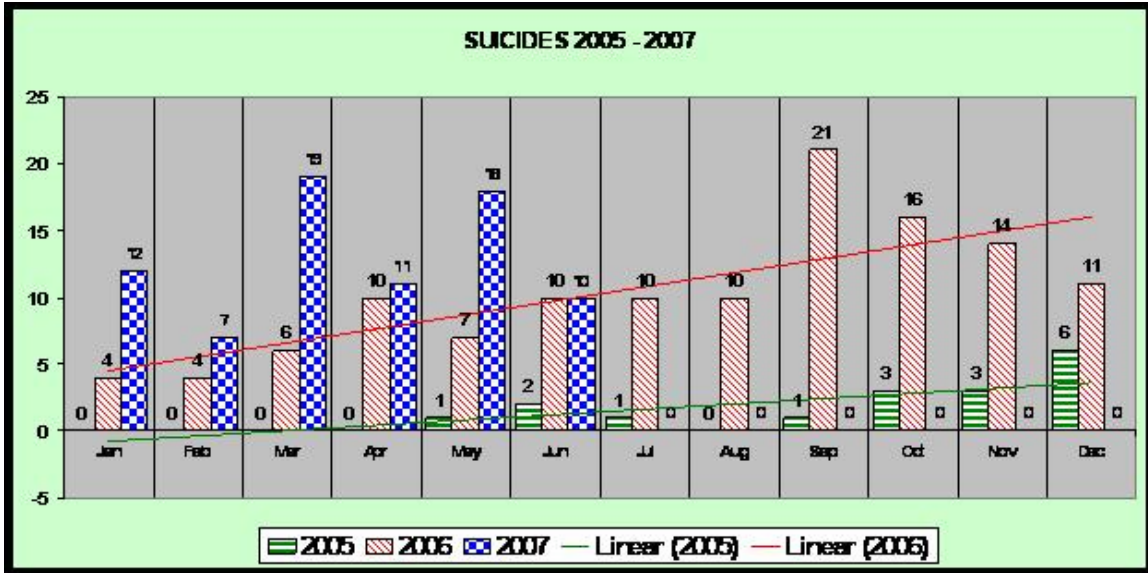
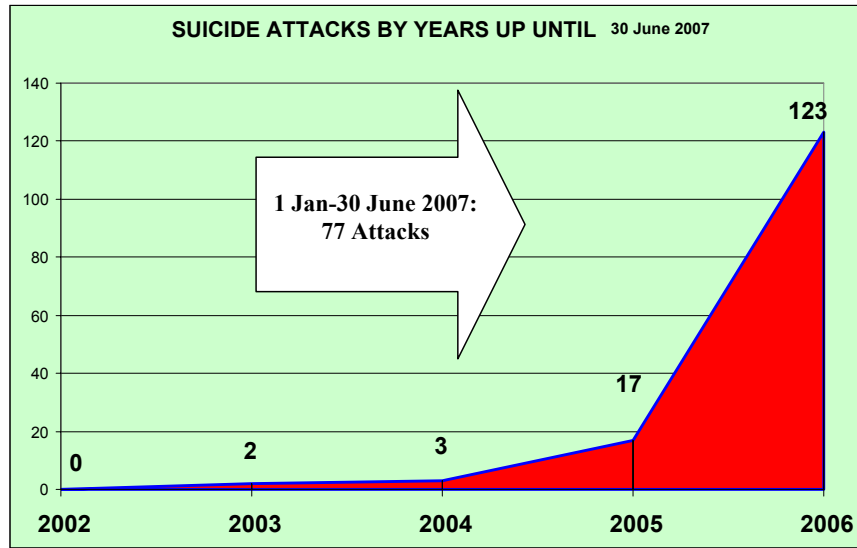


Figure 1 demonstrates the continuous rise in suicide events peaking in September 2006 with 21 attacks for the month. March and May of 2007 closely rival September 2006 for the position of the worst month ever, and it is important to note that while only one potential attack was thwarted in September 2006, a total of ten attackers or devices were seized or pre-detonated during March and May 2007. This does not include the preparations interrupted during the preceding months, which may have had an effect on attacks in subsequent months. It is equally important to note that all months in 2007 have seen higher or equal numbers of events than in 2006. While previous years saw lower than average numbers of events over the winter months, this was not always the case in 2007, when the data suggest a sustained attack campaign.

Attacks during 2007 primarily focused on main roads and urban areas similar to previous years, with the difference that the relative number of VBIED attacks against international military forces on main roads dropped as the use of BBIED tactics became more popular. While attacks against government and civilian targets remained constant, the ANA and ANP have been targeted more frequently than the international military forces.⁹⁶ Targeting is discussed later in this chapter.

Figure 2: Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2002-2007)



Timeline and Frequency of Suicide Events

The increase in suicide attacks in 2007 overshadows the rise observed in 2006. However in 2007, there has not been a steady, linear growth; rather a pattern of highs and lows as evidenced in Figure 1. The uneven nature of its increase may be attributable to the success of security forces in interdicting attacks. Since January 1, 2007, 36 attackers have been neutralized and 34 devices seized, which is an enormous increase over the same period in 2006. These arrests are likely to have had disruptive effects upon insurgent operational planning. Notwithstanding these successes, the overall figures as of 30 June, 2007, are still nearly twice those of the comparable period in 2006, and twenty-six times greater than the period January to June 2005.

UNDSS explored a number of hypotheses about the timing of events, including “memorial days,” particular days of the week and time of day. UNDSS has found no discernable connection between attacks and special days. This was also true in 2006, with the exception of an attack at Massoud Square in Kabul the day before the 9 September Massoud Memorial Day celebrations. It is possible that the attack was planned for the previous day, as security around the square on the Memorial Day itself would have been too tight. Heightened security in all main centres prior to celebrations probably explains the absence of attacks on other special days. Similarly, an examination by UNDSS of

days during which attacks occurred in 2007, found that suicide attackers tend not to favour particular days.

In 2006, UNDSS found that attacks tended to occur somewhat more often on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays tailing off towards the weekend. The most active days for suicide events also differ by region. Currently (and similar to 2006), the three main suicide target provinces and cities are Kandahar, Kabul and Khost. The first two experience most attacks on Mondays while Khost has only experienced one attack on a Monday and six on a Tuesday. Only Kandahar follows the 2006 pattern of high numbers at the start of the week followed by a decline towards the weekend although all three do indicate higher numbers at the start of the week. UNDSS cannot confirm the precise reason for this ostensible pattern, but it is possible that the attackers use Fridays for spiritual preparation, Saturdays and Sundays for logistic preparation, and execute their attacks over the next few days.

Analysis by UNDSS of the time of day when attacks occurred produced more robust findings than analyses of the days during which attacks occurred.⁹⁷ While the preferred timing differs from region to region, across all cases in 2007, 68 percent of attacks take place before 13:30. (In 2006, 77 percent of attacks took place before 13:30.)⁹⁸ In Kandahar, 56 percent take place before 13:30 (compared to 65 percent in 2006), and in Khost 88 percent are so timed (compared to 83 percent in 2006). In Kabul, 90 percent occurred before 13:30 compared to 82 percent in 2006.

The time required for logistic preparation for suicide attacks appears to have decreased since 2005 and attacks now occur with no discernable preparation breaks. In 2005 it was possible to identify “clusters” or groups of suicide events separated from the previous “cluster” by approximately one month. UNDSS surmised that the period between “clusters” represented the time required to conduct reconnaissance of targets, plan, train, and conduct other logistic activities in preparation for the next “cluster.” By 2006, UNDSS could not identify “clusters” and the average gap between attacks contracted to ten days.

Throughout 2007, it has become increasingly evident that there are sufficient suicide cells in the country for these activities to run concurrently. Events now occur at a frequency of three per week with no discernable breaks between incidents.

This increase in frequency of suicide attacks may suggest that more attackers and explosive materials are readily available, that reconnaissance and planning takes place continuously and concurrently, or that a series of attacks are planned where local coordinators have discretion within a “mission command” concept to execute attacks when ready. The increasing tempo of suicide attacks indicates not only improved experience and logistic capability to execute attacks, but also that this form of attack is considered legitimate and useful to the overall insurgent strategy in Afghanistan, notwithstanding a very low kill ratio.

UNDSS has found no evidence to suggest that anti-government elements plan and coordinate suicide attacks regionally.⁹⁹ UNDSS believes that the anti-government elements seek to use suicide attacks to achieve maximum dislocation of government and security forces by striking at multiple centres regularly and seemingly at random. The frequency indicates that, if sustained, suicide attacks can be expected at a rate of three per week, and may climb to four per week by the end of 2007.

The worst seven-day period on record is 13 to 19 March 2007, when there were ten suicide attacks. The high incidence of attacks in the SR and SER (46 to date in these two regions alone) indicates that suicide missions are still largely orchestrated and resourced in the traditional Taliban area of influence. While attacks country-wide will continue to rise, it is likely that the focus will remain in the SR, SER and CR for the foreseeable future, with an increase in the ER.

Targeting and Victims

Thus far in 2007, anti-government elements have primarily used suicide missions against international and Afghan military as well as Afghan police, which was also true of 2006. Many attacks were also carried out on softer targets such as government leaders, politicians, government workers and community leaders, especially during April and May 2007. However, the incidence of attacks on these targets remains stable since 2006, comprising a quarter of all attacks. What has changed is the targeting focus on international military and Afghan police and military forces. Attacks on international targets have *declined* from 51 percent of all attacks in 2006 to 43 percent in 2007 while

attacks on Afghan security forces *increased* to nearly 33 percent of all attacks in 2007, from 25 percent in 2006.

This is likely to have occurred because Afghan security forces are considerably softer targets in that they are lightly armoured, easier to approach and are often more remotely deployed. Indeed, “victim yields” (defined by the number of victims per number of attackers) for attacks against Afghan forces are considerably higher than victim yields for attacks against international military targets. Insurgents’ increased reliance upon targeting Afghan security forces may be due in part because such attacks have larger victim yields. Alternatively, increased targeting of Afghan forces may reflect changing insurgent preferences towards Afghan targets for political reasons. UNDSS data cannot discern which explanation is more defensible and both explanations may be valid in some measure. Figure 3 indicates the number of attacks against the various main target groups. (Note that successful attacks are those where a device has been detonated on or near a target).

Figure 3: Successful Suicide Attacks by Target: To 30 June 2007¹⁰⁰

Target (2007)	Attacks	%	Target (2006)	Attacks	%
International Military	31	43%	International Military	59	51%
Government, Political and Civilian	17	24%	Government, Political and Civilian	27	23%
ANA/ANP	24	33%	ANA/ANP	29	25%
Total	72	100%	Total	115	100%
Successful vs. Unsuccessful			Successful vs. Unsuccessful		
Successful Attacks	72	94%	Successful Attacks	115	93%
Pre-detonation or Discovered	5	6%	Pre-detonation or Discovered	8	7%
Total	77	100%	Total	123	100%

Among the various foreign military targets, insurgents do not evince a preference for attacking either Coalition Forces (CF) or ISAF. Given that the difference between these foreign military elements is often unclear to foreign and domestic non-military

observers, this distinction may certainly elude the often poorly trained and illiterate insurgents. Similarly, other UNDSS analyses find that the number of attacks against Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) indicates that there is no distinction on the part of the perpetrators between fighting forces and those whose aim is reconstruction and development.

The second largest target group is the Afghan military and police forces, which comprise 33 percent of all attacks. This figure is somewhat higher than that for government leaders, politicians and civilians, who in combination account for 24 percent of all attacks. These data suggest that suicide attackers consider Afghan targets (a total of 57 percent) of equal, or slightly higher, importance to international military targets. This 'market share' climbed by a full 10 percent on the 2006 numbers. This apparent focus upon Afghan targets is likely to be due to political reasons, as well as to the above-noted relative difficulty in hitting harder international targets. In total, 76 percent of all suicide missions target international and Afghan military as well police forces, and the remaining 24 percent are against softer governance and civilian targets.

Whereas during 2006 and 2007, use of normal IEDs (non-suicide) had no discernable geographical concentration, suicide attacks have been mostly executed in, and immediately adjacent to, urban environments along main routes and at prominent facilities. Target locations include city streets and highways near urban areas, main city access routes, entrances to military bases and government buildings, markets, rallies and parades etc.

Most attacks have been highly visible, with numerous bystanders, and have been immediately covered by national and international media. As was the case in 2006, many attacks are selected for maximum media exposure, and in some cases it can be assumed that maximum casualties were also the aim. Examples of prominent attacks in 2007 include:

- 23 January: BBIED attack on civilian daily workers outside a CF base in Khost
10 killed and 40 injured
- 27 February: BBIED attack at the entrance to Bagram air force base¹⁰¹
21 killed and 24 injured
- 14 April: BBIED attack at the entrance to the ABP headquarters in Khost
8 killed and 10 injured

- 16 April: BBIED attack at an ANP parade in Kunduz
10 police killed and 20 injured
- 17 June: BBIED attack on an ANP bus in Kabul¹⁰²
24 killed and 35 injured

These attacks indicate a degree of boldness in the choice of target, in that the chances of penetration were slim. All of the above employed BBIED devices and produced high casualty figures.

Irrespective of the insurgents' intended targets, the victims of the suicide attacks have been largely civilian bystanders; compared to suicide campaigns in Iraq, civilian casualties are low. Between 1 January and 30 June 2007, suicide attacks have caused 193 deaths, including 121 civilians, 10 international military and 62 ANA/ANP. During the same period in 2006, there were 76 deaths including 57, 2 and 17 civilian, international military and ANA/ANP deaths respectively. This represents a 254 percent increase between 2006 and 2007 for the same period.¹⁰³ (Summarised statistics for both years up to 30 June are presented in Figure 4 below.) Moreover, UNDSS analyses of target-specific victim yields finds that suicide attacks affect Afghans more than foreigners.¹⁰⁴ (Victim yields for various targets and types of attacks are depicted in Figure 5).

Figure 4: Casualty Statistics for Suicide Attacks 2006-2007

Target	Dead (2007 to 30 June)				Dead (2006 to 30 June)			
	Civ	IntMil	ANSF	Total	Civ	IntMil	ANSF	Total
International Military	65	10	2	77	13	1	0	14
Government Political Civilian	27	0	3	30	39	0	0	39
ANA/ANP (ANSF)	24	0	56	80	5	1	17	23
Predet/Discovered	5	0	1	6	0	0	0	0
Total	121	10	62	193	57	2	17	76

Analyses of the victim yield statistics for the entire year of 2006 find little difference between the ratios and victim yield for 2006 and 2007, suggesting little sustained innovation and concomitant refinement in technique. This contradicts numerous media and private assessments that Iraqi expertise is being imported into Afghanistan. If Iraq-derived techniques were coming into Afghanistan, further increases in victim yield would have been expected during the first half of 2007.

In fact in at least one case, the converse is true, i.e. that victim yield has dropped markedly. In 2006 attacks against civilian targets yielded 5.56 victims per attacker while in 2007 this has fallen to a low of 1.76. While victims per attacks against international military forces have climbed from 1.69 in 2006 to the current figure of 2.48, these victims are primarily civilian bystanders and not soldiers. The success rate against international military forces remains extremely poor with ten soldiers killed at the expense of 30 attackers.¹⁰⁵

Attacks against the ANA/ANP achieved a far higher victim yield of 3.33 victims per attack in 2007, while attacks against the softer governance and civilian targets were least effective, with 1.76 victims per attack. This appears to contradict common belief that softer targets are hardest hit. Irrespective of the target, civilians remain the hardest hit, with 121 dying in 2007 alone at the expense of 76 attackers in total.

While the international military remains the greatest target, it suffers by far the least casualties. Conversely, softer governance and civilian targets suffer the highest casualties but are only targets in 24 percent of the incidents. While Afghans as a whole may not have been the primary target in 2007, they still constituted 183 deaths in the first six months of the year. Taliban propaganda continues to communicate that the “US” and the “foreign invaders” are their primary target, but these claims are not supported by the data.

Figure 5: Victim Yield for Suicide Attacks all 2006 and 2007 until 30 June

Victim Yield (* Successful in last three rows implies attacks with victims, and not simply detonation)					
2007 to 30 June					
Ratio Attackers vs. Victims	Incidents	Attacker	Total Victims	Attacker/Victim Ratio	Victim Event
All Events	77	76	193	1:3	2.51
All Attacks (less pre-det & disc)	72	72	193	1:3	2.68
Attackers vs. CF/ISAF	31	30	77	1:3	2.48
Attackers vs. ANA/ANP	24	25	80	1:3	3.33
Attackers vs. Govt/Pol/Civ Targets	17	17	30	1:2	1.76
Attackers vs. Civilians (all events)	77	76	121	1:2	1.57
Attackers vs. Afghans (all events)	77	76	183	1:2	2.38
Pre-detonation & Discovered	5	4	6	1:2	1.20
* Successful BBIED attacks	20	21	119	1:6	5.95
* Successful VBIED attacks	19	19	74	1:4	3.89
* All successful attacks	39	40	193	1:5	4.95
Victim Yield (* Successful in last three rows implies attacks with victims, and not simply detonation)					
All of 2006					
Ratio Attackers vs. Victims	Incidents	Attacker	Total Victims	Attacker/Victim Ratio	Victim/Event
All Events	123	126	305	1:2	2.48
All Attacks (less pre-det & disc)	115	118	305	1:3	2.65
Attackers vs. CF/ISAF	59	61	100	1:2	1.69
Attackers vs. ANA/ANP	29	29	47	1:2	1.62
Attackers vs. Govt/Pol/Civ Targets	27	28	150	1:5	5.56
Attackers vs. Civilians (all events)	123	126	237	1:2	1.93
Attackers vs. Afghans (all events)	123	126	289	1:2	2.35
Pre-detonation & Discovered	8	8	8	1:1	1.00
* Successful BBIED attacks	28	28	169	1:6	6.04
* Successful VBIED attacks	33	34	136	1:4	4.12
* All successful attacks	61	62	305	1:5	5.00

Trends in suicide attack techniques

During 2007, insurgents continued to use both body-borne (BBIED) and vehicle-borne (VBIED) techniques to execute suicide attacks. Since September 2006, insurgents have increasingly relied upon the former, perhaps because statistically BBIED attacks are more lethal.¹⁰⁶ BBIEDs achieved 6.04 victims per attack, while VBIEDs achieved 4.12 in 2006, and the equivalent figures for 2007 are 5.95 and 3.89 respectively. Before analyzing trends in the utilization of BBIEDs and VBIEDs, a brief discussion of those techniques is in order.

BBIED suicide attacks are the most difficult to identify in advance and therefore present the most difficulties for authorities in taking evasive or mitigating action. In the case of the BBIED, the explosive material is strapped to the body of the attacker, usually in a type of specially adapted vest. The effect of the explosion can be enhanced with shrapnel if desired. The nature of traditional Afghan dress allows easy camouflage of a suicide vest and although there are no cases positively identified in Afghanistan yet, it would be easy for a woman attacker to hide the explosive material on her person underneath the capacious Afghan burqa.

Initiation of the device is usually on command, by means of an electrical switch (i.e. a simple battery-powered switch sending current to an electric detonator). This is effected by pulling a tab, chord or ring of a mechanical device, or by means of an electronic pulse. This could be transmitted by a simple radio frequency remote control, such as a mobile phone or similar device. UNDSS has evidence that suggests that some suicide attacks are initiated remotely by someone other than the assailant (i.e. by remote control when the attacker is in place).

Remote detonation has a number of advantages. First, it reduces mistakes caused by attacker stress, such as premature detonation, and prevents the attacker from aborting the mission. Second, it can be used to detonate persons or, in the case of VBIEDS, drivers of vehicles unwittingly carrying parcels of explosives. Third, it can also be used to detonate persons who have been coerced into carrying the device as a result of threats to their family members, and who may lack the necessary resolve to detonate at the right time or at all.

The VBIED, as the name suggests, requires a vehicle (car, taxi, truck, cart etc) packed with the explosive. There are several ways of detonating the VBIED. An attacker inside the vehicle may detonate it on command (i.e. by using a switch on the dashboard, steering wheel or wired into the horn) or another person may do so remotely. Alternatively, the bomb may detonate on contact with the target. There have been a number of incidents where the suicide vehicle has rammed the target (specifically in the SR) and then detonated. It is not always clear whether the resultant explosion has been automatically initiated or on command.

There are also cases where a vehicle borne suicide device has detonated close to (but not touching) target vehicles, which implies that command devices are also used. On 14 November 2005 in Kabul, a bomb vehicle was first used to ram a target vehicle, forcing it to stop. When the occupants disembarked to investigate what appeared to be a traffic accident, the bomb was detonated on command.

In general there are two variations on VBIED suicide attack techniques. One is mobile, during which the vehicle carrying the bomb is mobile and rams or otherwise impedes a target vehicle before detonating. This is difficult to prevent as any vehicle on the road could be a potential suicide attacker. The target vehicle could be static or mobile. Currently most suicide attacks occur on the move, but this is changing as discussed later in this section. The second kind of VBIED is static, when the bomb-carrying vehicle is stationary and detonates when the selected target passes by (i.e. the target is mobile). Although still difficult to detect, a stationary vehicle under certain circumstances may appear suspicious to an observer with local situational awareness.

The type and amount of explosive possible in a VBIED is more varied and greater than a BBIED version. Combinations of military and commercial explosive, military ordnance (i.e. artillery shells etc), home-made explosive and a variety of shrapnel generating agents can be found. Logically, a VBIED suicide attack should, in general be considerably more lethal than a BBIED suicide attack, however lethality often has more to do with targeting and tactics than with mass of explosive. In Afghanistan BBIEDs account for an average of 5.95 victims per successful attack compared to 3.89 for VBIEDs.

Even if the attacker may be the person who ultimately triggers the VBIED or BBIED device, there is increasing evidence that a suicide mission is supported by a team of persons. In addition to the actual attacker, the team may consist of a reconnaissance element preceding the attack, one or more “spotters” used to detect targets and guide the attacker, a command element and/or a person who initiates the device, the bomb maker, other logistics personnel, and the person ordering the attack, who may not necessarily be at the scene among others. There are also indications that secondary devices may be present during attacks. These are not always detonated and are likely emplaced as reserves should the first attempt fail. In some cases the secondary device has been detonated at or near the scene of the first explosion, either to create more confusion and/or to achieve greater success.

Since 2005, there have been many observable trends in the use of BBIEDs and VBIEDs. In 2005, BBIEDs were used nearly as frequently as VBIEDs, but by April 2006, VBIEDs accounted for 75 percent of all suicide missions. By the end of 2006, insurgents began relying less upon the use of VBIEDs, which accounted for only 63 percent of suicide missions. By 30 June 2007, the use of BBIEDs and VBIEDs was again nearly equal, as shown in Figures 6 and 7. It is possible that the remaining months of 2007 will see a crossover to greater reliance on BBIEDs. As of 30 June, 2007 there have been 77 suicide attacks, of which 31 have used VBIEDs (53 percent) and 36 have employed BBIEDs (47 percent).

Figure 6: Suicides by Type 2006

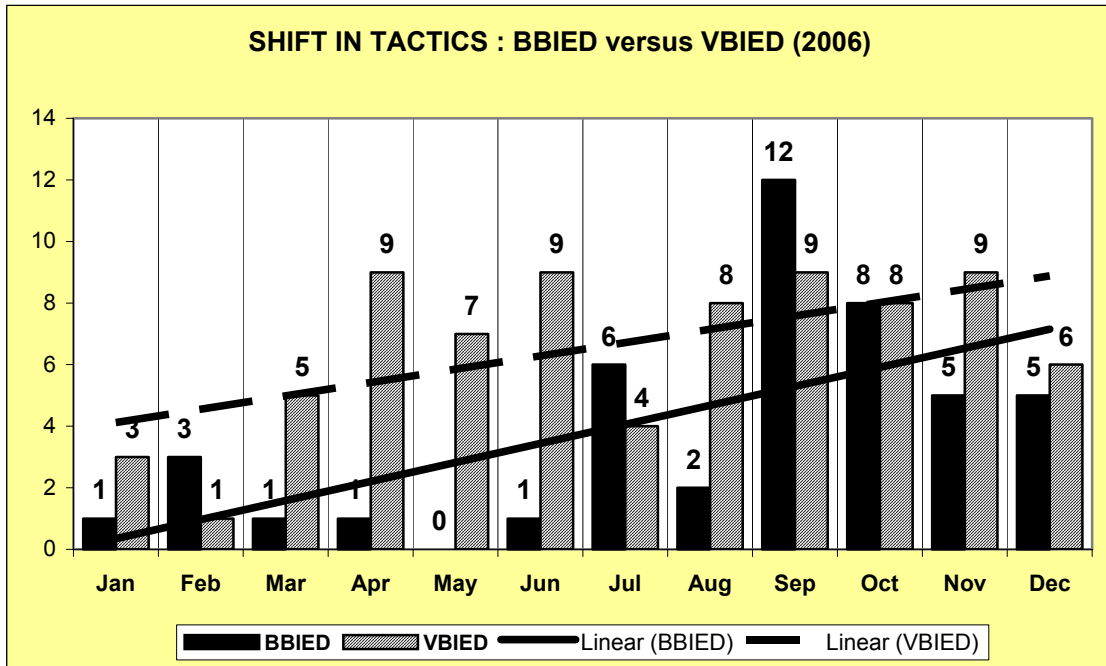
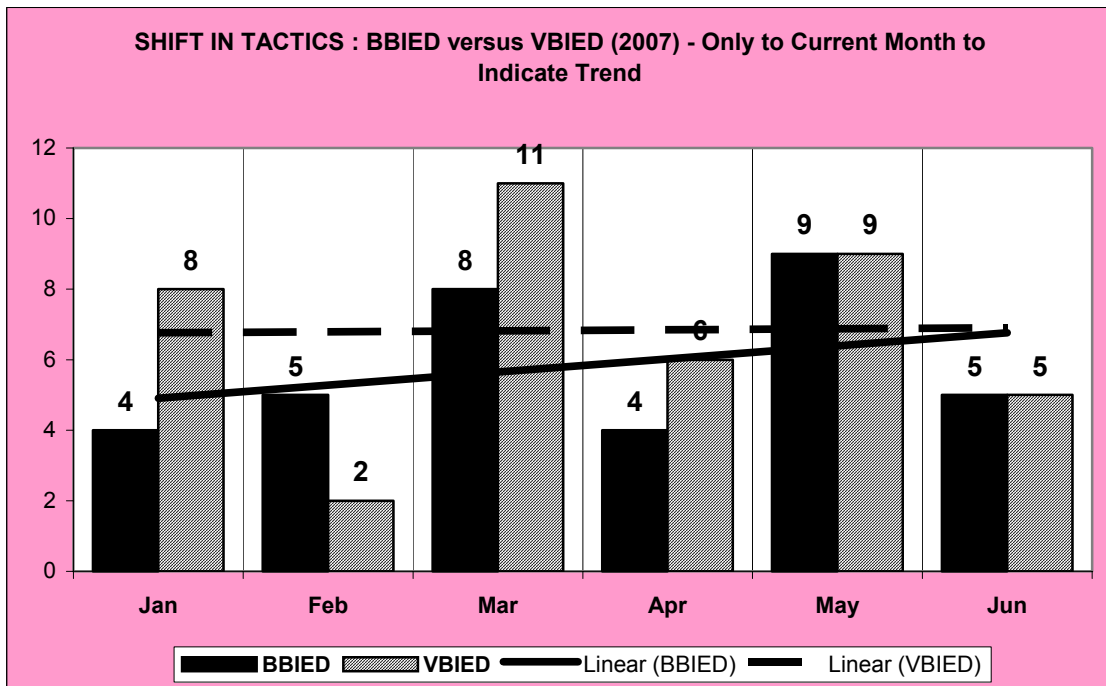


Figure 7: Suicides by Type 2007 (Until 30 June 2007)



Given that VBIEDs are potentially more lethal, at least in part due to the amount of explosives they can carry, why are insurgents increasingly employing BBIEDs? There are probably four possible explanations. First, the vigilance of security forces and the general public has increased, making it more difficult to move around a city or town with a vehicle - especially if the attacker must wait for his target to pass by. This is less of a problem when attacking convoys on routes outside of cities and this is likely to explain why VBIEDs are used most in these environments. Second, insurgents have found that attacking international military forces, even with VBIEDs is unsuccessful when measured by victim yield. Many more civilian bystanders are killed per attack than soldiers and the resultant public backlash is detrimental to the insurgents' cause. Third, VBIEDs are more costly. While both require an assailant and explosive, VBIED devices need a vehicle which is expensive, or if stolen adds greater risk of detection. Finally, targeting may be an important consideration: while BBIEDs are used almost as often as VBIEDs, they are used against different targets.

Currently, insurgents use BBIEDs more often than VBIEDs against international military forces than they did 2006. They use the former even more often to attack Afghan security forces. Since 2006, insurgent use of BBIEDs to assail the Afghan security forces has increased by 16 percent. Now, almost 50 percent of all BBIEDs are used against the Afghan security forces (and primarily the ANP), compared to 36 percent in 2006. Surprisingly, insurgents tend to use BBIEDs less frequently when targeting government, political and civilian targets than they did in 2006. Insurgent use of VBIEDs against these targets has increased by 11 percent since 2006.

Overall, insurgent use of BBIEDs against government, political and civilian targets has declined by one third. Figures 9 and 10 relate to the relative frequency of the use of the two types of devices with each target group. Figure 11 below indicates the share of each target group within all events.

Figures 9 and 10: Types by Target Group – 2006 & 2007

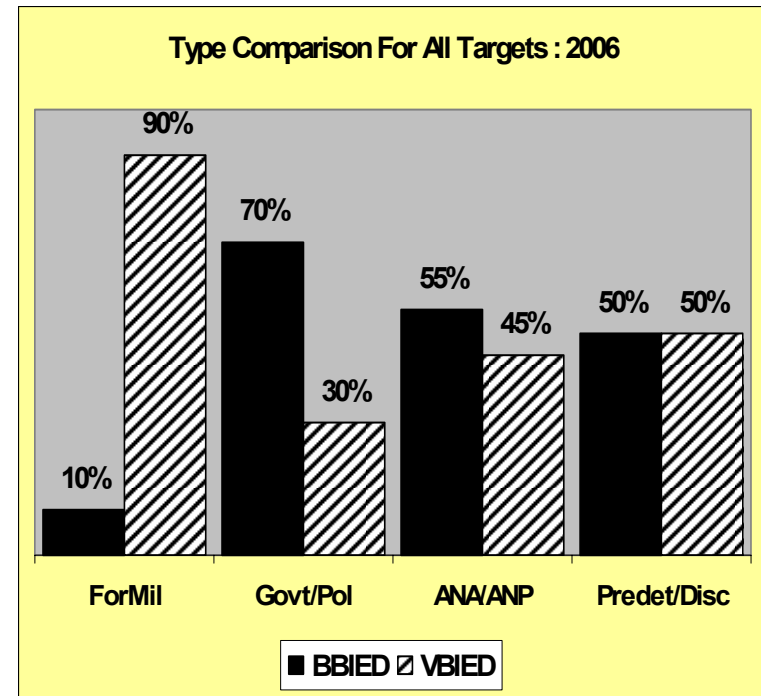
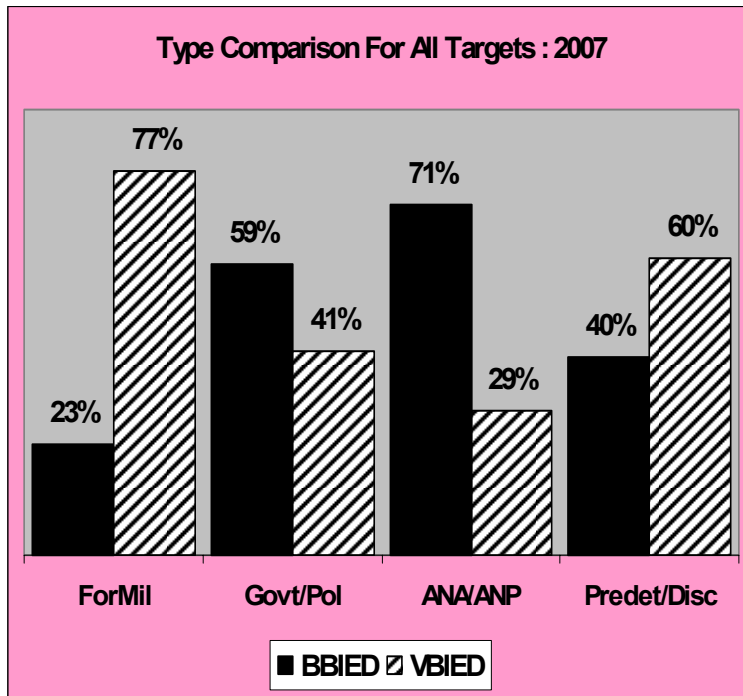
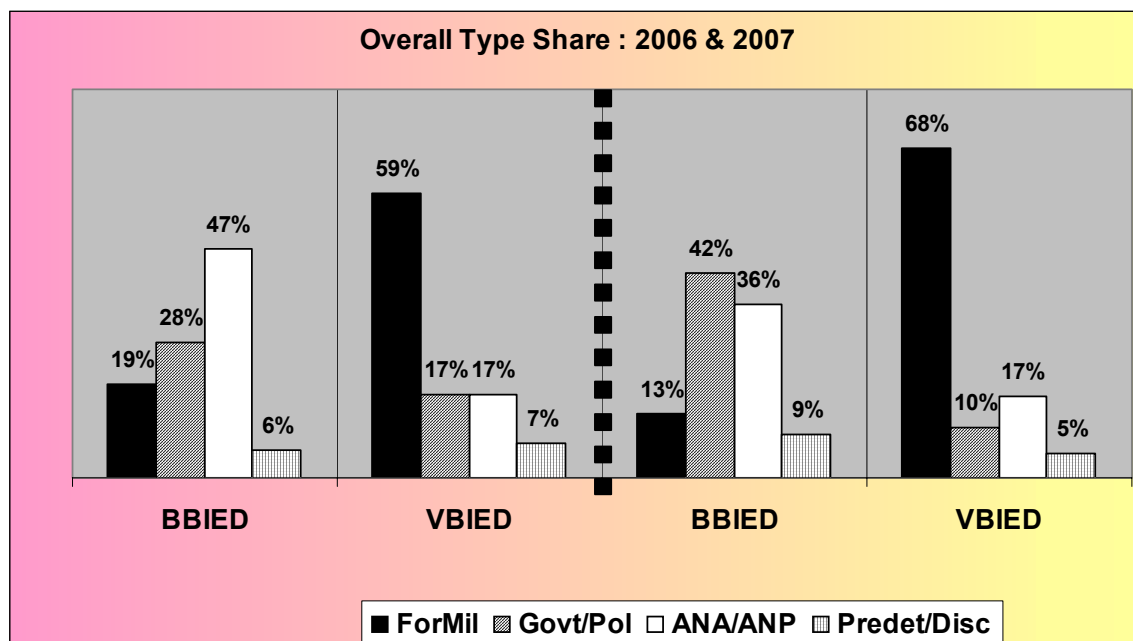


Figure 11: Overall Type Share – 2006 & 2007



Insurgents are likely to be turning to the use of BBIEDs against Afghan security forces (particularly the ANP), and to a lesser extent against the international military, because they are more effective. Conversely there are now relatively fewer BBIED attacks against non-security force targets, due perhaps in part to high civilian casualties in such attacks. It is also possible that the perpetrators have realized that traditional VBIED attacks against the international military do not achieve their desired results either.

This may explain the shift towards targeting Afghan security forces and, as BBIEDs achieve greater results overall, this technique is currently preferred. As the incidence of civilian collateral casualties in attacks against government and political targets is high and therefore counter-productive to overall insurgent aims, they may have decided to target the police and army, who are very accessible. While there may still be collateral damage, these attacks may be less unpopular than attacks against government and political targets. In fact, there have been a number of attacks against the ANP using BBIED devices where there were few or no civilian casualties. Such shifts in tactics and targets suggest that insurgents weigh the benefit of particular attacks against the cost of killing civilians and concomitant damage to their cause.

Geographical Analysis of Suicide Attacks

It is clear from the discussions above that the Southern Region (SR), Southeastern Region (SER) and Central Region (CR) are the main focus for suicide attacks countrywide, and have been so for more than one year. Kandahar, Khost and Kabul are the most-affected provinces with most attacks occurring within or near to the main cities of these provinces. Figure 12 depicts the number of suicide events per province in rank order for 2006 and 2007.

Figure 12: Main Suicide Attack Zones

Regional Spread : Percentages With Variations 2007 on 2006							
Region	2007			2006		2006 & 2007	
NER	4	5%		2	2%	6	3%
NR	0	0%		1	1%	1	1%
WR	7	9%		6	5%	13	7%
SR	28	36%		62	50%	90	45%
SER	18	23%		36	29%	54	27%
ER	7	9%		2	2%	9	5%
CR	13	17%		14	11%	27	14%
CHR	0	0%	Same	0	0%	0	0%
Total	77			123		200	

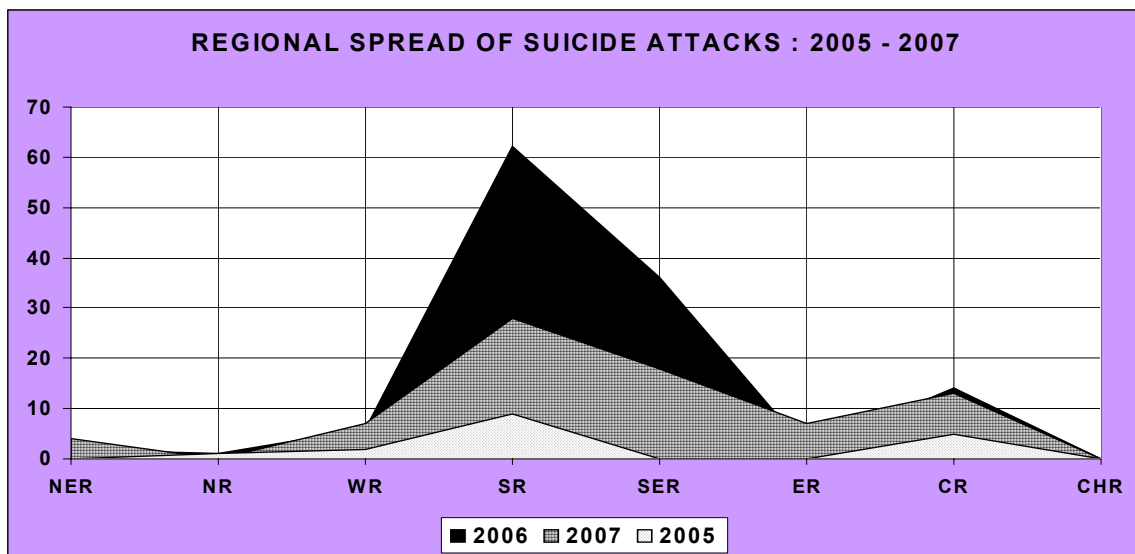
In terms of percentages, although the SR and SER remain the most severely affected, the NER, WR, ER and CR have experienced an increase in their share of attacks. For example, in 2006, ER experienced only 2 percent, but this rose to 9 percent in 2007. UNDSS believes that ER has been the target of an orchestrated insurgent strategy since the start of 2007, with an increase in all forms of insurgent tactics and terrorism in that region. This is consistent with previous wars in Afghanistan in which the eastern approaches to Kabul have featured prominently. The Provinces of Nangarhar and Kunar are particularly vulnerable to instability due to their proximity to Pakistan and Nangarhar has already experienced five suicide attacks in 2007 (to 30 June). The UN considers both provinces to be generally extreme risk/hostile areas.

The wider spread of suicide attacks in 2007 is indicative of an attempt by insurgents to destabilize the whole country and attract widespread publicity at low cost.

While they do not have the popular support base in most of the western and northern provinces to conduct an open insurgency campaign as they have within the Pashtun belt of the south and east, suicide tactics allow a highly visible presence with little resource expenditure. The media are quick to publish all insurgent events affecting the provinces outside of the traditional insurgent areas.

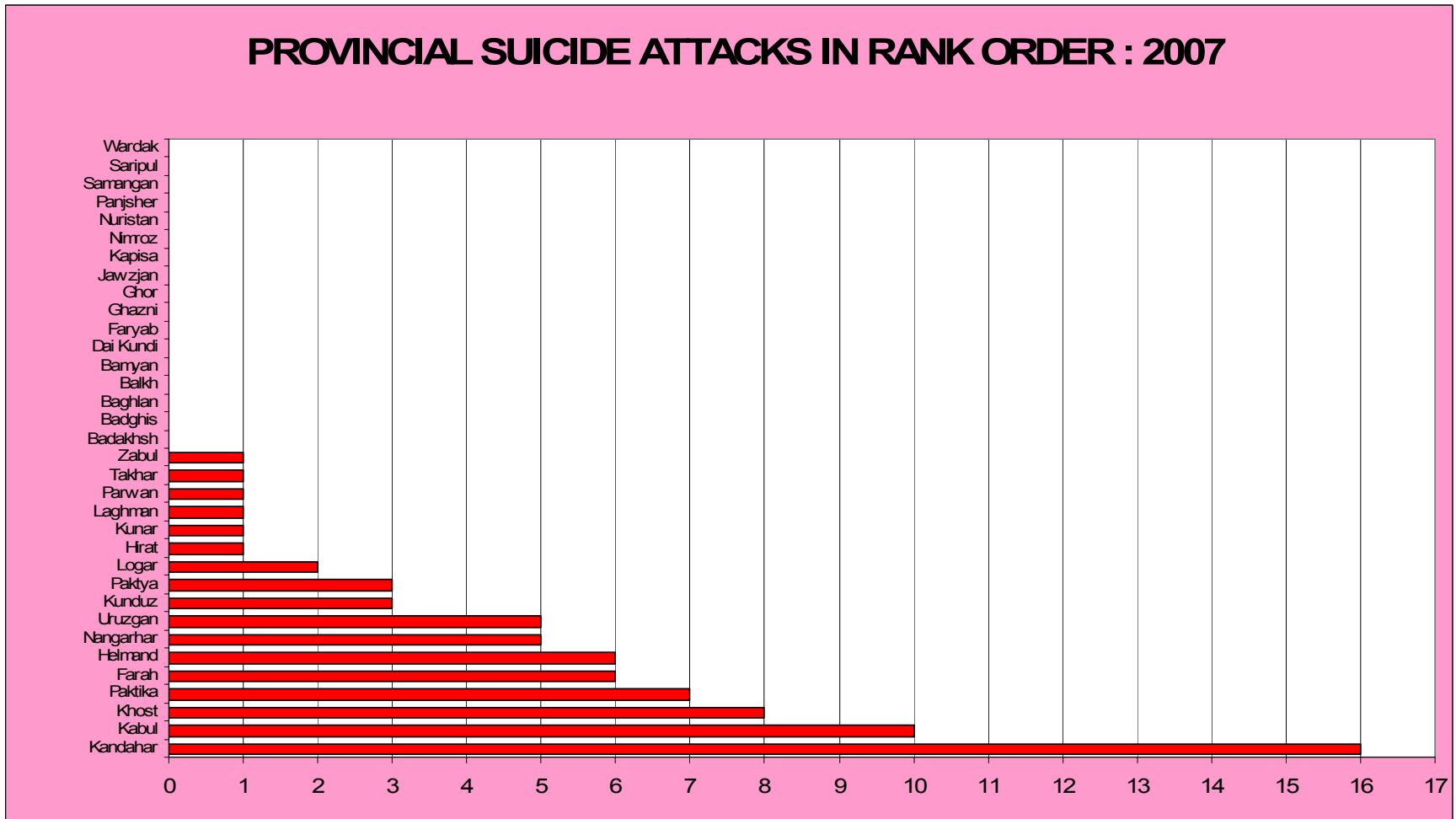
The regional graph in Figure 13 is created from the numbers of events and not percentages, and therefore the 2007 events appear considerably less than 2006 as the figures only include events until 30 June. The graph clearly shows how the traditional regions for attacks have maintained their relative position but also shows how the SER rose in prominence from 2006 and more importantly how the ER has risen in 2007 to its new shared fourth place. The NER also shows a 3 percent rise in the share of events since 2006.

Figure 13: Suicide Events by Regions – 2005 to 30 June 2007



Provincial rank order for suicide events in 2007 is indicated in Figure 14, where it is clear that SR provinces dominate the graph. In Kabul all of the attacks can be considered urban, in Kandahar most are within or close to Kandahar City, as is the case with Khost, although in both provinces, some events such as attacks in Spin Boldak, are further afield in the provinces. This pattern has existed since 2005 and will probably continue at least for the remainder of 2007.

Figure 14: Suicide Events in 2007 by Provinces (to 30 June)



It is likely that attacks will continue to focus on the SR, SER and CR for the foreseeable future, with continued increases in the ER. Sporadic attacks are still likely to occur in other regions, and this dispersion of effort may also expand in the medium term. It is in the interests of the insurgents to widen the spatial distribution of attacks and in this way create greater confusion and anxiety amongst the population, attract greater media attention and force the further dispersion of security forces.

UN Involvement

The UN has only been involved on the periphery of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. No UN staff, activities or facilities have yet been deliberately targeted by suicide attackers and all peripheral involvement of the UN in attacks was coincidental. The primary suicide-related danger to the UN and its staff is being in close proximity to the primary targets, which are international military and Afghan government institutions, primarily the ANP. There have been at least three cases where UN vehicles were close enough to suicide attacks to sustain damage, but no injuries occurred.

This seemingly safe environment may however change. The statement on 29 April 2007 by Mullah Dadullah on Al-Jazeera shortly before his death that the UN and the US are synonymous and that as such the UN is a legitimate target is relevant and of concern, and suggests a distinct probability that insurgents may begin targeting the UN in the future.

Conclusion

Suicide attacks remain one of the most serious insurgent tactics in Afghanistan. They shape public perceptions about the government's and the international community's inability to protect Afghans. Suicide attacks attract widespread international media attention, even when the attacker manages to kill only himself. This expansive coverage of these events casts doubt on the ability of the Afghan Government and the international forces to provide security in Afghanistan. The increase in frequency and success of suicide attacks detracts from positive governance and developmental initiatives and diminishes appreciation of progress made in Afghanistan. It is unlikely that 2007 will see

reductions in this form of terrorism, and it is more probable that numbers, lethality and geographical dispersion in attacks will increase.

As the foregoing analyses suggest, from a military point of view, suicide attacks in Afghanistan are not terribly “successful.” Thirty-one out of 77 (or 43 percent) successful attacks were aimed at the international military, but those attacks required 31 attackers for the 10 soldiers that were killed, implying the expenditure of 3.1 attackers for 1 military casualty. From a military point of view, this could be considered extreme failure, especially compared to the victim yields in other conflicts. The success of attacks against Afghan forces was not much better with 56 victims for the loss of 25 attackers, implying a ratio of 2.24 victims per attacker.

In general, the suicide attacks achieved very poor results and actually generated more public outcry by killing 183 Afghans (of which 121 were civilian bystanders) for the loss of 76 attackers, which are ostensibly difficult to recruit, indoctrinate, train and prepare. Moreover, suicide attacks in 2006 and 2007 have not impinged upon the execution of military operations or seriously hampered achievement of military objectives. In this sense, suicide attacks are not a serious threat to the international military presence. This does not take adverse public opinion in the home countries into account, but although there have been protests in some troop-contributing countries this has not yet caused the withdrawal of troops.

While the suicide missions may have limited direct military utility, however, they may be important to sustaining the coherence of the groups employing the tactic, raising funds for their insurgent activities and generating recruits for both suicide and non-suicide operations. The suicide attacks have also had significant import for the UN’s mission and operations in Afghanistan.

First, since the attacks of 2006 and 2007 are likely to have negatively affected civilians’ perception of the ability of the Afghan government to protect them, the suicide attacks may be a serious impediment to governance and national development. Second, irrespective of the number or affiliation of casualties resulting from suicide attacks, the international exposure caused by immediate and wide media coverage of attacks adversely influences the donor community, and therefore the success of development projects.

Third, mitigation measures implemented in the wake of suicide attacks have a serious impact on UN programmes. For example, movement restrictions hamper programme delivery in the field.

Fourth, suicide attacks demoralize staff and may hamper future recruitment efforts. Fifth, the need to provide costly armoured vehicles for risk mitigation has serious budgetary impacts for programme delivery. Sixth, although none to date, the potential for deaths to UN staff as a result of suicide attacks will have a serious effect on the UN's ability to continue operations in Afghanistan. For all of these reasons, while insurgents' use of suicide attacks may be militarily ineffective, they continue to focus the attention of all actors in the field.

4. Who are Afghanistan's suicide attackers and their supporters?

Analyses of incident data illuminate important dimensions of the nature of the changing threat that suicide attacks pose to Afghanistan, and offers a number of insights into how the Afghan government and international entities in Afghanistan can mitigate associated risks. However, analyses of incident data offer little insights into the identities and motives of actual attackers or the various kinds of support they enjoy within and without Afghanistan. To more comprehensively develop measures to curb the supply of suicide attacks, information is needed about the identity of the attackers and how they came to be associated with suicide missions, as well as information on the nature and source of logistical and other support that the suicide groups secure and sustain.

While efforts to deter attacks or harden targets are important supply-side deterrents, demand-side deterrents are needed to diminish support for groups that use suicide missions. Effective demand side deterrence requires information about societal grievances, degree of support for anti-government forces, stated support for suicide attacks among other data elements. This chapter mobilizes limited available data to begin answering this cluster of questions.

The following section presents available data about the backgrounds and motivations of the suicide attackers and others working to enable these attacks in Afghanistan. The second section provides some information, albeit limited, about the sources and nature of logistical and other material support for suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Notably, Pakistan remains an important source of human and material assistance for the insurgency generally but suicide attacks in particular. The third section, using public opinion data, explores the degree of congruence between the concerns of the Afghan polity and the attackers and examines the depth of popular support for suicide attacks and other kinds of attacks taking place in Afghanistan.

Who are the suicide attackers?

Obtaining information about the identity and motivations of the attackers is extremely difficult in Afghanistan. Successful attackers leave few physical remains for purposes of identification and, in fact, UNAMA analysts in the South East Region believe that the attackers may be instructed to tuck in their heads and hands before detonating to make identification all the more difficult.¹⁰⁷ Interlocutors in Peshawar (Pakistan) interviewed in July 2007 shared similar reports.

In many suicide attacks in other theatres, heads and sometimes hands remain intact and provide important clues into the identity of the attacker. In countries with adequate criminal investigation skills, these attackers' remains and subsequent identification can provide important clues about the cell that sustained the attack and lead to the arrest of other related personnel either in the cell or within the larger group hierarchy. Problematically, the Afghan authorities lack the capacity to collect, store and analyze DNA and other forensic evidence, which may permit identification of the perpetrator. According to one Afghan forensic professional, Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Sherzai, who has conducted autopsies on suicide attackers, the procedures are brief, lasting perhaps 30 minutes or fewer. He explained in an interview for the *New York Times*, "We have limited staff and equipment...The police would like to know the man's identity. But we have no facilities for DNA testing. What we discover is very little."¹⁰⁸

Curiously, Afghan officials claim that families have not attempted to claim the attackers' bodies. There are a number of plausible reasons for this. Families may be simply unaware of their son's demise in a suicide mission. Some of the families may not be in Afghanistan (i.e. they may be living in neighbouring countries). Some of the attacker may be orphans or from displaced families. Available evidence suggests that some families are sending their children into Pakistan for education, and the children may be recruited in Pakistan without the knowledge of their families. Brian Williams, in the course of his fieldwork in Afghanistan, found that parents come to learn of their sons' death only when the Taliban arrive to distribute their "martyrdom payment."¹⁰⁹ Afghan Police and intelligence officials interviewed by UNAMA staff in Gardez and Kandahar in July 2007, suggest that drug addicts are also employed in suicide attacks. This was

buttressed by Pakistan-based analysts interviewed by UNAMA staff in July 2007, who also believed that heroine addicts were being used for such missions.

In the absence of robust capabilities to identify the attackers, it is difficult to investigate their personal and family backgrounds and discern anything credible about their nationality, ethnicity and origins; their motivations and intentions; the benefits (religious or secular) they expected their missions; or obtain information that may lead to the capture of individuals related to the provision of suicide attacks.

President Hamid Karzai, as well as Afghan intelligence and other Afghan authorities, have tended to claim that the attackers originate from Pakistan with the implications that they are Pakistanis.¹¹⁰ Often culturally reductionist arguments (e.g. Afghans do not commit suicide, Pashtunwali forbids such actions) are used to buttress these assertions. For example, in early 2006, Gen. Rahmatullah Raufi (Corps Commander of the Afghan National Army in Kandahar) explained that "The explosives come from Pakistan, and the drivers come from Pakistan and foreign countries. *It is very difficult for an Afghan to persuade himself to commit suicide.*"¹¹¹ (Emphasis added.)

These beliefs and the absence of credible publicly available data about the assailants exist alongside a consistent belief among Afghans that "foreigners," such as Pakistanis, Arabs along with a few Central Asians, are the attackers. As Hekmat Karzai notes, many Afghans believe that suicide missions are not "culturally acceptable or a characteristic tactic of the Afghan people."¹¹² However, he cautions that this view discounts the fact that Afghan culture has not remained isolated. He notes Afghanistan's 25 million persons who became refugees, many of whom attended foreign madrassas (pl. madrassah) where they were exposed to radical and even militant ideologies.¹¹³

A more general point should be observed that in many conflicts refugee camps seem to produce militants, as evidenced in the Rohingya camps along the Bangladesh-Burma border, Pakistan's madrassas during the anti-Soviet campaign and during the 1990s, as well Palestinian refugee camps throughout the Occupied Territories and Lebanon, among others. Hekmat Karzai also cites the importance of DVDs, VCDs and other forms of technology that are pervasive and inexpensive and which permit facile diffusion of ideas and images.¹¹⁴

Increasingly some analysts are arguing that while initially Pakistanis and other foreigners may have been the culprits, the perpetrators are increasingly Afghan nationals.¹¹⁵ However, this is strongly disputed by authorities in Afghanistan's Southern and Southeastern regions. Police, intelligence, foreign military and UNAMA sources in the Southern Region, for example, believe that most of the attackers are in fact coming from Pakistan and/or are trained in Pakistan, although they concede that many, but by no means all, may be Afghans who have spent some or much of their lives in Pakistan. Afghan police and intelligence officials base these assumptions upon arrests of numerous "failed" attackers, most of whom they claim are Pashtuns from Pakistan's Baluchistan province and Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). However, they believe that Punjabis and Pakistani Pashtuns have also been involved in the planning and execution of suicide missions. They also claim to have arrested numerous Afghan facilitators, from whom they have learned a great deal about the nationalities of the attackers, including their tenures in Pakistan.¹¹⁶

In a May 2007 assessment, UNAMA analysts also concluded that recruitment for suicide attacks in the southeast region primarily takes place in madrassas in Pakistan's North Waziristan and particularly in those associated with Jalaluddin Haqqani. In that assessment, UNAMA analysts found that in the southeast region suicide attackers are typically young males between the ages of 14 and 25, poor, introverted and impressionable. While this determination is derived from examination of remains of attackers, interviews with persons captured in association with the attacks as well as other UNAMA contacts cultivated in the South East region, it is supported by UNAMA interviews of failed attackers in Pul-e-Charki prison described below.¹¹⁷

According to one senior Taliban commander, whose views have been verified and who has direct knowledge of the attitudes and priorities of the Quetta-based Taliban military shura, over one half of the suicide attackers used by the Taliban in Afghanistan are foreigners, i.e. citizens of countries other than Afghanistan. They come from a wide range of countries, primarily Pakistan but also Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Arab countries. The Taliban go to great lengths to disguise the true identities of these attackers. Beyond this majority of foreigners, one quarter or less of the suicide bombers used in southern Afghanistan are ethnic Baluch and one quarter are Afghans of other ethnic origins, but

principally Pashtuns. Almost all undergo some form of training and preparation in madrassas based in Pakistan. Over 80% of suicide attackers pass through recruitment, training facilities or safe houses in North or South Waziristan en route to their targets inside Afghanistan. Taliban groups in and around Quetta – of which there are roughly three dozen – are expected to produce one or two suicide attackers this year, though this requirement is not strictly enforced. The attackers are expected to be volunteers, but in the event heavy-handed persuasion, misrepresentation of the mission and even coercion are often employed. Many Taliban commanders inside Afghanistan abhor the practice of suicide attacks, deeming it contrary to their traditions. But there are insurgent networks that specialize in IEDs and suicide attacks in all parts of the country, particularly the southern provinces. According to this Taliban leader, the overall coordinator for the suicide attack campaign in southern Afghanistan – in succession to Mullah Dadullah who was killed in counter-insurgency operations earlier in 2007 – is Mullah Mansur, the shadow "Taliban governor" of Kandahar.

In an effort to elucidate in some measure the motives and background of Afghanistan's suicide attackers, given the lack of data about successful attackers, UNAMA secured permission from Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior (MOI) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) to interview persons who had been arrested either because they were allegedly "failed attackers" or because they were otherwise implicated in executing, organizing or facilitating suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Ideally, interviewees should have been randomly selected from among all persons arrested in conjunction with suicide attacks. The NDS and MOI selected the list of potential interview candidates according to their own criteria, which was not shared with UNAMA. Therefore it is impossible to determine how representative these interviews are compared to all persons arrested in connection to suicide attacks. Similarly, it is impossible to know how the characteristics of these arrested persons compare with those of actual attackers who successfully executed their missions.

The individuals selected by the NDS and MOI for this study were interviewed by UNAMA human rights officers in Afghanistan's Pul-e-Charki prison complex outside of Kabul. This chapter uses this limited data to glean some insights into who these attackers are and their motivations. Unfortunately, as will be discussed later in this report, once

the team began interviewing these selected candidates, it became clear that the evidentiary basis for their arrests/and or convictions are inadequately robust to permit one to say definitively that they were so involved in the provision of suicide attacks.

Moreover, because those who were convicted did not have access to a legal defence, conviction is an inadequate proxy for actual guilt. Only a handful of persons interviewed acknowledged their guilt or even conceded supporting the activities of anti-government elements. Where possible and where appropriate, this chapter also draws from interviews with police, intelligence, foreign military and UN analysts.

Given these significant data constraints, this chapter draws most directly from the few interviews wherein subjects confessed their involvement in full or in part. However, it should be noted that even those who vehemently denied their guilt expressed sentiments that are not dissimilar from those who embraced their guilt. Where appropriate, this chapter draws upon the opinions expressed by those who claimed to be innocent.

Due to the nature of these data, this chapter cannot claim in any way to offer definitive insights into the motivations of suicide attackers in Afghanistan. However these interviews converge on several religious motivations but also upon a number of other political and personal concerns regarding foreign occupation, dissatisfaction with the Afghan government, honour violations and these views are shared in some measure by the Afghan polity, as measured in opinion polls in Afghanistan. These interview data also permit limited—but important—insights into the support base that these attackers enjoy within Afghanistan as well as Pakistan.

Evidence from UNAMA interviews in Pul-e-Charki prison

As noted above, considerable debate surrounds the nationalities and origins of Afghanistan's suicide attackers and their supporting personnel. UNAMA human rights officers were able to interview 23 persons incarcerated or awaiting trial in connection to suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Interviews ranged between 30 minutes and two hours, though most lasted about one hour. Contrary to popular contention that "Afghans cannot be involved," 21 of the 23 were Afghan nationals and two were Pakistani nationals, one

from Karachi and the other from Waziristan. However, of the 21 Afghan nationals, fourteen had spent time as refugees in Pakistan and two were refugees in Iran.

The youngest person interviewed was 15 and the oldest was in his fifties. (He did not know his exact age.) The average age of those interviewed was about 26 years old. As noted above, few admitted involvement in the crime for which they were convicted. Moreover, those who were asked about the availability of legal counsel all claimed that they had none. To protect their identities, all names have been changed in this report.

Munir

Munir, who is 19, described himself as a member of the Deobandi (Pakistan-based) militant group, Harkat ul Mujahidin. Munir is uneducated except for the four years he spent in a madrassah in Karachi. His father was a mullah who earned, in his view, an average income which was nonetheless inadequate for his family's needs. He explained that he was saddened by the defeat of the Taliban in 2001 because they were an Islamist party. He is accused of being a suicide attacker and he admits to the same. He explained to the UNAMA human rights officer that he sought to kill Americans and other outsiders with a car that was laden with a bomb. With little preparation and promises of nothing other than heaven (janat) he was willing to execute his attack.

He had numerous grievances with the Afghanistan government and opined that there is "interference of foreigners in the government. All affairs are done by the Americans and other foreigners. Now America is supporting this government and I hate invaders as well as foreigners."¹¹⁸ He was adamant that his planned attack was jihad targeted against Americans who "shouldn't have come to Afghanistan." He continued "They are invaders...The war against them is jihad."¹¹⁹ While intently interested in killing Americans and other armed outsiders, he claims that he would have been careful to avoid harming civilians. He was unrepentant and said that he would attempt his mission again if possible.

He offered explicitly Islamic arguments for his actions, explaining that instructors at his madrassah, Jamia Farooquia, taught that jihad and suicide attacks are obligations (farz in local pronunciation, fardh'ain in Arabic). While his two friends encouraged him

to become an “intahari” (suicide attacker), he explained that the views of his family were irrelevant to his decision. As such, he did not inform them of his decision and he held their opinions of the issue in low esteem. He explained to UNAMA staff that he had not told his parents “because the jihad is farz. [There is] no need for questions. God would have [taken care] of them.”

When asked whether he understands his act to be suicide or martyrdom (shahadat), he averred that “This is jihad not suicide. If a Muslim is killed, he is a shaheed (martyr). If I’m killed, there is another life where there would be no accountability ... and God will be happy because of this action.” He saw little scope to achieve his cause beyond the suicide mission noting that if “I perform my holy task. I will be happy.”¹²⁰ He embraced the persons who set up this mission for him as his “Muslim brothers.”¹²¹ He said that he would advise others to do as he did but to avoid harming civilians.

Tahir

Tahir, 23 years of age, was born in Pakistan’s Shamshatu camp near Peshawar, which he describes as “Hekmatyar’s camp.” His family is Afghan in origin (Spin Jumat, Zaji District, Paktya Province) and he speaks Pashto, Dari and Arabic. Tahir freely admitted involvement in suicide attacks and in fact purported to have been a group leader organizing suicide attacks in Afghanistan. He was arrested in Kabul on Pul-e-Mahmood Khan (Mahmood Khan Bridge) allegedly while arranging explosives. While he denies this charge, he admitted that in December 2003 he had a remote controlled bomb. He and a friend, Jalal, had received intelligence about ISAF movements and they wanted to kill the ISAF commander. He explained “We had fixed a point for [Jalal]. When he was about to plant the bomb and before we could detonate it, the Afghan government people arrested him.”¹²² He was in another vehicle a short distance away.

When Tahir and associates saw Jalal being arrested, they tried to plant another bomb. When they heard two shots and an explosion, they left their car and ran away to a shelter in Kabul. He says “Our friend had been killed as he had detonated the bomb. He was a faithful mujahid with the decision to get rid of the United States. He claims to have been “Jalozai’s (Sayyaf’s) camp.” He claims he was arrested because one of his friends

was a “spy” who provided photos and evidence against him to the NDS. He also admitted to conducting another operation against the United States, about which the NDS is unaware.

He claimed that the same ISAF commander visited him in prison and inquired how he came to have information about ISAF movements. Tahir boasted that he refused to answer and confronted the commander telling him that he should leave Afghanistan and that the United States came only to occupy Afghanistan. The ISAF commander reportedly countered that they were here to bring peace and hunt Al-Qaeda not him.” He retorted that “Al Qaeda is now in Waziristan. [The Americans] should go there.”¹²³

Tahir articulated firm anti-Soviet/anti-Russian sentiments as well as a strong sense of Afghan nationalism. He recounted how his village in Afghanistan was bombarded by the communist regime forcing his impoverished father to go to Peshawar where he bought a rickshaw to earn money. His father “had no time to get involved with politics” and “had no political links and was against his decision to join the party. He wanted me to be a merchant.”¹²⁴

Tahir opted to join Hizb-e-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) in 1994. He believed that Hekmatyar acted in the best interests of Afghans compared to other groups. Tahir emphasized that “I am not a Talib” and boasted that “I had the reputation of the zealous Afghan in the camp. I did not take any Pakistani citizenship, because I would then have to be part of another’s country’s military.”¹²⁵

Hizb-e-Islami, in his view, has many positive attributes one of which was that “it has no relations with foreigners and is run by Afghans... Hizb-e-Islami is totally against the ISI, which is another factor why I joined it.”¹²⁶ [Clearly, Tahir was ill-informed about Hekmatyar’s long-standing relationship with the ISI¹²⁷ or chose to engage in deception with the interviewer.]

Another reason for his affiliation was the large number of madrassas that Hekmatyar established. He claimed that there “were six hundred up to seven hundred boys in the madrassah and there were separate schools for girls.”¹²⁸ In fact, he graduated from the 12th class from one of the madrassas run by Hekmatyar’s Hizb-e-Islami. He claimed that the madrassah taught many modern subjects (except science) and stressed English. Tahir noted with particular satisfaction that all of the teachers were Afghans.

This fact was important to him and he again opined that “I am proud to be grown up an Afghan as I am sticking with my roots.”¹²⁹

While not a Talib, he supported some of the Taliban’s actions even though in general he was not supportive of their governance. He was, for example, satisfied with the “executions/punishments meted out by the Taliban.”¹³⁰ Following their defeat in 2001, he was sad about their failure as an Afghan and he was displeased with the arrival of the “Kafir.” He was open to a return to the Taliban but, consonant with his strong Afghan nationalism, he contended that they should adhere to real Islam, be true Afghans, control their own affairs, not the ISI, and have “critical relations” with other countries.

Like Munir, Tahir disparages the Afghan government: “Regarding the government, it is not an elected Afghan government. The voters who were brought there were not real Afghans. There is a difference between Karzai and Babrak Karmal. One came with US plans the other with the USSR. Both are puppet regimes and they will be toppled.”¹³¹ Unlike Munir, Tahir does not have an unqualified loathing of foreigners and their efforts in Afghanistan. For example, he was pleased with the construction of roads and schools but he was irritated the government of Afghanistan seemed to pocket much of the aid money and the Afghan government in his view has failed to make good use of the aid it has received. He queried “Who has asked the government where the aid money is?”¹³² He also articulated a difference between “foreigners like the UN and Islamic entities and other diplomatic entities [who are good]...but those who are occupiers are not good.”¹³³

When pressed to say who the occupiers are, he identified the United State and those who support the U.S. Interestingly, he observed that “[The Americans] are here to bring peace, but their presence has brought instability...[It’s] now clear that the Taliban and Hikmatyar want to talk to the government, but the United States in hampering this. NATO/ISAF are completely the people of the United States. But I am not against the unarmed foreigners.”¹³⁴ Tahir believed that if the United States were to leave “Afghanistan for Afghans and the international community [stops interfering with] political parties... then Afghans can come together.”¹³⁵ He blames the ISI, the United States, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for the disunity of present-day Afghanistan.

Also in contrast to Munir, Tahir did not dilate at length upon religious motivations for his actions. He consistently noted that his country “is invaded by the Americans and their friendly forces. I hate them and want them to leave the country.” As noted, he drew visceral parallels between the American and Soviet presence. When pressed about the religious dimension of his actions, he argued cursorily that success in an operation would make the perpetrator a shaheed. (Note that he was not a suicide attacker himself.)

However, he quickly strayed away from Islamic arguments to Islamist arguments, noting dilemmas confronting Muslims throughout the Muslim world. He explained that when a shaheed goes to heaven, he can intercede on behalf of 70 “guilty people.” He also noted that shaheeds’ parents have a high position in paradise. He also explained that according to the Quran and books that he had “from Beirut,” such attacks are legitimate in Islam. He also claimed that there is an order to kill Jews and others “if they invade you.” He cited the plight of the Palestinians who are “in a cage” and treated cruelly. He also identified Saudi Arabia where “there is Hajj but the reality is that it’s occupied by the United States. They killed innocent children and women. Even when Talib and al Qaeda operate in Afghanistan they had minimal civilian casualties.”¹³⁶

With respect to targeting in attacks, Tahir explained that his group of “pure Afghan Hekmatyar supporters” are more discriminating in their attacks and focused upon the “occupiers” (the United States and ISAF) than those groups whom he called “ISI supported.” He claimed that the “Government of Afghanistan is not our target but if they are present, they become our target. [If we come to] know they are slaves and mercenaries, then we kill them. You UN people, you will lose your prestige and you will be seen on the same side. You are supporting the United States. Hekmatyar and his son-in-law Baheer said time and time again that the UN should not support the United States.”¹³⁷

UNAMA staff asked him to explain his conflation of the UN with the United States. He proffered the case of the US military action in Nangarhar and Sangin where the “United States killed people.” He also noted that Dr. Baheer gave a television interview and was arrested and sent to Bagram. He argued that Baheer spoke under UN principles of freedom but was arrested four years ago in Pakistan by the ISI and was handed over to the US. He asked the UNAMA staff member “Why do you people stay

silent?”¹³⁸ He later encouraged the UN to work to secure its prestige in Afghanistan by, among other things, encouraging the United States to leave Afghanistan.

Like Munir, Tahir had no remorse and spoke with relish how he had hoped he would kill all the commanders of American forces and ISAF. He candidly described his group’s hidden military quarters where they train operatives for three to six months. He quipped that “Many of us do not need training.”¹³⁹ He expressed confidence that the jihad would continue and that they would prevail in defeating the United States. If given the opportunity, he would tell others to do this as it is “an order of Islam to do it and be proud of it.”¹⁴⁰

He was forthcoming about the criteria by which they selected recruits for suicide attacks. “Many people knew us in Peshawar... We do not pick them. They come to us. There is no power to stop them. They come from Jalalabad, Kunar, Gardez and there are too many. I swear to God I have never asked people to come to us to do this. Naturally Afghans are against occupation.” He claimed that some 1,900 youth came to him without asking for money or support. He believed that candidates should be at least 19 or 20 years old, should act without coercion and should not be mentally retarded. He would dissuade a candidate if they were the primary earner for their family.

While noting that this is for practical reasons, he cited an incident when a man came to the Prophet Mohammad asking to fight for Islam. When the Prophet understood from the man that his family was poor and that he was the sole earner, the Prophet turned him away. They should aim for “heavy enemy casualties” and claimed to carefully train candidates. He claimed that 70 are really ready for the suicide mission but he could not prepare them since his arrest. While he suspects that “everything fell apart” following his arrest, he has received some information that “they are organizing themselves... [and] their numbers have increased and they are ready to do more suicide attacks.”¹⁴¹

He cautioned the UNAMA staff member to not compare the “Youth of Afghanistan to the plastic youth of Kabul who are without any zeal. [Previously] it was Arab and a few Pakistanis [who were suicide attackers]. But it is all Afghans since December 2003.”¹⁴²

Tahir expounded a lengthy treatise on civilian casualties in this conflict. First, he noted that “in Islam, responsibility does not go to a shaheed if he kills civilians as

collateral damage. Responsibility goes to the infidels because they positioned the public in a way [that put them in harms way] because they are cowards.”¹⁴³ He claimed that before Islam came to Afghanistan, there were Tartars. “Ibn Tayamia was a famous scholar of Islam. The same case existed at that time... Tartars used Muslims as human shields and this is what is happening now. The United States push civilians into military attack areas. Three centuries after Mohammad, there was a fatwa that our target should be enemies. But if the public is amongst the enemies and are killed, responsibility goes to [the enemies].”¹⁴⁴

Amir

Amir is a fifteen-year old boy who was born in Pakistan to a family from Gardez. He has spent half of his life in Pakistan and the other half in Gardez. He is uneducated and spent only two days in a madrassah when his father asked him to leave and start working with him. He was greatly influenced by a local mullah (religious leader) who told him to go to Kabul to kill the “Angrez”. He left Gardez for Kabul by bus and went to a mosque to offer his prayers.

Another mullah of that mosque asked him what he was doing, and he showed him his suicide jacket. That mullah began screaming and a *mêlée* ensued. A guard came for him and he tried to pull the detonator, but it failed. The guard shot him and he was arrested. He claims that the Gardez mullah gave him 200 Afghanis and told him that he is in fact giving him heaven. The mullah told the boy that jihad is farz, required against the foreigners that have come to occupy Afghanistan and if he manages to kill a foreigner, he would go to heaven. The boy reported that he wanted to go to heaven and that he truly believed all that the mullah told him including that his suicide attack is both farz and jihad.

The boy said that his father was unaware of his intentions and he believed that had his father known, he, along with his entire village, would have rejected his decision. The boy told UNAMA staff that he now realizes it was a mistake to not tell his father of his plans. Instead, he deceived his parents when he left for Kabul by telling them that he was going to the bazaar. He believes his parents would have stopped him and he worries that if ever he is released, his parents will be saddened once they learn of what he tried to do.

The boy also said that upon learning from the NDS that he was going to kill Muslims he felt deceived by the mullah who sought to use him for his own purposes.

Ghulam

The story of sixteen-year old Ghulam is interesting for another reason: he admits that he was caught in a suicide mission; however he claims to have been deceived and coerced into the operation. Ghulam is from Waziristan, where he spent his entire life until he was reportedly duped into going to Afghanistan. He is utterly uneducated. Having begun regular schooling at the late age of thirteen, he left after three months. He next attended a madrassah but similarly did not excel because he did not comprehend the lessons. He had great difficulty understanding the questions posed to him during his interview with UNAMA staff. Curiously, although he lived in Waziristan his entire life he did not know who President Musharraf is (he did know who President Karzai is, however).

Ghulam attended a madrassah run by Maulvi Noor Mohammad from Zup, which had about 2,000 students and only four Pakistani lecturers. Upon leaving the madrassah in 2006, he was about to begin working at a local hotel when some Afghans approached him and suggested that he come to Afghanistan after Eid in January 2007. A person named Shoaib brought him to Ghazni. Shoaib was known to Ghulam because he was the headmaster of his madrassah. Shoaib, along with two other associates (Bilal and Mohammad), went to Ghulam's home to meet with his parents. His parents were opposed to his going because they did not trust Shoaib initially. However, they later agreed at least in part because Shoaib convinced them that Ghulam would earn money in Afghanistan. However, when pressed about what he would do in Afghanistan, Shoaib and associates said different things.

Ghulam described how he became a suicide attacker. Once he arrived in Ghazni, he was remanded to Mohammad and Bilal and another person named Jalal. At 8 a.m. he put on the suicide jacket. Jalal gave him six tablets, which intoxicated him.¹⁴⁵ This person also gave him a detonator and he was told to explode it. He tried to explain to Jalal that he did not understand. Notwithstanding his purported confusion, Jalal dropped him close to the police station. Upon seeing foreigners he claimed that he could not detonate the

jacket and he threw away the detonator. (It is not obvious how this is possible because UNAMA staff had no information about the design of the vest.)

He explained to the UNAMA human rights officer that he realized that the targets were foreigners as well as Afghans. He claims that Bilal and Mohammad were in a car nearby and when he refused to detonate, they grabbed him and put him in the car. It is not clear from his account what next transpired, but he was able to tell someone who in turn told the police and everyone—including him—was arrested. He claims that Jalal promised to give him 10,000 Pakistani Rupees if he exploded himself and killed “a big commander.” Jalal also said that if he did not do it, he would behead him. Ghulam explained to the UNAMA human rights officer that “I was forced to do this.”¹⁴⁶ He noted that they spoke Dari among themselves but Pashto with him, perhaps because Ghulam does not know Dari. He described them as looking like government people because they were “wearing uniforms with badges and carried machine guns.”¹⁴⁷

When probed in greater detail about his motivations and how he felt about this experience, he said a number of interesting things. First, he was ambivalent about the Taliban and their defeat. He said that “They are re-arming around here [Waziristan] but there is no need to be hostile to them. They are domestic Taliban. There’s not much difference between them and us. If there is a conflict in the village, they help and sort things out.”¹⁴⁸ Yet at the same time, he was pleased that they were defeated because they “harmed the people.” He then added quickly, “but they can be good.”¹⁴⁹

Second, when asked about “motivations,” for him the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is irrelevant: “There are no foreign troops in my area of Waziristan,”¹⁵⁰ he said. When pressed about his beliefs about “shahadat,” he said that he was told by his handlers that because he was innocent and very young, he would not be killed. But he admitted that “I don’t know what shaheed means. If I did not do it, they said I would go to hell.”¹⁵¹ His handlers also told him that “Islam says you must kill foreigners because they do not respect God. If you kill them, you win God. I was not thinking of jannat (paradise). I did it because they would give me 10,000 Pakistan rupees. No question of paradise.”¹⁵² His handlers did press upon him that this was a “farz.” Throughout the interview he repeatedly complained that he did not receive his money.

He described his training as lasting about five days, mostly focusing on how to use the detonator. They did not show him any videos but they did keep talking to him and repeating themes like “The Angrez (literally British but implying foreigners generally) are here. Afghans don’t want them and that we should kill them—that Muslims are in a bad condition and I should take the money.”¹⁵³ While it should have been clear that this young man understood very little about what was expected of him, his handlers had hoped that he would be able to kill a “big commander,” whose name he did not recall or know. Despite all of their efforts to ideologically persuade him of the perils of occupation and religious duty, he remained fixated upon the money and incapable of appreciating that he would have died obviating the benefit of those funds. Incredulously, he explained to UNAMA staff that “They kept saying I would not be killed. They also said that I didn’t do what they say I would go to hell.”¹⁵⁴

While Ghulam’s interview does not illuminate motives per se, his story is important because it comports with stories appearing in the Pakistani press about young madrassah students being persuaded to come to Afghanistan under various ruses but ultimately for suicide missions. His story also illuminates the importance of monetary rewards for such young and impressionable persons.¹⁵⁵

Ahmed

Ahmed is a 31 year-old Tajik from Ghazni province who concedes that he was a former deputy minister for education under the Taliban before 2001. After the fall of the Taliban, he went into hiding. He was sentenced to 20 years for organizing suicide attacks in Kandahar province, which he denies. He believes that he was arrested only because he was a member of the Taliban. He lamented to UNAMA staff that “I was born in a painful environment. I have lived in painful circumstances and I will die in this way too.”¹⁵⁶ His father was killed fighting the Soviets in the 1980s. He had always lived in Ghazni except for the period when he served as a Taliban minister. In Ghazni, he served as the Imam of the Ghazni Mosque and he is widely respected for his Islamic credentials.

Despite being a self-professed minister for the Taliban, he says he was hopeful after their fall, explaining that “the Americans came as messengers of peace and we were hopeful that peace and progress for our people would follow.”¹⁵⁷ However, as he saw it,

the ensuing litany of abuses perpetrated by international and Afghan forces have angered the Afghan people and turned them against both. He was personally affronted by the treatment he received and claims to have been personally tortured by a governor of Kandahar.

While he believes that suicide attacks are against Islam he also contended that “when you do not have guns or bomber planes then your body is the only weapon that you use to resist people killing your families.”¹⁵⁸ He too was dissatisfied with the legitimacy of the government, and claimed that people are fighting the government, which is a puppet regime supported by the UN which does nothing, because “they rob us, bomb our homes and disrespect our families and communities.”¹⁵⁹

Insights from Other Interviews

These above-detailed interviews permit some tentative observations about the background and motivations of attackers. First there is a sense that irrespective of the person’s view of the Taliban, that current activities of the international presence are problematic, with the obvious exception of Ghulam from Waziristan. Second, most were sceptical of the legitimacy and competence of the Afghan government and noted its corruption.

Third, while Islamic motivations are important, so are Islamist and ethno-nationalist ones. The salience of these motivations is highly personalized. Money is important only for Ghulam, who may not have entered into his mission with full commitment and possibly with some degree of deception. Ghulam and his gullibility is similar to an event recorded by UNAMA analysts in Gardez wherein an assailant from Khost prematurely detonated and survived without his legs. The failed attacker claims that a mullah misled him by promising that his blood would smell of roses and he would be surrounded by virgins.

Fourth, the interviewees rationalized the civilian deaths in a variety of ways. Fifth, these interviews underscore the importance of Pakistan as place of recruitment. However, Amir concedes that while their “group was well known in Peshawar” he claims that the recruits also come from Afghanistan. Madrassas and poverty also figure in these

interviews. Finally, poverty and lack of education figure in all but one the interviews of the confessed perpetrators.

While the empirical bases for these observations are weak and reside upon highly limited interviews, it is worth noting that many others interviewed by UNAMA, who did not concede to being guilty, shared many of these characteristics and sentiments. Most persons interviewed by UNAMA in Pul-e-Charki prison claimed that they were from impoverished backgrounds with little or no education. When they were educated, they appear to have been educated mostly in madrassas. Many prisoners interviewed by UNAMA, while denying their guilt, expressed their belief that only the Taliban can bring peace and most also noted that previous and current Afghan governments have been ineffective and corrupt.

Curiously, many interviewed in Pul-e-Charki prison claimed to be initially optimistic about the American presence. Some saw them as coming to bring peace and others noted that unlike the atheist Soviets, they were “God fearing.” Others thought that things would get better with the arrival of the Americans and the defeat of the Taliban, including improved human rights, more schools and hospitals and, most importantly, peace. Several interviewed prisoners thought that there were positive benefits to be derived from the foreign presence. For example, one prisoner claimed that the foreign troops “help keep the balance” in the rivalry between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. Others thought that the foreign troops could do better either by “playing fair” and not targeting Pashtuns more than others. Another believed that the foreign military forces came to defend the country. (This individual also had positive things to say about the Afghan Government, despite his contention that it has some degree of corruption.)

However, most of the interviewees were disappointed with the foreign troops for various reasons, including consistent reports of mistreatment, dishonour, civilian losses and failure to achieve peace. Most expressed the belief that foreign forces should leave, allowing Afghanistan to rebuild the country and permitting some form of reconciliation process between the various factions causing violence. In fact, many believed that peace can be restored in Afghanistan only through dialogue with the anti-government elements. Interviewees understand the foreign forces to be an impediment to the process because they will not permit this much-needed settlement with all fighting factions.

There was considerable and surprising disagreement among interviewees on whether or not they saw Afghanistan as an occupied country, although most tended to see the current situation as some form of occupation or another. Many interviewees were quite ambivalent about the Taliban. While they tended to respect them for their Islamic beliefs and their ability to establish an Islamic country in relative peace with little corruption, several persons harboured various complaints about them. For example some felt that the Taliban were too harsh on issues such as banning television, music and girls' education and disregard for human rights.

Many opined that the government is deficient in various respects. One prisoner said that the Afghans are "even worse than the Americans in that they take everything from the houses they search." Another interviewee grouched that the government is "not working for the Pashtuns, only for the Tajiks." This 34-year old Ahmedzai Pashtun who was arrested for selling a car to members of Jamiat Islami Afghanistan, who packed it with explosives and then reported him to the police, was particularly bitter about the privileged position of General Dostum and Sibgutullah Mojaddedi whom he called a "slave to the foreigners." Another interviewee shared the concern that the government targets Pashtuns and expressed dissatisfaction with the moral laxity of the Afghan government, dismissing the lot as un-Islamic drinkers and adulterers whose police forces loot and rob.

Many persons complained about different kinds of affronts to personal, familial and national honour perpetrated by both international and national forces. Some even suggested that these affronts justify in some measure suicide attacks. One 33 year old Dari speaker from Baghlan, who received the death penalty for being a member of Al Qaeda and organizing suicide attacks at Dyncorp and Chicken Street in Kabul, complained about abuses perpetrated by U.S. troops and recalled his outrage when he "heard on the radio about the American's taking a woman from her home and her family in Baghlan and keeping her in detention at Bagram air base."¹⁶⁰ He was also dismayed by the "American soldiers standing watch as Afghan security forces conduct house searches."¹⁶¹ Searches emerged as important sources of indignity for many interviewees. One 26-year old Pashtun from Zabul (who received ten years for preparing three cars for suicide attacks), recounted how his "home in Zabul was raided by Afghan forces as the

Americans watched and encouraged them.”¹⁶² However, he did not believe that foreign troops should leave “if they are here to help rebuild the country.”¹⁶³ Unfortunately, he believed that they were here only to harass and kill Afghans and to occupy Afghanistan, a view that was shared by many interviewed.

The above-noted Baghlan resident complained about the air raids conducted by U.S. forces in Helmand, Kandahar and Shindand district of Herat which resulted in numerous civilian casualties. He furthered that the Afghan Government is culpable for failing to stop these civilian deaths and maintains that the attacks have enraged citizens who are furious with both the government and the Americans. In fact, air raids figured in many interviews. One Pashtun from Logar explained that that people now hide when they see a plane flying above their villages and opined about the foreigners who kill innocent women and children. He explained to UNAMA staff that the first time he saw a foreigner in Afghanistan, he was pointing a gun at him. He asked of the UNAMA interviewer “What do you expect us to think of them when they abuse us like this in front of people in our own community.”¹⁶⁴

While categorically condemning civilian casualties as a result of national or international security forces’ actions, like those who claimed their guilt, many of the other prisoners interviewed rationalized the deaths of civilians when they occurred in the conduct of suicide attacks. A popular construction offered by the detainees is that civilian deaths were not the fault of the attackers, but rather the fault of the international or even Afghan military and police presence because it is their presence that precipitated the attack. In other words, if these forces were not present, the attack would not have happened and the civilians would not have died. No one condemned the anti-government forces for inflicting civilian losses. Others diminished the impact of the civilian deaths by reasoning that the civilians who are killed will become shaheed and, as such, they will acquire heavenly benefits. This implies that civilians, in some perverse way, are better off dying in this manner than dying through natural causes because the latter would not confer comparable benefits to becoming a shaheed.

With respect to suicide attacks, there was considerable variation in views held by interviewed prisoners—both those who admitted their involvement in suicide attacks and those who asserted their innocence. Many saw the tactic as unjustifiable but others

deemed it to be appropriate for the circumstances in Afghanistan where people are dishonoured, occupied by foreigners and non-Muslims and experience heavy civilian casualties routinely. Most claimed that they did not find killing Afghan civilians justified. However, many said that killing foreigners—especially non-Muslim Kafirs—is in varying degrees defensible and legal and some interviewees claimed it was a duty. Afghan government, police and military were seen as justifiable targets as they work with foreign elements and comprise the puppet regime that many despise.

Finally, the Pul-e-Charki interviewees had a range of views about the UN and its operations in Afghanistan. Some believed that the UN is still doing work to help the country. However, others believed that the UN is supporting the government—widely seen as a “puppet regime of the Americans.” Those who held the former view felt that the UN should stay in Afghanistan while those holding the latter thought that the UN should leave as well as the foreign military forces.

From where do the attackers draw logistical support: the cross-border dimension

The Pul-e-Charki interviews suggest that logistical support for suicide missions is secured both in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Other open-source data, while limited, underscore the fact that the logistical underpinning of suicide attacks in Afghanistan is not confined to Afghanistan. This section mobilizes information garnered through UNAMA interviews with local interlocutors as well as national and international intelligence, military and police officials; data from interviews in Pakistan; and information from press accounts from Pakistani and international media. The section illuminates, in some measure, the degree to which the phenomenon of suicide attacks in Afghanistan is a cross-border concern that requires dedicated policy attention and robust mitigation efforts on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The Afghan dimension

While some security officials downplay Afghan involvement in these attacks, it is undeniable. In September 2006 the Kabul Police Chief announced the capture of several persons involved in a Kabul-based suicide cell. Four persons were arrested and their explosives cache seized. The leader of the cell was based in the Fifth District of western Kabul where he served as the cleric of a mosque, where he stored explosives and through which he recruited new operatives and even planned attacks. A second person involved was a 28-year Tajik from Baghlan, who had never left Afghanistan. He too was a cleric. A third was a Pashtun from Wardak who admitted obtaining explosives and passing them onto another Afghan in the cell. The Wardak resident justified his action on the familiar grounds that the United States and NATO were occupying Afghanistan and accordingly he declared “I have not committed any kind of crime. I was doing jihad for God. They have arrested me as if I were some sort of criminal.”¹⁶⁵ In August 2006, authorities arrested a Taliban commander in charge of suicide attacks in Kabul. The individual, identified as “Qari Hakim Mullah”, is a twenty-five year old Tajik from Charikar. He had spent some time in Pakistan, according to authorities.¹⁶⁶ Bomb factories have also been discovered in Kabul and Kandahar among other places attesting to the local flavour of suicide attacks in Afghanistan.¹⁶⁷ With bomb factories in particular, it is very likely that neighbours either know something nefarious is taking place or at a minimum suspect something because bomb factories often have unintended explosions, noxious fumes or other mishaps.¹⁶⁸

The Pakistan Dimension

Afghan and international entities will have to struggle hard to address the logistical base for suicide attacks within Afghanistan as well as the broader demand for suicide terrorism, which is likely to be resolved only in the context of the larger insurgency in Afghanistan. It has proven difficult for Afghan and international partners to contend with

the degree and complex nature of cross-border support for suicide attacks in Pakistan. Part of this support no doubt derives from the steady process of “Talibanization” of FATA and other areas, which threatens both Afghanistan and Pakistan. According to the International Crisis Group, there are some fifteen to twenty local militant groups in South Waziristan and perhaps a dozen in North Waziristan. While there is no evidence that they coordinate their operations, these local militant groups are inspired by Mullah Omar, and have pledged allegiance to the Taliban commander. FATA also is home to several Afghan war veterans (e.g. the late Nek Mohammad and Abdullah Mehsud), who provided an important network for al-Qaeda and the Taliban in FATA. Given the low development of FATA and paucity of employment opportunities, unemployed youth have joined these local militant groups as a way of both earning a livelihood and as a means of enhancing their social status.¹⁶⁹

Journalists have observed that “training camps are sprouting in and around the heavily-forested Shawal region in North Waziristan, and the [Pakistani] Taliban are recruiting, training, raising money.”¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the militants freely distribute jihadi publications, CDs and DVDs throughout FATA as well as the settled areas. In key localities within FATA and the settled areas, militants have established local administration that emulates that of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. For example, Miramshah and Mirali in South and North Waziristan have come under Taliban-like governance as have settled areas within Khyber Agency, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Bannu, and Lakki Marwat among others. In the north, the Bajaur tribal agency has come under increasing Taliban-like governance, as have adjacent settled areas of Dir, Swat and the Malakand region. Even areas as far east as Kohistan and Gilgit have shown signs of Talibanization. Equally disconcerting is the apparent increased demand for clerical control of public life throughout large swathes of the FATA and NWFP. One of the problematic consequences of this phenomenon is that militants from all over Pakistan are converging in these Talibanized areas. These militants, many of whom are active supporters of the Afghan Taliban and even Al Qaeda, serve as an important resource for the Taliban operating in Afghanistan.¹⁷¹

In addition to this ever-deepening militarization of the border areas, tribal relations and shared Pashtun identity may in some measure also facilitate the recruitment

of Pakistan-based operatives and their movement into Afghanistan. Most persons interviewed in Pakistan and in Afghanistan for this study believed that *Pashtunwali* (the Pashtun code of honour) per se did not directly aid the recruitment of attackers. However, one interlocutor in Pakistan disagreed. This individual, a Pakistani journalist who has been working in FATA, believed that the notion of revenge in *Pashtunwali* may be easily mobilized by recruiters who seek to draw and capitalize upon the belief that Afghanistan has been occupied and that Pashtuns are being killed in the conduct of the national and international anti-Taliban operations. While this utilization of *Pashtunwali* may be weak, more direct appeals to “badal” (revenge, a component of *Pashtunwali*) may be made if the person has suffered a direct loss either at the hands of international military forces, or in the case of attacks in Pakistan, at the hands of Pakistani security forces. This person also believed that *Pashtunwali* and bonds of tribal affiliation may be important in moving the recruit to Afghanistan and in establishing necessary safehouses between the point of recruitment and the point of deployment. However, apart from these considerations, few observers interviewed for this study believed that *Pashtunwali* per se has a direct effect upon suicide attacker recruitment, even though *Pashtunwali* is popularly believed to be an important consideration.¹⁷²

Leaving aside tribal and ethnic forms of support, analysts have made staggering allegations of both active and passive support from the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies. The most thorough published inventory of assistance is explicated by Seth Jones of the RAND Corporation, who has conducted extensive field work in Afghanistan. Jones alleged that some Pakistan intelligence officials are involved in directing suicide operatives into the Afghan theatre; however, much of this purported assistance comes from mid- and lower-levels of the ISI.¹⁷³

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that FATA (along with Baluchistan) is not only a Taliban and Al Qaeda sanctuary, but also the base for Taliban decision-making and its logistical apparatus.¹⁷⁴ NATO officials have remarked upon the Taliban’s impressive logistical capability and have concluded that the Taliban could not be so effective without the ISI.¹⁷⁵ During the Peace Jirga in Kabul in August 2007, General Musharraf offered the frankest acknowledgement to date that Pakistan is an important sanctuary for anti-government elements. Addressing the 650 delegates from

both countries, he declared “I realize this problem goes deeper, there is support from these areas....There is no doubt Afghan militants are supported from Pakistan soil. The problem that you have in your region is because support is provided from our side.”¹⁷⁶

UNAMA analysts in the South East region also have collected data that attest to the importance of Pakistan in the production of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. In their investigation into suicide attacks in the South East region, they reported that “generally, targeting is decided in advance by commanders in North Waziristan, but in some cases there is a degree of operational flexibility at the local level.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, those UNAMA analysts concluded that that much of the equipment, explosives and vests are prepared by North Waziristan-based commanders, at least for suicide attacks in the South East region. However, they reported that increasingly there are local cells in the South East region that provide explosives and vests and this is actually preferred because it reduces the risks of detection in transit.¹⁷⁸ UNAMA analysts in that region also identify the importance of madrassas run by Haqqani in Pakistan’s North Waziristan. Indeed, the above-detailed UNAMA interviews with Pul-e-Charki detainees consistently underscore the importance of Pakistan for their recruitment. Notably, none of those interviewees identify any explicit involvement of Pakistani authorities. Rather, those interviews underscore the importance of madrassas and madrassas staff in Pakistan’s settled and tribal Pashtun areas.

Pakistani media reports also buttress some of these claims by Afghan and international observers and analysts that Pakistan remains a territory for recruitment of suicide attackers. On 23 June, 2007 *The Dawn* (Karachi) published a story about a 4 June 2007 meeting of the National Security Council (NSC), chaired by President Musharraf, wherein exhaustive discussions on Talibanisation in FATA and the NWFP took place. During that meeting, the situation in the Kurram tribal region was reported to be “precarious because of sectarian clashes and it had also become a major transit point for cross-border movement into Afghanistan.”¹⁷⁹ In another recent report in *The Daily Times*, a late June 2007 meeting was held in Gandahab near the regional headquarters of Mohmand Agency to pay tribute to Nazar Muhammad who was ‘martyred’ in Afghanistan’s Kunar province. A Karachi-based cleric (Sheikh Fazal Muhammad) addressed the gathering of about 1,500 men including “armed and masked Taliban.” He

said “that the mujahideen lacked modern weapons, but were using suicide bombers to fight back the enemy (the US).” A young man, who was introduced to the gathering as provincial head of the mujahideen, addressed the group proclaiming that “We will sacrifice thousand more lives to drive out the Americans from Afghanistan,” removing any doubt that this rally was intended to support insurgent recruitment for Afghanistan.

Adding to the list of “strategic support” suicide assailants enjoy within the Pakistan official establishment, on August 3, 2007 the Pakistani parliament declined to adopt a proposal condemning suicide attacks, even within Pakistan. This request was made by Minister of Interior Sherpao, who was himself a target of a suicide attack in which he was injured.) Instead of condemning suicide attacks as a threat to Pakistan’s own internal security, parliamentarians, led by key Islamists such as Maulana Fazlur Rahman and Liaquat Baloch—called for an end of the US intervention in Afghanistan. Liaquat Baloch, a leader of the Jamaat Islami opined that “The situation will not change, and resistance will continue till the Americans leave.” The parliamentarians also attributed the suicide attacks in Pakistan to the government’s military actions against militants in the tribal areas.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, in June 2007, Pakistan’s Religious Affairs Minister Ejaz-ul-Haq offered his own justification for suicide attacks. While condemning Britain’s knighting of Salmon Rushdie, this important minister told parliament “If someone commits suicide bombing to protect the honour of the Prophet Mohammad, his act is justified.”¹⁸¹ Both in his capacity as minister of religious affairs and as the son of the former Pakistani General and President Zia al Haq, Ejaz-ul-Haq is respected and his opinions have credibility among political and militant Islamists alike. That Haq retained this position is an important acquiescence to militants in Pakistan and exemplifies Islamabad’s willingness to tolerate attitudes that encourage and justify the use of suicide attacks—even on its own soil.

UNAMA analysts as well as journalists and analysts cited throughout this report have concluded that at least some of Afghanistan’s attackers are children and many come from Pakistan; although some of their families may originate in Afghanistan. These findings are supported by several reports that have come out of Pakistan which cite the use of madrassas and schools along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas to recruit

young children for suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Syed Shoab Hasan visited Tank, on the edge of Pakistan's tribal belt, to investigate claims that pro-Taliban militants are kidnapping children from schools, often as young as eleven years of age. Teachers interviewed by Hasan clarified that the children are not kidnapped per se. Rather the Taliban "convince" them that it is their duty to carry out jihad. The teacher added that they are being recruited for suicide missions. While popular press fixates upon madrassas, Hasan found that "As many as 30 students from each of the four government schools in Tank 'enlisted'. A similar number have also joined from private schools. The ages of those taken are between 11 to 15 years."¹⁸² Parents are too afraid of the Taliban to do anything and hope, that if they acquiesce, there is chance that their child may return.¹⁸³

In fact, there have been several disturbing reports of children suicide attackers recruited from Pakistan's madrassas. In July 2007, a fourteen year old boy, Rafiqullah, was studying in a Pakistani madrassah in the South Waziristan town of Kotki. Two men came to the school and showed him and his classmates various videos of suicide attackers. They taught him how to drive and let them ride motorcycles in effort to persuade him to cross into Afghanistan to kill an Afghan governor. Rafiqullah walked eight hours over the border into Khost where he met his handler who sought to embolden his courage before giving him his suicide vest. Similar to youth interviewed by UNAMA in Pul-e-Charki prison, his handler also threatened to kill him if he backed out. Rafiqullah claimed that at least two other boys had been so indoctrinated from his school. The Karzai government opted to release the boy. In June, a six year old boy in Ghazni claimed that Taliban militants coerced him into wearing a suicide vest to approach US soldiers. The plot was foiled when he sought help from the Afghan police.¹⁸⁴

The use of children in these attacks has vexed some key figures in Pakistan's Waziristan, such as Mullah Wazir of North Waziristan. In June, he requested the Taliban to cease and desist from "recruiting" children. His request seems to have been disregarded.¹⁸⁵ ABC obtained a video depicting several boys, some as young as twelve, graduating from a suicide training camp run by Mullah Dadullah Monsour (the successor of the slain Mullah Dadullah).¹⁸⁶ All of this taken together makes a strong case that children are used to some extent in Afghanistan's suicide attacks and that these young children may be uneducated, ignorant, impressionable, brainwashed, and seeking money

for their families. This is a marked departure from the backgrounds of suicide assailants observed in other theatres, most of whom are *not* under-educated, brain-washed persons from backgrounds of poverty and seeking financial rewards for their surviving family members.

The government of Pakistan is wont to dismiss these claims, and tends to blame the Afghan government and international actors for the insurgency in Afghanistan. Curiously, while denying that al Qaeda and the Taliban are in Pakistan, President Musharraf and Foreign Minister Kasuri frequently - and correctly - boast that Pakistan has captured and detained more such fugitives than any other partner and has suffered more casualties than any other partner. Indeed, Pakistan continues to receive appropriate approbation for these important contributions. Certainly, the degree of Pakistani support for Afghanistan's insurgents will remain a deeply controversial and divisive issue. It is difficult to determine whether, as Seth Jones alleges, Pakistan actively supports these elements; passively tolerates them; is unable to comprehensively shut them down; or employs a mixed strategy of pursuing and eliminating some while tolerating others who remain of strategic value to Pakistan's security managers.¹⁸⁷

While this report cannot adjudicate these various contentions about the nature of the sanctuary in Pakistan and the degree of official and unofficial support they enjoy, it is clear that the insurgency and suicide attacks in Afghanistan will not diminish as long as anti-government elements can rely upon Pakistani territory for the recruitment and training of operatives, for fundraising, and safe havens while preparing for fresh attacks in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan environment: who supports the insurgents and their goals?

Promulgation of policies to retard popular support for suicide attacks demands an understanding of popular grievance, the degree to which the polity agrees with the claims made by insurgents, and a dedicated effort to identify those segments of society that support suicide attacks and understand why they do so. Gauging the degree to which the population shares the broad sentiments of anti-government elements and even support for

suicide missions is important because expanded public support for the groups' grievances, goals and tactics may augur an improved recruitment environment for anti-government elements in Afghanistan, permitting them access to more and better qualified assailants. Conversely, as long as there is little resonance between these elements and society, militant groups may find it difficult to recruit high quality attackers for their missions with the result that groups are less effective or incapable of producing "high quality" terror than those groups with better qualified attackers. For these reasons, it is important to understand, with as much granularity as possible, not only where support for these groups resides among the Afghan population, but also the determinants of that support. Such analyses are the fundament of good public policy interventions to either mitigate support for the groups where it exists or to insulate the population to ensure that such support does not further develop.

Unfortunately, most polling firms that globally monitor support for suicide attacks or support for worldviews espoused by groups using such attacks (e.g. Pew, Gallup, Zogby) do not include Afghanistan in their surveys at all. While such non-proprietary data are scarce for Afghanistan, there are three publicly available polls on Afghanistan which do cast some light on popular grievances and in one of these explicitly questioned respondents about suicide attacks. UNAMA also received data from the Rendon Group which also surveyed a national sample of Afghans about their support for suicide missions. The first national survey of Afghans used in this report was fielded by WorldPublicOpinion.org in November and December of 2005 using face-to-face interviews among a national random sample of 2,089 adults.¹⁸⁸ This survey only queried about satisfaction with governance and counter-terrorism efforts prosecuted in Afghanistan. The second survey used herein was fielded by the US media organization, ABC News, and involved surveying 1,039 adults in October 2005. The third was performed jointly by ABC and the UK-based BBC World Service and included 1,036 adults interviewed in October 2006.¹⁸⁹ Both of these ABC/ABC-BBC polls were conducted in face-to-face interviews using samples drawn from 31 of 34 provinces. Note that all three polls used the same Afghan firm, the Afghan Center for Social and Opinion Research in Kabul. This likely explains the similar sampling structure employed across

the three polls. The nation-wide poll fielded by the Rendon Group included 2,343 Afghans, interviewed face-to-face in May 2007.

Turning to the WorldPublicOpinion.org survey of late 2005, while the concerns identified by the Pul-e-Charki interviews were not terribly common among Afghans generally, they were held by important minorities. For example, a solid majority (83 percent) felt that the country was generally going in the right direction but one in ten felt it was going in the wrong direction. While 70 percent felt that the security in their areas was excellent or good, 30 percent thought it was fair or poor. President Karzai also was very popular with nine in ten persons indicating a very or somewhat favourable view of him. Only six percent had a somewhat or very unfavourable view of him. Conversely the Taliban were quite unpopular with 88 percent holding a very or somewhat unfavourable view of them. Only 8 percent had a somewhat or very favourable view of them. And most (82 percent) thought their overthrow was a good thing. However, more than one in ten thought it was a bad thing.

A solid majority (81 percent) either had a very or somewhat favourable opinion of the United States and 83 percent were somewhat or very favourably inclined towards the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan. But 16 percent had a somewhat or very unfavourable view of the United States generally and 17 percent had a somewhat or very unfavourable view of U.S. military operations. Respondents overwhelmingly expressed confidence in the effectiveness of ISAF with 82 percent believing their efforts were very effective or somewhat effective, while 15 percent found the same to be not very or not at all effective. Most (79 percent) approved of US military efforts to kill or capture Al Qaeda fighters although 13 percent disapproved. More than two in three persons approved of NATO expansion while fewer than one in five disapproved. Of those who approved of NATO's previous expansion, the majority wanted further growth.¹⁹⁰

The UN was also extremely popular with nine of ten persons being very or somewhat favourably inclined towards it. Only five percent were somewhat or very unfavourably inclined towards the UN. Afghan respondents overwhelmingly (81 percent) believed that Al Qaeda is exerting mainly a negative influence. (However 6 percent thought the organization's influence is mainly positive.) A majority (63 percent) thought Pakistan's influence was mainly negative while 13 percent thought its influence

was mainly positive. With respect to governance, in 2005, most Afghans (91 percent) said that the central government was very or somewhat effective. Local leaders were seen as less effective: 64 percent said they were very or somewhat effective and 32 percent said that they were not very or not at all effective.¹⁹¹

The 2005 ABC poll results were similar to those of WorldPublicOpinion.org perhaps because both groups used the same firm, similar sample structure and similar time periods. For example, 87 percent believed that US overthrowing the Taliban was a good thing; 75 percent believed that security was better since the fall of the Taliban, and 91 percent believed that the Afghan government is preferable to the Taliban regime. While 83 percent had a favourable view of the United States in general, only 68 percent were positively inclined towards US' activities in Afghanistan. However, persons who indicated unhappiness with their living conditions were twice as likely to have unfavourable views of the United States. Nine out of ten held negative views of Bin Laden and nearly the same had negative views of the Taliban. Karzai was rated as excellent or good as president by 83 percent and the United Nations enjoyed widespread support with 82 percent findings its work in Afghanistan to be excellent or good. So on these public sentiments, there is broad congruence between the WorldPublicOpinion.org and the ABC Poll.¹⁹² Such similar results from contemporaneous polls with similar sample structures is reassuring and suggests that these polling results are stable and thus likely reliable.

However, the ABC poll found several areas of concern that were not probed by the shorter WorldPublicOpinion.org poll. For instance, there was substantial suspicion of cheating in the parliamentary elections with nearly one half (46 percent) believing that there was intimidation of voters, vote buying, and/or fraudulent counting in their areas. Despite this, most (77 percent) were confident that the parliament will work for the benefit of the people. When asked to identify the greatest danger to Afghanistan, 41 percent identified the Taliban compared to 28 percent who identified drug traffickers, 22 percent warlords, 4 percent the United States and 2 percent the Afghan government.

Security was a pre-eminent concern of respondents even though 72 percent said that the current security conditions in Afghanistan were "good." But there was considerable variation across the sample. Security in urban areas was better with 40

percent of city dwellers describing their security as very good compared to 24 percent in rural areas. Both security and economic circumstances were substantially worse in the Southwest and East where the Taliban are active. When asked to identify the single-most important priority for Afghanistan, 40 percent identified security from crime and violence compared to 31 percent for economic opportunities and 14 percent for improving infrastructure.¹⁹³

The ABC poll additionally queried respondents about acceptability of different kinds of attacks. While Afghan respondents expressed—as noted above—broad support for the United States, three in ten believed that attacks against U.S. forces can be justified. This belief was most intense among those that are “socially conservative” or disaffected, 55 percent of whom thought they are justified. Reflecting the US centric nature of the poll, it did not ask comparable questions about ISAF.¹⁹⁴

ABC and BBC jointly fielded the next survey in late 2006. In the intervening year, several measures began to decline. Only 68 percent approved of Karzai’s work, 59 percent believed that the parliament is working for the benefit of the populace, positive ratings of the U.S. declined 11 points. Governance loomed as a large problem with 78 percent of Afghans identifying official corruption as a problem in their locality.¹⁹⁵

Only 58 percent said that security was good in their locality, a steep decline from 75 percent in 2005. Security concerns were greatest in the south, especially in Kandahar and Helmand, where the Taliban were active and in the northwest where Taliban activity was increasing. In the southwest, only one in three said security was better in 2005 than under the Taliban and only one in four in the Northwest. Not surprisingly, respondents in these areas also reported a lack of government or international troop presence relative to other areas. More than four in ten reported Taliban violence in their locality and this was as high as eight in ten in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces.¹⁹⁶

On the positive side, most Afghans—notwithstanding these regional pockets—reported that the government and local police have a strong presence in their areas and trust the current authorities, and at least trust them somewhat to provide security.¹⁹⁷ With respect to the Taliban, more Afghans saw the Taliban as the country’s greatest threat (57 percent compared to 41 percent in 2005) and most (89 percent) continued to view them unfavourably. Bin Ladin is equally unpopular as the Taliban and has

remained so since the 2005 poll. Nine in ten were dubious that the Taliban can provide security.

Despite being deeply unpopular, the Taliban were able to obtain food and money from residents with one in six survey participants claiming that people in their locality provided Taliban fighters with food or money. In the Northwest, more than a third of surveyed persons reported such support and in the Southwest provinces, nearly one half of respondents did so. In Helmand and Kandahar, nearly two thirds reported such direct support to the Taliban.¹⁹⁸ When asked to explain why people in their area support the Taliban, Afghans identified a number of reasons: religious duty (23 percent); agreement with their goals (14 percent); coercion/compulsion (12 percent). However, the reason most often identified is the belief that the Taliban can provide security: nation-wide 30 percent cited this reason and 46 percent did so in Helmand and Kandahar.¹⁹⁹ So while most Afghans do not support the Taliban and doubt they can provide security, the minority who does support the Taliban do so because they do trust the Taliban to pacify the country.

Most Afghans (88 percent) said that the US-led invasion was good for Afghanistan but 11 percent thought it was very or mostly bad. A large majority (88 percent) preferred the current government to the Taliban, which declined three percentage points from year before. With respect to international military forces, eight in ten supported their presence compared to only five percent who supported the Taliban and 11 percent who supported jihadis from other countries. There was considerable variation in views about when U.S. troops should leave. Overall 55 percent wanted the US military to remain until security is restored (down from 65 percent in 2005). Support for this was highest in Kabul (70 percent) and lowest in the East and Northeast (40 percent).²⁰⁰

While support for the US military presence had declined, support for attacks against U.S. troops also declined. Only 13 percent indicated that they are justified. Those who are politically disaffected were more likely to believe attacks can be justified (35 percent). Unfortunately, the poll did not ask about ISAF attacks. The poll also found widespread rejection of other attacks. Large majorities (all above ninety percent) condemned attacking government officials, police, schools, teachers and other civilians.

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With respect to suicide attacks in particular, 89 percent said that there can be no justification for suicide attacks. However 8 percent believed that suicide attacks can be justified. Since this question was not asked in 2005, there is no way to discern whether this reflects an increase or decrease from the past. The Rendon Group's poll also asked respondents about the acceptability for suicide attacks. That poll found that 71 percent said that suicide attacks are never acceptable while 2 percent indicated that they are acceptable. However, when asked about suicide attacks against non-Muslims, 21 percent indicated that they are acceptable. When asked if they are launched in defence of Islam, 72 percent said that it is never justified; 11 percent believed that it is always or sometimes justified; and 14 percent indicated that it is rarely justified. While it is tempting to conclude from the ABC/BBC figure of 8 percent and the Rendon Group figures of 11 percent that support decreased or increased, it is impossible to make these across-time comparisons because the two groups used different questions.²⁰²

While one cannot compare the late ABC/BBC 2006 and the Rendon Group's May 2007 figures for support for suicide attacks, the latter figure of 11 percent can be compared to Pew's measurement of levels of support for suicide attacks in numerous other Muslim countries because the Rendon Group used the same question as Pew in their survey and achieved a nationally representative sample. Pew has surveyed Muslim respondents in Muslim majority states (or in states with large Muslim minorities) every year since 2002. To measure the level of support, Pew survey teams (and that of the Rendon Group) pose the following question in several nations:

“Some people think that suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in order to defend Islam from its enemies. Other people believe that, no matter what the reason, this kind of violence is never justified. Do you personally feel that this kind of violence is often justified to defend Islam, sometimes justified, rarely justified, or never justified?”²⁰³

According to their most recent survey results for the countries they monitor, support for suicide attacks has declined between 2002 and 2007 as depicted in Figure 15. Support for suicide attacks was the highest in Lebanon in 2002 (Pew did not survey the Palestinian Territories in 2002) when 74% believed its use to be “often justified” or “sometimes justified.” In 2007, this declined to only 34% in Lebanon. In 2007, the

Palestinian Territories registered the most intense support where 70% found its use to be often or sometimes justified.²⁰⁴

When one compares the degree of support for this tactic in Afghanistan to that in other countries, support for suicide attacks in Afghanistan is not so dissimilar from that of Pakistan: 11 percent of Afghans said it could be justified sometimes or often compared to 9 percent of Pakistanis. Another nine percent of Pakistanis said it could be rarely justified and 72 percent said never justified compared to 14 percent and 72 percent of Afghans respectively who gave such responses. Afghanistan also resembles Indonesia and Morocco with ten percent and 11 percent respectively finding suicide attacks to be often or sometimes justified. This benchmarking effort undermines the popular view that Afghans somehow are less likely than citizens of other Muslim countries to support suicide attacks. (See Table 15.)

Figure 15. Support for Suicide Attacks According to Pew Global Attitudes Survey

Often/Sometimes Justified	2002 (%)	2007 (%)	Percent Change
Lebanon	74	34	-40
Bangladesh	44	20	-24
Pakistan	33	9	-24
Jordan	43	23	-20
Indonesia	26	10	-16
Turkey	13	16	-3
Palestinian Territories	--	70	--

Malaysia	--	26	--
Kuwait	--	21	--
Morocco	--	11	--
Egypt	--	8	--

Source: Pew Global Attitudes Survey, “A Rising Tide Lifts Mood in the Developing World: Sharp Decline in Support for Suicide Bombing in Muslim Countries, July 27, 2007, available at <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=257>

Inferences from the survey data

These survey data suggest that while large majorities support the Afghan government and the international presence in Afghanistan, and while large majorities dislike the Taliban, there are important - and growing - segments of the population who have serious concerns and significant misgivings. Security figures pre-eminently both in the polls and in the interviews and, as noted, a key reason for supporting the Taliban is the paradoxical belief that they can provide security. This belief resonated in the Pul-e-Charki interviews as did its converse that international troops not only fail to deliver security, but they also bring insecurity.

Unfortunately, none of the polls asked respondents to indicate whether or not they perceive Afghanistan is “occupied.” While not a precise proxy, declining support for international military presence is notable and may intimate growing beliefs about occupation. While the authors of the ABC and BBC polls tended to dilate upon the positive large figures supporting the government and international efforts; however, terrorism is a phenomenon that draws off of even small numbers. The reported figures on material support to the Taliban and high levels of support they enjoy in the south is disquieting as is the levels of support that suicide attacks enjoy under some circumstances, which exceeds reported levels for Pakistan. Polling data are most useful when they are consistently obtained through regular conduct of surveys with standardized questions. It is very difficult—if not impossible—to discern trends using different survey questions. The situation in Afghanistan merits regularized polling with consistent intervals to monitor these important developments and to develop appropriate policy responses to adverse public opinion on key issues.

Conclusions

Evidence gathered from prisoners interviewed in Pul-e-Charki prison and from other sources suggests that suicide attackers in Afghanistan differ markedly from those in other conflict areas. Whereas in other theatres they tend to be better educated and less likely to be unemployed relative to the societies from which are recruited, in Afghanistan it appears as if suicide attackers are young (sometimes children), poor, uneducated, easily influenced by recruiters and draw heavily from madrassas across the border in Pakistan. Their motivations seem to draw from a range of issues including religious rewards and duties; secular concerns such as occupation, security, ethno-nationalist motivation; as well as communal and personal concerns including dishonour and humiliation.

Whereas the cells that employ suicide attacks have a firm footing in Afghanistan, they also enjoy significant degrees and varying kinds of support in Pakistan. This means that mitigation of suicide attacks, like the phenomenon itself, is inherently a cross-border issue and ways must be found to ensure that Pakistan is a part of the solution in defeating the threat from suicide attacks, not part of the problem.

Of equal concern is the polity of Afghanistan itself. Surveys illuminate numerous areas of growing concern such as security, declining confidence in the national government and international actors and surprising levels of support for suicide attacks that exceed levels observed in Pakistan. However, the polity generally remains committed to its belief that the current government is better than that of the Taliban. Nonetheless, concerns about safety, legitimacy and efficacy of the government and international presence require redress to ensure that these disaffected pockets do not grow and harbour sentiments that support the anti-government elements and their tactics.

5. The human rights dimension: the impact of suicide attacks on Afghan communities

The recent adoption of suicide attacks by anti-government elements in Afghanistan has had wide ranging impacts upon Afghan communities, adversely affecting Afghans' quality of life and inflicting loss of income and other forms of socioeconomic hardships. The first part of this chapter outlines these broader consequences for Afghans in their daily lives, including the deleterious impacts upon their right to life and safety, freedom of movement, right to education, access to essential public service and imposition of income loss along with other adverse socioeconomic consequences.

As noted throughout this monograph, anti-government elements' use of suicide attacks in Afghanistan has had particularly disturbing impacts upon children both as perpetrators of the attacks and as victims. Because children enjoy special protections under the purview of the UN system, the consequences for children are of particular concern. This second section of this chapter expositis in some detail the myriad ways in which children have been affected by suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

While it may be tempting to assume that the impact of suicide attacks, compared to the insurgency writ large, imposes only marginal or peripheral burdens upon Afghan society; their impacts upon several domains of human rights are substantial. These human costs of suicide attacks are considered in this chapter. Suicide attacks contribute a particularly disturbing dimension to the impact of general insurgency on Afghan communities because they occur without warning. Their occurrence in otherwise peaceful civilian areas, rather than areas affected by regular ongoing fighting, along with their seeming randomness, impedes the safe and full enjoyment of important human rights.

The wider consequences of suicide attacks

The government of Afghanistan is a party to a series of human rights instruments that guarantee Afghans the individual and communal enjoyment of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.²⁰⁵ While suicide attackers may not per se violate individual

human rights, their actions severely restrict the space for the enjoyment of such rights by individuals or communities. Although there are other rights affected by the insurgency in general, the specific rights mentioned in this chapter are ones that are particularly affected by the regular occurrence of suicide attacks.

Right to life and safety

One of the internationally recognized human rights is the right to life and safety. While Afghans' right to life and safety has been at risk for decades, this fundamental right has been further compromised by the recent introduction of suicide attacks into the Afghan theatre.²⁰⁶ While anti-government elements could use suicide attacks as a precise weapon of warfare, evidence shows that the actual victims of suicide attacks by insurgents in Afghanistan are predominantly civilians, as discussed in the third chapter of this report and as described by international organizations such as Human Rights Watch.²⁰⁷ While suicide attacks are not a daily occurrence in most of the affected communities and while actual risk of death or injury from such an attack remains a low probability event, their unpredictable nature affects the perceptions of persons and encourages individuals to feel as if their life and daily safety are genuinely at risk.

In many cases, this insecurity has led community members to openly question whether they, rather than the claimed military target, were in fact the focus of an attack. For instance, during an interview with Human Rights Watch, Habibullah, the brother of one of two civilians killed in a 21 May 2006 attack on Jalalabad Road said: 'The bastards—they blew themselves up. They did not kill the foreigners. They only killed innocent people. It was like they tried to kill the children... They killed the innocent; they killed the poor, and hurt the children. They just make us hate them. We felt like we were targets, not the foreigners.'²⁰⁸ Similarly, Mohammad Yousef Aresh, another survivor of an attack, when interviewed by Human Rights Watch, asked, 'What was their target, the people? The Taliban, they were targeting everybody and nobody. I don't know what or who was the target that day. I don't know who their target is.'²⁰⁹

Freedom of movement

Suicide attacks have a detrimental impact on freedom of movement, another important right. Citizens may avoid movement in particular areas out of fear of falling victim of suicide attacks because they can take place far beyond actual areas of conflict. This is exemplified by an incident monitored by UNAMA human rights staff on 19 May 2007. On that day, a suicide attacker attacked a PRT patrol in the bazaar in Kunduz city, leaving seven civilians dead and 14 more injured. In the immediate aftermath, it was not just UN and other international agencies that restricted their movement and adopted extra security precautions to mitigate their risk-exposure. Anecdotal evidence available to UNAMA indicates that everyday transactions carried out in the bazaar area also saw a significant reduction. This was attested to by claims from several shopkeepers in the area who experienced a slump in business as people stayed away in the aftermath of the deadly attack. It may be usefully recalled that this particular attack occurred just a month after an earlier suicide attack that targeted the city's police forces right in the heart of their official compound in the city. The brazen nature of this attack against the city's security forces had sent shockwaves through the economically thriving and still widely considered peaceful and stable north-eastern city.²¹⁰

Suicide attacks pose a particular threat to freedom of movement because they are, as typified by the attack in the Kunduz bazaar, often carried out in areas of regular or high civilian traffic and frequently impact indiscriminately on civilians, including children in several recorded instances. Attacks occur in buses and bus stations,²¹¹ in front of shops, hospitals, police stations, mosques, on roads and in other public places. They kill or maim ordinary men and women going about their daily routine, as well as children at play, on their way to or from school, or simply in the company of adult carers. For women, heightened concerns for their safety in view of suicide and other attacks the potential further restriction of their movement is especially problematic as this right is already significantly constrained by religious, cultural and social conventions.

Right to education

A third right generally recognized is the right to education. This right has been battered over recent decades and suicide attacks in Afghanistan have further imperilled the exercise of this basic right. The right to education has arguably been the most negatively affected by insurgent attacks in general, but it bears noting that educational institutions are under threat not only from insurgent attacks but from other conservative or radical forces as well. Many parents agonise over weighing the costs and benefits of sending their children to school, often translating to the difficult perceived choice between having an educated child dead or an illiterate one alive.²¹²

Schoolchildren have on several occasions become the victim of suicide attacks. Children need to navigate civilian areas and services to access schools and most suicide attacks are carried out in such civilian areas. The following case provides a useful illustration.

Sharzad is a nine-year old girl who was seriously wounded in the 12 March 2006 suicide attack apparently directed at Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, former Afghan president and Meshrano Jirga official. In her interview with Human Rights Watch, she said: “I went to the mosque that day to say prayers. I was worried that I may not be accepted to school [a school she had applied to], so I went to ask God to help me to get into the school. My younger brother and sister came with me too. The explosion happened on our way home. It cut my stomach open and I thought I was going to die”.²¹³

Worried parents may well decide that it is too dangerous for their children to undertake a twice daily journey to and from school and may prefer to keep their children at home. Given still enduring traditional views in many communities that favour boys over girls when it comes to parental decisions on educating their children, it is possible that security concerns may especially dissuade parents to send their girls to school.

Enjoyment of essential public services

The enjoyment of several important rights, such as the right to education and health care depend on safe and free access to essential public services provided by the state. This

access has come under additional pressure because suicide attacks have mostly occurred in public places, where community members normally access not only schools, clinics and hospitals, but also markets, mosques, courts and government offices. As such, suicide attacks have also diminished the community's full and safe access to the services that these institutions provide. Anecdotal evidence collected by UNAMA indicates that affected families and communities make conscious decisions to reduce exposure. This may result in individuals deciding to reduce the frequency of their movement in areas considered unsafe, limiting their movement only to particular areas considered safe, or assigning certain tasks only to certain members of the family.

To the extent that suicide attacks compel aid agencies and other service providers operating in Afghanistan to determine that an affected area is no longer an adequately permissive security environment to permit service, the community may suffer further adverse consequences due to this reduced level of assistance. In already underserved areas the effect can be devastating with many aid agencies scaling back operations or even pulling out. Even if innovative modalities of implementation allow their operations to continue, this may mean policy adjustments that would otherwise be deemed irregular or that could compromise humanitarian principles.

Loss of income or access to livelihood and other social and economic consequences

While many Afghans have suffered loss of income and other adverse economic impacts over the decades of warfare, suicide attacks, like other insurgent attacks, have posed further hardship upon Afghans. Several instances of suicide attacks have destroyed shops that are often the victim's main or only means of livelihood. Others have killed or injured labourers or primary earners at work or on their way to or from work. In Khost, for example, a suicide attack at the entrance to the International Military Forces' base killed 10 and injured 40 of the men reporting for work in the IMF premises.²¹⁴ Threats of suicide and other insurgent attacks continue to scare Afghans working for NGOs, ISAF/PRT and other organizations within the general aid community.

The impact on their dependents can be devastating especially where there are no other income earners. The resulting inability to afford the same standard of living may mean sacrifices or compromises in decisions on education of the children, health care for family members, travel and the enjoyment of other rights dependent on the family's finances. Continuing medical treatment of those who survive with injuries or disabilities often impose additional financial burden on the family.

Family members of those killed also experience profound depression and trauma, affecting family life.²¹⁵ In the case of families of those who survived but were rendered disabled, there is the added burden of their care and rehabilitation, a difficult challenge given the inadequacies of existing national policies and programmes on disability, a difficulty compounded by prevailing social and community prejudices and general lack of awareness.

In its report, Human Rights Watch also clearly highlighted the impact of suicide attacks on community life. Najib, interviewed by Human Rights Watch in relation to a suicide attack carried out by the Taliban on 21 May 2006 against a US military convoy travelling on Jalalabad Road, described the effect of the attack on the neighbourhood: "The shop was a good shop. It was more than a shop where we bought things. All the neighbours came here during the day. Some of us came in the morning; some of us came in the afternoon. But all of us came here during the day. We all live here. There are many houses, around here and we are like brothers and we take care of each other. [Now] the shops are destroyed and we have no money to rebuild them. The tragedy here is not that the shops were destroyed but that we don't meet one another everyday now. We don't hear all the news and the stories about the families here. I was thinking about this when I had to clean the shop. I had to take the body parts away that were in the shop. I had to take the hands and feet of Saifoor, my friend, away. That day was hell for me."²¹⁶

The impact of suicide attacks on children

Children have special status in society, which is highlighted within the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given

opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity."²¹⁷ Many of these protections and benefits are lost on children who grow up in conflict affected countries, including Afghanistan. While the armed conflict in Afghanistan affects children in many different ways, regular suicide attacks have a particularly problematic impact. In Afghanistan, there are increasingly disconcerting reports that anti-government elements—with various degrees of coercion—are persuading children to execute suicide missions. Equally disturbing is the fact that children tend to be particularly affected by some of the wider consequences of suicide attacks discussed above, particular with respect to diminished educational opportunities.

Children as perpetrators of suicide attacks

Many armed groups engaged in conflicts around the world have used children to fight in hostilities. The CRC prohibits those less than 15 years of age from being recruited for and engaging in armed conflict.²¹⁸ However, in many armed conflicts the soldiers involved are children under 15 and often these children are forcibly recruited. Commanders target and recruit children because they are readily available, easy to terrorize and manipulate, and provide an excellent source of free labour. Even within the sphere of child soldiering, the dispatching of children on suicide missions is a particularly egregious violation of international norms. Nevertheless in several countries, including Sri Lanka, the Palestinian territories, Iraq and now Afghanistan, children, including girls, have become suicide attackers. However, in Afghanistan there have been no reports of girls being used in this way. Available evidence suggests that children below the age of 15 are not typically employed. However, there are a number of reports of 15-year olds being employed including those interviewed in Pul-e-Charki prisons.

Utilizing children in these missions confers a number of operational benefits for anti-government elements in Afghanistan. As Afghan and international security forces become more adept at recognizing suicide attackers, children may be more desirable because they are not generally suspected. Under the presumption of innocence, a child may more easily conceal himself among the population. Employing children as

perpetrators of suicide attacks is an even more effective instrument of psychological warfare than using an adult attacker. Indistinguishable from the other children, the spectre of the “child attacker” is as terrifying as it incomprehensible.

The operational disadvantages of deploying young children in these missions include premature detonation, aborting the mission, and making a misstep that results in their capture and concomitant mission failure. Child attackers, once captured, may also be more inclined to provide information about their group or cell as they may be less sophisticated and less ideologically committed to the cause. It is possible, but not certain, that the use of young attackers contributes to the high civilian casualties that result from suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

Children are drawn into armed conflict for a variety of reasons: They may have been orphaned or separated from their parents, caregiver or community; they may lack a home and basic means of support. Orphans and separated children frequently join armed groups to gain security, food, etc. The desire for revenge because a family member is killed can also have a huge impact. Sometimes family pressure, often financial, can play a major part in the decision of children to join militant groups. Excitement and a desire for power combined with boredom and lack of opportunities also figure largely, as often children come from poor backgrounds with little or no means to further their education or make money. Finally, dissatisfaction with an existing political, social and economic system often pushes children into taking up arms where their sense of hope has been lost for building a more positive future.²¹⁹ Needless to say, in many conflicts children do not enter into conflict of their own accord and indeed are coerced.

Some of these causal factors may be salient for Afghanistan’s children suicide attackers including coercion. Available evidence, though scant and tentative, suggests that some children are motivated by money for their family. Reports cited in this report that recruiters lure children with “motorcycles and cell phones” comport the above-noted explanations for child volunteerism. And the reliance upon madrassas suggests that recruiters are seeking out children who are separated from their families and who may be vulnerable to their means of suasion. Moreover, the limited information garnered for this report on children involved in suicide attacks has highlighted that many come from poor and uneducated households.²²⁰

Evidence collected for this report and cited above suggests that children are often indoctrinated from an early age—often in madrassas across the border in Pakistan. The resultant worldview as well as the persons imparting the instruction may exert a strong influence over children’s’ “choices” and “desire” to join armed groups and potentially commit suicide attacks. It is debatable whether or not children are capable of undertaking such rational choices at such a young age. The reality of this indoctrination, influence and lack of rational decision-making is dramatically demonstrated by a school teacher interviewed in Tank (in Pakistan) who witnessed Taliban taking children from his school. He explained to BBC reporter, Syed Shoaib Hasan, that the Taliban “don't really kidnap the children...The Taliban convince them it is their duty to carry out jihad [holy struggle]... [But] How much convincing does a child need? ... Especially when promised adventure?”²²¹

Armed elements in Afghanistan successfully recruit children by emphasizing the child’s sense of idealism and commitment to their religion. Amnesty International details the thinking of a 15 year old suicide attacker who was reportedly willing to undertake a suicide mission: “I want to sacrifice my life for Islam ... [T]his is our country and we are Muslims, and the British, sorry the foreigners, are here. So I wanted to expel the foreigners. That’s why I’m ready to explode myself to kill them. To explode them. That’s my duty.”²²²

For the most part, however, children join armed groups through forced recruitment and abduction. This also may be true at least in some measure for child suicide attackers in Afghanistan. In the Andar district of Ghazni province, for instance, it is reported that Taliban fighters targeted and abducted children between the ages of 8 and 12 years and took them to religious madrassas for education. According to US officials, between 5 and 10 boys a year are reportedly lost in the small villages in this district.²²³ Forced recruitment has also allegedly occurred in Tank and other villages in northwest Pakistan. The afore-noted BBC correspondent reported in June that “as many as 30 students from each of the four government schools were ‘enlisted’ [by pro-Taliban militants] ... [with] a similar number [having] joined from private schools.”²²⁴

The Taliban have in the past denied recruiting children. According to their military rulebook called Layeha, which every mujahid must abide by, under rule 19

“Mujahideen are not allowed to take young boys with no facial hair onto the battlefield.”²²⁵ According to the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, Mullah Mohammad Omer in an interview with the BBC, claimed that young followers who had not yet grown a beard would not be included in their fighting forces. Anyone who disobeyed this order would be punished.²²⁶ This does potentially still allow for recruitment under the age of 15 years as the cut-off point is linked to puberty. In June of this year a Taliban spokesperson, Qari Yousef Ahmadi, denied in the media that the group was using children to carry out suicide attacks, claiming that there were plenty of adult men willing to undertake a suicide mission instead. However, this runs counter to several recent reports of children being deployed as suicide attackers.²²⁷

Children as victims of suicide attacks

Children are easy targets. They play in streets, ride on buses, and gather in crowded market places – they are inquisitive and curious. Accordingly, children tend to be especially hard hit by suicide attacks taking place in civilian areas. Hundreds of children have been injured as a result of IED explosions, including suicide attacks in Afghanistan. They become victims because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time such as in an attack on 21 November 2006, in which four children were injured in Khost when a suicide attacker targeted a NATO convoy that was handing out sweets to the children. Similarly, on 27 June 2006 two Afghan youth were killed in Kunduz in an attack that targeted German ISAF soldiers. Insurgent forces, although - as in the cases above - frequently directing their attacks against military targets have tended to disregard the impact that these attacks have on any civilian bystanders, including children. As more suicide attacks have occurred, there have been increasingly more civilian casualties, with children frequently making up a substantial part of them.

In some extreme cases children even become the unwitting accomplices of suicide attackers who use them as shields to gain access to a particular target. ISAF has repeatedly accused the Taliban of using children as human shields. According to ISAF spokesperson Colonel Tom Collins, for instance, on 12 February 2007 local children

were reportedly used as human shields by the militants to escape fire from ISAF forces during an attack in Kajaki district, Helmand province.²²⁸

Finally, children tend to be disproportionately affected by the wider impact that suicide attacks have on Afghan communities, which is discussed in the first part of this chapter. The right to education is the most obvious one of those particularly relevant to children. However, a limitation on their freedom of movement also tends to be particularly severe for children and in many cases it will be them who suffer the most from a loss of a family's main means of livelihood.

Conclusions

This chapter demonstrates the impacts that suicide attacks have on Afghan communities goes well beyond the immediate attacks and their victims. Campaigns of regular suicide attacks create a lasting climate of fear throughout affected and unaffected communities alike and severely limit the affected population in their enjoyment of such basic human rights as freedom of movement and the access to education. Children, a community's most important yet vulnerable resource, tend to suffer especially under the effects of suicide attacks. Not only are they particularly hard hit by the limitations that such attacks can precipitate, but also they tend to be at a higher than normal risk of being caught up in the direct consequences of an attack. Worst of all, there have been several cases in which children have been turned into the perpetrators of suicide attacks themselves. Overall, it must be recognized that, even more so than with other means of warfare, the effects of suicide attacks extend well beyond the specific victims of an attack.

Examples Affecting Children

- On 19 March, 2007 two miles from the American Embassy in Kabul, a 14 year old child was killed as an American Embassy convoy was passing
- On 8 and 17 March, 2007 three children were injured and one (age unknown) was killed respectively in Kandahar as a suicide attacker targeted a Canadian ISAF Convoy
- On 21 November, 2006 four children were injured in Khost as a suicide attacker targeted a NATO convoy that was handing out sweets to children
- On 17 October, 2006 two children were killed in Lashkar Gar in Helmand Province in an attack on a British ISAF patrol
- On 12 July, 2006 in Khost-Matun district, Khost province, a seven year old boy was killed during an attack on a Coalition vehicle
- On 27 June, 2006 two Afghan youth were killed in Kunduz in an attack that targeted German ISAF soldiers
- On 30 March, 2006 a child was killed in Kandahar during an attack on a Canadian ISAF convoy

6. Conclusions: Countering the threat and denying suicide Attackers' Successes

Suicide attacks in Afghanistan are distinct from suicide attacks in other theatres. On available evidence Afghanistan's suicide attackers appear to be largely poor, uneducated, young and impressionable. In many cases they come from madrassas across the border in Pakistan. Unlike other conflict areas wherein suicide attacks are commonly used, Afghanistan fortunately has yet to develop a robust "martyrdom culture," which simultaneously celebrates the attacker and helps forge a justifying narrative for the attacks as in other theatres. In fact, in Afghanistan it is rare that one can identify - much less celebrate - the attacker and his deed. Not all attackers seem to be truly ideologically committed, based upon the highly limited data garnered for this study. While suicide attackers in Afghanistan may have been inspired by such attacks in Iraq and neighbouring Pakistan, Afghanistan has been spared sectarian violence despite having a relatively large Shi'a population as discussed in this report.

While Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan have produced and distributed videos and DVDs of gruesome assassinations and while al Qaeda and a variety of Pakistan-based groups have produced last wills and testaments for local and global distribution, there have been remarkably few videotaped last wills and testaments of Afghanistan's suicide attackers, even though many have spent time in Pakistan where these videos are made. The reasons for this glaring absence of highly-emotive propaganda materials are not known. But the relative lack of sophistication and ideological zeal of Afghanistan's attackers likely make for "bad theatre" and thus Afghanistan's attackers may be unsuitable in large measure for such videos. This dearth may also reflect insurgents' judgments that the Afghan public may not be receptive to, or perhaps repulsed by, such media. Indeed, recent polling suggests that while support for suicide attacks among Afghans is not terribly dissimilar from comparable support in Pakistan, support is still low when compared to other countries.

All of these considerations, coupled with the minimal and geographically constrained support base for anti-government elements, suggest that insurgents can be denied success in their employment of suicide attacks through appropriate policy

interventions. The task at hand is to craft a series of interventions that will both mitigate the supply of suicide attacks as well demand for the same. Drawing from the extant literature on suicide attacks and the data gathered for Afghanistan, we present below a number of key suggestions. It must be stated upfront that while these suggestions are derived from the scholarly literature, most have not been empirically tested to be efficacious because prescribed courses of policies have not been taken by governments.

Uprooting root causes: occupation, justice, humiliation

Pape's work on suicide attacks offers several insights that require urgent consideration in Afghanistan. The genesis of suicide campaigns in Afghanistan comports with the three criteria he has identified: occupation (real or perceived), armed resistance to the occupation, and a difference in religion between occupier and occupied. This should prompt some reflection on the nature of the military presence in Afghanistan and the modalities of its kinetic action. While polling data suggest that majority of Afghans still welcome foreign troops, this support appears to be diminishing, and this is cause for concern as it may auger deepening perceptions of occupation.

To contend with this diminished receptivity to foreign troops, there is a need to enable Afghans to provide for their own security to reduce the foreign military footprint on the ground. During this effort to prepare Afghans to provide their own security, greater care should be used in military operations to minimize civilian casualties to the greatest extent possible. Civilian casualties, as described herein and as reflected in the various statements of President Karzai, promote hostility towards the international forces in Afghanistan, deepen popular frustration with the Afghan government for being unable to protect its civilians, and introduce tensions between the Afghan government and the international forces operating in Afghanistan. Reducing civilian casualties should be a high priority objective for the near term.

It may be useful to engage a wider range of actors including armed forces from additional Muslim countries in the international effort to stabilize Afghanistan. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan along with several African states all have robust records of peacekeeping.

Such efforts may have only marginal impacts. Extremist groups employ suicide attacks against moderate Muslim governments who cooperate with western forces and who lack legitimacy in the eyes of both the suicide groups and key elements of the society in which they are based. As noted in the fourth chapter, Afghans are increasingly sceptical about their government citing corruption and other concerns.

It is clear that military action alone has not prevented, or diminished, the incidence of suicide attacks in Iraq, Kashmir, Palestine or elsewhere. This does not augur well for the efficacy of military action in deterring and diminishing suicide attacks in Afghanistan either. Evidence from other theatres – including Palestine and Chechnya - offers cautionary insights about the consequences of air-strikes and other operations generating high civilian casualties.

It is well recognized that kinetic or military approaches to deter the supply of militant attacks have inherently diminishing margins of return, as they are likely to have the unfortunate effect of increasing demand (or support) for attacks and also increasing the number of attackers, simply by outraging the population in which the attackers are based.

It is vital that a premium be placed on diminishing civilian losses through increased accuracy of intelligence about prospective targets, combined with effective law enforcement. Arrests of perpetrators - rather than their elimination through military action - is preferable where it is possible. Many scholars whose work has been reviewed here stress the importance of resisting “over-reaction” to a threat. Anti-government elements often count on excessive use of retaliatory force and concomitant oppression of the community in which the militants are based or from whom they garner support because such excessive use of power generates and sustains support for them and their cause.

Data from the Palestinian case also emphasize the importance of humiliation and loss both in the support for suicide terrorism and in the actual supply of activists. Some scholars have found, for example, that desecration of sacred places and perceived humiliation - even more than death and destruction - move people to embrace violence.²²⁹ This too suggests that international forces *and* national forces operating in Afghanistan must pay utmost importance to these issues and it demands understanding of the

lineaments of humiliation in Afghanistan (e.g. house searches, civilian casualties, treatment while in detention, etc.) and vigorous efforts to minimize such affronts to honour and dignity.

Given the limited ability of the Afghan state and its partners to protect human rights, it is essential that persons detained in conjunction with the provision of suicide attacks or other insurgent activity not be subject to further maltreatment or torture or deprived of legal representation and due process.

The indignities suffered by such persons also undermine the legitimacy of state institutions and may encourage some to believe that anti-government elements can provide a more just and fair government. Ensuring that suspects have access to justice is not just relevant to protecting human rights; it is at the core of efforts to secure a stable Afghanistan with minimal internal conflict. It will likely be central to any future process of national reconciliation.

While there is an explicit need for a “last line of defence” to protect sensitive populations and installations from suicide attacks and a need to pre-empt, penetrate and destroy organizations and networks through intelligence, military and police action, the *first* line of defence consists of understanding and removing “root causes” that create demand for terrorism and feed receptivity of recruits to suicide groups and their ideology and tactics.²³⁰ This can be achieved through political, economic and social action programs. It does not in any sense entail yielding to insurgent demands. Rather it means satisfying core concerns of the population from whom insurgents draw recruits and support in order to undermine their ability to mobilize resources from that community.

In Afghanistan (as well as in parts of Pakistan), these popular concerns are diverse and growing and require urgent political attention. They include the exercise of basic rights to life and safety, access to justice, education, freedom of movement, the right to a livelihood as well access to public services, and good governance.

Diverting sympathy for martyrs, de-legitimizing suicide attacks and curbing the formation of martyrdom cults

Martyrdom cults are critical to sustaining suicide campaigns in a given society or country. Given that Afghanistan has so far been spared this phenomenon, it is imperative that the Afghan Government engage the relevant civil society organizations, including religious authorities, to dampen and divert the sympathy garnered for attackers as martyrs, curtail the development of martyrdom cults and engage appropriate political, religious and social authorities to denounce suicide attacks as an appropriate means of redress. While in Afghanistan, videotaped last wills and testaments are rare, analysts and policy makers should watch this closely. Propagation of such wills may be probative of a burgeoning popular culture of suicide attacks and may herald expanding legitimacy for the tactic. They are currently a rarity - not the norm: This may suggest that there is time to engage these important institutions to deter and prevent such martyrdom cults from taking root in Afghanistan. Deterrence of such cults is critical because martyrdom cults *do* exist nearby in Pakistan. Given the large degree of cross-border movement, it is surprising that such cults have not developed in Afghanistan.

The support of these religious and other civil institutions cannot be taken for granted. These are the very individuals and institutions that anti-government groups seek to co-opt either by developing legitimate support among their ranks or through coercion by violence or threat of violence. If a state expects these authorities to speak out against anti-government violence, the state should be prepared to protect these individuals. A dramatic illustration of this failure is the assassination of several ulema (religious scholars) in Khost who took part in writing a fatwa signed by 30 ulema who condemned suicide attacks. Such esteemed and learned religious scholars (ulema) with advanced religious educational pedigrees are rare in Afghanistan and they cannot easily be replaced. This is because of the enormous amounts of education ulema must acquire from prestigious institutions. Failing to protect such groups will ensure clerical silence, discourage clergy from denouncing anti-state actors and may even encourage some clerics to actively support the militant groups.

Focus on cells and disrupting centralized networks

Scholars emphasize the importance of focusing upon the cells in which suicide attackers are located and disrupting centralized networks. As suicide attackers themselves are hard to distinguish from the mainstream population and their operations cannot be conducted without a group or a cell, focusing upon these groups and their networks is a reasonable course of action. This requires infiltration, enhanced intelligence assets and robust and transparent law enforcement and justice procedures to deal with discovered cells and their personnel.

As discussed in chapter four and elsewhere in this report, relatively little is known about the identities of successful attackers. This is due in part to the fact that Afghan authorities currently have highly limited investigative. Because successful assailants leave few physical remains, there is a premium upon sophisticated forensic evidence which is currently beyond the scope of Afghan investigative agencies. Consequently little is known about successful attackers and the support networks that enabled their missions. Effective interdiction of cells and networks will require Afghan authorities to learn how to control and secure a crime scene as well as develop better capabilities in gathering, handling and analyzing complex crime scene and other related evidence. Therefore, Afghan investigative capabilities must be strengthened and augmented as needed.

Such information is critical to developing efficacious supply-side mitigation efforts and it may provide invaluable insights into the evolution of attackers, allowing analysts to monitor any evolution in the ethnic or national identities of attackers or in the skill level of particular assailants. A change in these factors would be important as it could suggest transformation in the operational environment confronting suicide cells in Afghanistan. For example, expanded reliance upon Afghan or increasingly better educated attackers may suggest that the Afghan public is becoming more receptive to the tactic. Alternatively, the persistent unavailability of Afghan or well-qualified attackers suggests that the environment remains hostile to groups and cells employing suicide attacks in the country.

With respect to the infrastructure cells use (e.g. mosques, madrassas, safe houses, training facilities, websites, religious gatherings, etc.) elimination may not be the most effective measure; rather, some scholars such as Scott Atran suggests monitoring them. By eliminating these structures governments force groups to continually innovate. By imposing a curious selection pressure, only the most competent can “out-innovate” state counter-measures with the result of successively improving group operations. Moreover, state operatives should participate in real (gatherings and public meetings) and virtual venues (e.g. chat rooms) where individuals discuss the merit of violent action with the objective of replacing ideas with suitable substitutes. The goal of these infiltrators is not to seek to undermine “sacred values” as this will only encourage moral outrage. Rather they should encourage radicalized persons to consider channelling their belligerence into more acceptable substitute behaviour.²³¹ What is urgently needed therefore is an ideological substitute to the use of suicide attacks.²³²

While such innovation needs to be encouraged within Afghanistan, Islamist groups using suicide attacks draw legitimacy and authority from a selection of religious scholars throughout the world. Efforts to expand the marketplace of ideas on suicide attacks will require active effort by government, non-government and international organizations to empower moderate voices and mainstream clerical opinion from all corners of the Muslim world. However, to do so they must also be secure from retaliation through violence or the threat of violence.

Cross-border concerns

As noted throughout this report, the phenomenon of suicide attacks in Afghanistan is inherently linked to a variety of structures and institutions across the border in Pakistan. Even if Afghan and international forces were able to effectively resolve the various internal problems within Afghanistan that contribute to the use of suicide attacks and other insurgent violence within Afghanistan, without dedicated efforts to destroy safe havens and bastions of support across the border, violence in Afghanistan is unlikely to disappear. This cross-border dimension to the problem demands that Pakistan play a

prominent role in stabilizing Afghanistan, including by ending immediate sources of support for the insurgency, effectively dealing with the growing presence of Islamist militancy in the border areas and in Pakistan's hinterland and extend the rule of law and effective development programmes into the FATA.

In summary, denying insurgents success in their suicide campaign in Afghanistan will require several kinds of interventions over the short- and long-term time horizons. While foreign and domestic security forces must rethink elements of the counter-insurgency campaign, Afghan military and civilian capabilities must be supported comprehensively. The Afghan government must be able to increasingly provide effective security for its citizens as well as good governance, rule of law, and access to justice. Given the limited utility of military solutions, greater space must be afforded to political solutions and engagement of anti-government elements. At the same time, near- and long-term measures must be taken regionally to counter support for Islamist militancy. This will no doubt require political and human development throughout the region.

Endnotes

¹ Brian Michael Jenkins, "International Terrorism: A New Mode of Conflict," in David Carlton and Carlo Schaerf, eds., *International Terrorism and World Security* (London: Croom Helm, 1975), p. 16.

² For more information about the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, refer to its official homepage. Accessible via [//www.nato.int/isaf/index.html](http://www.nato.int/isaf/index.html).

³ Data used here have been collected and compiled by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) Afghanistan. However, exact counts vary. According to the UNDSS, there were 17 actual suicide events in 2005. In 2006, UNDSS recorded 123 actual and 17 potential events in 2006, totalling 140 for the year. UNDSS did not record potential events in 2005. Brian Williams and Cathy Young report 25 such attacks in 2005 and 139 in 2006. The large discrepancy between these two accounts for 2005 may be due to the fact that Williams and Young included "potential events" for 2005. See Brian Glyn Williams and Cathy Young, "Cheney Attack Reveals Taliban Suicide Bombing Patterns," *Terrorism Monitor* Vol. 5, No. 4 (1 March, 2007), pp. 4-6.

⁴ According to news accounts, this attack killed 35 and injured at least 30. See "Kabul police bus bomb 'kills 35'," *BBC News Online*, 17 June, 2007. news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6760791.stm.

⁵ Analysts within UNAMA understand Hizb-i-Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) to be distinct from the Taliban in ways that are not comparable to other commanders within the Taliban. While the Taliban has co-opted structures such as the Haqqani Tribal Organisation (HTO), which have placed themselves under the supreme leadership of Mullah Omar; the Taliban has only co-opted segments from Hizb-I Islami (Gulbuddin Hikmatyar). Some of these segments were "particularly troublesome and some were outright incompatible with the [Taliban] ideology and some were ejected and confronted earlier (Bashir Baghlani, Juma Khan Hamdard, Kashmir Khan) and still continue to be backed only in specific cases and [not directly via the Taliban] but through intermediaries." For this reason, this report separates Hizb-I Islami (Gulbuddin Hikmatyar) from the Taliban. See UNAMA internal document, *Analysis of the Situation on 19 July in the Eastern South-Eastern and Central Regions*, July 2007; UNAMA internal document, *A Review of the TB and Fellow Travellers as a Movement: Concept Paper Updating Joint Assessment of June 2006*, 23 June, 2007.

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- ⁶ Seth G. Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," *Survival* Vol. 49, No.1 (Spring 2007), pp. 15-32.
- ⁷ Syed Shoaib Hasan, "Recruiting Taliban 'child soldiers,'" *BBC News Online*, 12 June, 2007. available news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6731389.stm;
- ⁸ See ABC News/BBC World Service Poll, *Afghanistan: Where Things Stand*, 7 December, 2006. news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/07_12_06AfghanistanWhereThingsStand.pdf; ABC News, *ABC News Poll: Life in Afghanistan*. (New York: ABC News, December, 2005). These 2005 data are also comparable to those collected by WorldPublicOpinion.org between November 27 and December 5 2005. See WorldPublicOpinion.org, *Poll of Afghanistan: Questionnaire* (Washington D.C.: PIPA, January 2006). www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_Jan06/Afghanistan_Jan06_quaire.pdf.
- ⁹ Williams and Young, "Cheney Attack Reveals Taliban Suicide Bombing Patterns."
- ¹⁰ See Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost: The Consequences of Insurgent Attacks in Afghanistan* Vol. 19, No. 6(C), April 2007. www.hrw.org/reports/2007/afghanistan0407/afghanistan0407web.pdf
- ¹¹ UNAMA internal document, UN Department of Safety and Security, Afghanistan, *Security Situation Report Week 26*, 22-28 June, 2007.
- ¹² According to UNAMA data, as of 31 May, 2007, 213 civilians have been killed by insurgents and 207 have been killed by Afghan and international forces. See Alisa Tang, "U.S., NATO See Surge in Afghan Deaths," *The Washington Post*, 24 June, 2007. www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/24/AR2007062400447.html
- ¹³ The heavy civilian loss of life prompted President Karzai to chastise both for treating Afghan lives as "cheap." Tang, "U.S., NATO See Surge in Afghan Deaths."
- ¹⁴ UNAMA staff conversation with ISAF personnel in June, 2007.
- ¹⁵ Human Rights Watch. *The Human Cost: The consequences of insurgent attacks in Afghanistan*, April 2007. hrw.org/doc/?t=asia_pub&c=afghan.
- ¹⁶ Williams and Young, "Cheney Attack Reveals Taliban Suicide Bombing Patterns."
- ¹⁷ Similar definitions are used by Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Mohammad M. Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq: The Strategy and Ideology of Martyrdom* (USIP: Washington D.C., forthcoming 2007); Robert Pape. *Dying to Win: The*

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¹⁸ Mia Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," in Ami Pedahzur ed., *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 29.

¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism*, see Chapter 7 "Legislative Requirements and Key Terms," 30 April, 2007. www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82726.htm. This definition supersedes the previous product *Patterns of Global Terrorism* and its definition, which explained that "The term terrorism means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant¹ targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." See U.S. Department of State, "Introduction," in *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, 29 April, 2004. www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2003/31880.htm.

²⁰ See UN Office of Drugs and Crime, "Definitions of Terrorism," n.d. www.unodc.org/unodc/terrorism_definitions.html.

²¹ Williams and Young, "Cheney Attack Reveals Taliban Suicide Bombing Patterns."

²² See Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror* and Pape, *Dying to Win*.

²³ Bruce Hoffman, Gordon McCormick, "Terrorism, Signaling, and Suicide Attack," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 27, No. 4 (2004), pp. 243-244.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 243-244, 256-262.

²⁵ UNAMA calculations using data from the MIPT Knowledge Base (available at www.tkb.org) between January 1, 1980 and June 24, 2007. This database defines terrorism "...by the nature of the act, not by the identity of the perpetrators or the nature of the cause. Terrorism is violence, or the threat of violence, calculated to create an atmosphere of fear and alarm." Thus in this database, events are recorded irrespective of whether the group is a "terrorist" or an "insurgent" organization. While the database

technically goes back to 1968, in principal the coverage of the dataset differs between 1968-1997, when it tracked all international terrorism incidents, and 1998-present, when it encompassed terrorism incidents worldwide, both domestic and international. For more information, see

<http://www.tkb.org/RandSummary.jsp?page=method>.

²⁶ For a detailed list of countries wherein they have occurred, see Jane's, "Suicide terrorism: a global threat," 20 October, 2000.

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²⁸ John Horgan, *The Psychology of Terrorism* (London: Routledge, 2005).

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³⁰ J. Bowyer Bell, "Terrorist Scripts and Live-action Spectaculars," *Columbia Journalism Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (1978), p.50.

³¹ Bruce Hoffman, "A Form of Psychological Warfare," *Foreign Policy Agenda* Vol. 12, No. 5 (May 2007). usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0507/ijpe/ijpe0507.pdf.

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³⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Ganor, "The Rationality of The Islamic Radical Suicide Attack Phenomenon," pp. 6-11.

³⁵ See Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," p. 26.

³⁶ For a critique of suicide missions' success see Max Abrahms, "Why Terrorism Won't Work," *International Security* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Fall 2006), pp. 42-78. He takes issue with the claim that suicide mission achieve their strategic aims. While he is correct to point this out, this is not debatable. Most proponents of the claim that terrorism and suicide attacks in particular succeed note that they only succeed

partially. Abrahms' analysis misses the point that suicide missions need not satisfy groups' maximalist political objectives to be deemed successful, as discussed throughout this monograph.

³⁷ See The U.S. Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 2004), p. 160. www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf.

³⁸ Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The Atlantic Monthly* June 2003. www.theatlantic.com/doc/200306/hoffman.

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⁴⁵ For a more thorough discussion of demand-side issues, see Christina Paxson, "Comment on Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?"" (Princeton: Research Program in Development Studies, 8 May, 2002). www.wws.princeton.edu/~rpds/downloads/paxson_krueger_comment.pdf. and Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 100, No. 2 (April 1992), pp. 271-291.

⁴⁶ Assaf Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach," in Ami Pedahzur ed., *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 81-107; Martha Crenshaw, "The Causes of Terrorism," *Comparative Politics* Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 1981), pp. 379-399; David E. Long, *The Anatomy of Terrorism* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Mohammed M. Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study," *Studies In Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 29, No. 2 (March-April 2006), pp. 165-185; Ted R. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

⁴⁷ See *inter alia*, Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism;" Paul K. Davis and Brian M. Jenkins. *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on Al Qaeda* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002).

⁴⁸ Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism," pp. 89-90; Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers."

⁴⁹ Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism;” Mariam Abou Zahab, “‘I Shall Be Waiting For You at The Door Of Paradise’: The Pakistani Martyrs Of The Lashkar-E Taiba (Army Of The Pure)” in A.Rao, M. Böck and M. Bollig eds., *The Practice of War. The Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence* (Oxford/New York: Berghahn, forthcoming 2007) pp 133-158; Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*; Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers,” pp. 175-176; Pape, *Dying to Win*.

⁵⁰ Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers,” pp. 175-176; Zahab, “‘I Shall Be Waiting For You At The Door Of Paradise’.”

⁵¹ Moghadam, “The Roots of Suicide Terrorism,” pp. 81-107; Assaf Moghadam, “Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in Second Intifada: Motivations and Organizational Aspects,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol.26, No.2 (February/March 2003), pp. 65-92; Walter Reich, “Understanding Terrorist Behavior: The Limits and Opportunities of Psychological Inquiry,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 27, No. 4 (July-august 2004), pp. 283-295; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Ecco/Harper Collins, 2003), Jeff Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist,” A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 49, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 3-42; Christoph Reuter, *My Life is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁵² Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers.” pp. 175-176; Zahab, “‘I Shall Be Waiting For You At The Door Of Paradise’.”

⁵³ Hafez, “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers,” p. 177.

⁵⁴ One known video will from an Afghan suicide attacker is of Amanullah Ghazi of Khost. After the video portion of his will is complete, the cameraman follows him to his point of detonation—a military training center in the heart of Kabul—where he kills 13 people and injures more than 50 in his suicide attack. See Hekmat Karzai, “Afghanistan and the Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” IDSS Commentaries, 27 March 2006, p. 3. www.rsis.edu.sg/publications/Perspective/IDSS0202006.pdf.

⁵⁵ Sara Jackson Wade and Dan Reiter, “Does Democracy Matter: Regime Type and Suicide Terrorism” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 2007), p. 343.

⁵⁶ See Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism;" Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*; Martha M. Crenshaw, "An Organizational Approach to the Analysis of Terrorism," *Orbis Vol. 29* (Fall 1985), 465-489; Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism."

⁵⁷ Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism."

⁵⁸ Atran, "Trends in Suicide Terrorism: Sense and Nonsense."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism" *American Political Science Review* Vol. 97, No. 3 (August 2003), p. 2. See also Pape, *Dying to Win*.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Although not germane here, Moghadam took issue with Pape's classification of many LTTE attacks against combatants as "terrorist" attacks. Indeed many of the LTTE attacks in Pape's database target combatants. Moghadam notes that upon excluding attacks on combatants, a different pattern emerges with Hamas (a religiously motivated group) clearly the largest perpetrator of noncombatant attacks. Assaf Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of *Dying to Win*," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* Vol. 29, No. 8 (2006), pp. 710-711.

⁶³ Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom," pp. 710-712.

⁶⁴ Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," p.29.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Scott Atran, "Trends in Suicide Terrorism: Sense and Nonsense."

⁶⁷ Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," p. 29.

⁶⁸ Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism."

⁶⁹ Adam Dolnik, "Critical Commentary on "Who are the Palestinian Suicide Bombers?" *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter 2004), pp. 845-848.

⁷⁰ Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," pp 44-45.

⁷¹ Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism;" Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," pp. 44-45.

⁷² Moghadam, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism;" Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," pp. 165-185; Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," pp.25-53.

⁷³ Allan 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; James Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty? Terrorism Poor Economic Development and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 18, No. 1 (2006), pp. 159-178.

⁷⁴ Assaf Moghadam, *The Roots of Terrorism* (New York: Chelsea House, 2006).

⁷⁵ Pape, *Dying to Win*.

⁷⁶ For historical data on Palestinian support for suicide attacks, see Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," p. 172. In the case of Palestinians, in March 1999, a majority (67 percent) opposed suicide attacks. By December 2000, a majority (67 percent) approved. Since then approval ratings has remained between 59 percent (June 2004) and 73 percent (April 2001). In the case of Afghanistan while support for suicide attacks generally remain low. However support for suicide attacks against non-Muslim targets increased from 17 percent to 21 percent between November 2006 and May 2007. Similarly, there has been a decrease from 76 percent to 71 percent in the percentage of persons who say suicide attacks are never acceptable. The Rendon Group, *Polling Results - Afghanistan Omnibus May 2007*, 15 June 2007.

⁷⁷ Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," pp.25-53.

⁷⁸ Charles Haviland, "US probes Afghan civilian deaths," *BBC News Online*, 30 June, 2007. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6256458.stm; Aryn Baker, "Backlash from Afghan Civilian Deaths," *Time Magazine*, 23 June, 2007. www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1636551,00.html.

⁷⁹ See Pedahzur and Perliger, "Introduction."

⁷⁹ See Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism."

⁸⁰ Wade and Reiter, "Does Democracy Matter."

⁸¹ As of October, 2006 most (eight out of 10) support the presence of U.S., British and other international forces in Afghanistan. In contrast, five percent support Taliban fighters and 11 percent express support for jihadi fighters from other countries. See ABC News/BBC World Service Poll, *Afghanistan Where Things Stand*. The Rendon Group's data from June 2007 suggests different view. They found that 62 percent of Afghans strongly or somewhat favor a greater multinational force presence in Afghanistan. However, 35

percent are strongly or somewhat opposed. In the intervening six months between their two most recent polls, there has been a substantial decline in the numbers of those who strongly favor a greater force. The Rendon Group, *Polling Results*.

⁸² See Freedom House, *Country Report: Afghanistan 2007*, 2007.

www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7119&year=2007.

⁸³ The Minorities at Risk Database identifies Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks as the main ethnically distinct minorities. See Minorities at Risk Database, available at <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/assessments.asp?regionId=3>.

⁸⁴ Wade and Reiter, “Does Democracy Matter.”

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Atran, “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism.”

⁸⁸ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. *The World Factbook*, July 2007. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html.

⁸⁹ The Central Highlands Region is comprised of Daykundi and Bamiyan provinces.

⁹⁰ Northern Region includes the provinces of Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan, Sar-e-Pol, Saryab.

⁹¹ Southern Region includes the provinces of Zabul, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Helmand, Nimruz

⁹² South-Eastern Region includes the provinces of Ghazni, Paktika, Paktiya, Khost.

⁹³ Central Region includes Loghar, Kabul, Vardak, Kapisa, Parwan, Panjshir provinces.

⁹⁴ Eastern Region includes the provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan.

⁹⁵ Western Region is comprised of Badghis, Ghawr, Herat, Farah provinces.

⁹⁶ In all cases the figures between 2006 and 2007 are relative, i.e. in terms of percentage share and not in actual numbers.

⁹⁷ For this analysis only actual attacks are included as accidental pre-detonations and discoveries take place at times which are not indicative of the time that the planned attack would have occurred.

⁹⁸ The earliest attack recorded in 2007 is 07:30 (23 January, Khost, against daily workers at a CF base), and the latest is 19:00 (17 May, Kandahar, against the governor’s convoy). In 2006 the earliest was 02:30 and the latest, 20:50.

⁹⁹ “Regionally” in this context does not imply coordination within UN or governmental regions, but simply within a given insurgent or AGE “area” which could be based on the village, district or province.

¹⁰⁰ Attacks against foreign entities other than military forces but including private security companies and embassies are included in the Government, Political and Civilian Category.

¹⁰¹ There are varying opinions of this incident as the base was being visited by the US Vice President at the time. While some analysts believe it was coincidence, it is widely believed by others that the incident indicates the insurgent’s ability to shift suicide assets at short notice when a high media value attack is possible. No analysts believe that the insurgents responsible had the aim of trying to penetrate the base but simply to achieve maximum media coverage.

¹⁰² Some doubt exists as to whether this was a suicide attack. For the purposes of this analysis it is accepted as one.

¹⁰³ Final victim statistics for 2006 were 237 civilians, 16 international military and 52 Afghan security forces killed. Comparison of year-end figures with 2007 is fruitless as this analysis only goes as far as 30 June, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Victim yield is defined as the number of victims versus the number of attackers expended (in some cases there is more than one attacker killed, and in others, such as pre-detonation and discovered events, none are killed).

¹⁰⁵ Although there were 31 attacks against the international military, only 30 attackers were killed. The attacker was arrested before detonation could occur at Camp Phoenix in Kabul on 16 January, 2007.

¹⁰⁶ In this case only events where victims were involved were counted. A detonation, even against or near a target, where no victims were killed, was not included.

¹⁰⁷ UNAMA internal document, “UNAMA South-East Region: Special Report: Suicide Attacks in the Southeast Region,” 5 May, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ See Barry Bearak, “Bomber’s End: Flash of Terror, Humble Grave,” *The New York Times*, 1 July, 2007.

¹⁰⁹ Brian Glyn Williams makes this claim in “The Taliban Fedayeen: The World’s Worst Suicide Bombers,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 5, Issue 14, 10 July, 2007.

¹¹⁰ See Carlotta Gall, “Afghan leader blames Pakistan for instability,” *The International Herald Tribune*, 12 December, 2006. www.ihf.com/articles/2006/12/12/news/afghan.php. President Karzai himself opined that

"Sons of Afghanistan" would never carry out such "un-Islamic" actions as suicide attacks. See Brian Glyn Williams, "A Report from the Field: Gauging the Impact of Taliban Suicide Bombing," *Terrorism Focus* Vol. 5, No. 10, (14 May, 2007), pp. 4-6.

¹¹¹ Emphasis added. Scott Baldauf. "Taliban turn to suicide attacks," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 3, 2006. www.csmonitor.com/2006/0203/p01s04-wosc.html.

¹¹² Karzai, "Afghanistan and the Logic of Suicide Terrorism."

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Omid Marzban, "The Foreign Makeup of Afghan Suicide Bombers," *Terrorism Focus* Vol. 3, Issue 7, (21 February, 2006), pp. 4-5; Wallullah Rahmani, "Afghan Authorities Apprehend Leaders of Kabul Suicide Cell," *Terrorism Focus*, Vol. 3, Issue 39 (10 October, 2006), p. 3; Srinjoy Bose, "Patterns in Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2005-March 2007)," *I-Post Quarterly: IPCS Program on Suicide Terrorism*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (January-March 2007), pp. 1-10; Williams, "A Report from the Field."

¹¹⁶ UNAMA interviews in Qandahar and Gardez in July 2007.

¹¹⁷ UNAMA, "UNAMA South-East Region: Special Report: Suicide Attacks in the Southeast Region."

¹¹⁸ UNAMA interview with Munir in May 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² UNAMA interview with Tahir in May 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Steven Coll. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹²⁸ UNAMA interview with Tahir in May 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² UNAMA interview with Tahir in May 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ UNAMA analysts in the South East region also reported the use of pills. While initially they thought the pills were sedatives, they now believe them to be stimulants based upon eye witness accounts of the attackers. UNAMA, “UNAMA South-East Region: Special Report: Suicide Attacks in the Southeast Region.”

¹⁴⁶ UNAMA interview with Ghulam in May 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ See the recent account of a 14-year old boy from a madrassah in Waziristan who was sent to Khost to kill the governor of Khost, Arsal Jamal. See “Afghanistan frees 14-year-old boy trained as suicide attacker at madrassa in Pakistan,” *International Herald Tribune*, 15 July, 2007.

www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/07/16/asia/AS-GEN-Afghan-Boy-Bomber.php.

¹⁵⁶ UNAMA interview with Ahmed in June 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ UNAMA interview with Morid in June 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ UNAMA interview with Wakeel in June 2007 in Pul-e-Charki prison

¹⁶⁵ Waliullah Rahmani, “Afghan Authorities Apprehend Leader of Suicide Cell,” *Terrorism Focus*, Volume 3, Issue 39 (10 October, 2006), p.3.

¹⁶⁶ Waliullah Rahmani, “The Taliban’s Chief of Kabul Suicide Operations Arrested,” *Terrorism Focus*, Volume 3, Issue 30 (1 August, 2006), p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Jude Sheerin, “British troops fight four-hour battle with Taliban,” *The Independent*, 10 January, 2007.

news.independent.co.uk/world/asia/article2142045.ece; “Coalition Raid Destroys Insurgent Bomb Factory in Afghanistan,” *VOA News*, 16 October, 2006. www.voanews.com; “Six hurt as bomb factory discovered in Afghan capital,” *ABC News* (Australia), July 4, 2004.

www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2004/07/04/1146532.htm; “40 Suspected Taliban Killed in Afghanistan,” *VOA News*, 9 September, 2006.

www.voanews.com/burmese/archive/2006-09/2006-09-09-voa4.cf.

¹⁶⁸ “Six hurt as bomb factory discovered in Afghan capital.” In this article, then NATO Commander Chris Henderson explained that “There's little doubt that the neighbours on that street knew what was going on in that compound.”

¹⁶⁹ The International Crisis Group. *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants* (Brussels, Islamabad: International Crisis Group, 11 December, 2006); Mariam Abou Zahab, "Changing Patterns of Social and Political Life among the Tribal Pashtuns in Pakistan," working draft, September 2006, cited with permission from the author.

¹⁷⁰ The International Crisis Group. *Pakistan's Tribal Areas*, p. 21.

¹⁷¹ Intikhab Amir, "Flashpoint Frontier," *The Herald*, June 2006, pp.62. See also the International Crisis Group. *Pakistan's Tribal Areas*; Zahab, "Changing Patterns of Social and Political Life Among the Tribal Pashtuns in Pakistan."

¹⁷² This claim is made in Williams, "The Taliban Fedayeen."

¹⁷³ Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," pp. 18-19.

¹⁷⁴ Ahmed Rashid, "NATO's top brass accuse Pakistan over Taliban aid," *The Telegraph*, 6 October, 2006. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/10/06/wafghan06.xml; See US National Intelligence Council, *The Terrorist Threat to the US Homeland*, July 2007. dni.gov/press_releases/20070717_release.pdf; Council on Foreign Relations, "Rubin: Afghanistan at Dangerous 'Tipping Point'," October 6, 2006. www.cfr.org/publication/11620/rubin.html. A "U.S. intelligence source" also reported to CNN that Mullah Omar is in the environs of Quetta. See Peter Bergen, Anderson Cooper and Charlie Moore, "Source: Mullah Omar in Pakistan," *CNN.com*, 9 September, 2006. www.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/09/09/pakistan.mullahomar/; Alan K. Kronstadt, "Pakistan and Terrorism: A Summary," Congressional Research Report, 27 March, 2007. www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS22632.pdf; "Haqqani recruiting Taliban in Pakistan: US Gen," *The News* (Pakistan), 14 January, 2007. www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=5247.

¹⁷⁵ Rashid, "NATO's top brass accuse Pakistan over Taliban aid."

¹⁷⁶ Carlotta Gall, "Afghan Rebels Find a Haven in Pakistan, Musharraf Says," *The New York Times*, 12 August, 2007. www.nytimes.com/2007/08/12/world/asia/12cnd-afghan.html?ex=1344571200&en=70830b6fe293c541&ei=5088&partner=rss.

¹⁷⁷ UNAMA, "UNAMA South-East Region: Special Report: Suicide Attacks in the Southeast Region."

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

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- ¹⁷⁹ Ismaeil Khan, "Talibanisation imperils security, NSC warned: Immediate action urged." *The Dawn*(Karachi), 23 June, 2007. www.dawn.com/2007/06/23/top1.htm.
- ¹⁸⁰ "Pakistan Suicide Motion Ignored," *BBC News Online*, 3 August, 2007. news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6929884.stm.
- ¹⁸¹ "Rushdie title 'may spark attacks'," *BBC News Online*, 18 June, 2007. news.bbc.co.uk/2/6763119.stm.
- ¹⁸² Hasan, "Recruiting Taliban 'child soldiers'."
- ¹⁸³ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁴ Jason Straziuso, "Taliban Recruiting Children for Suicide Attacks," *Associated Press*, 15 July, 2007.
- ¹⁸⁵ It is not surprising the Mullah Nazir's request would be disregarded as he has been associated with helping the government of Pakistan oust Uzbeks from North Waziristan.
- ¹⁸⁶ Williams, "The Taliban Fedayeen."
- ¹⁸⁷ Jones, "Pakistan's Dangerous Game," pp. 15-32.
- ¹⁸⁸ The sample design was a multi-stage area probability sample fielded in 30 of 34 provinces. In the final stage, the sample was stratified by gender to permit matching of appropriate interviewers (e.g. women interviewing women, men interviewing men). The sample reflected proportionate urban and rural representation. For more information see, WorldPublicOpinion.org, *WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll of Afghanistan*, January 2006, available at www.pipa.org/OnlineReports/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_Jan06/Afghanistan_Jan06_quaire.pdf.
- ¹⁸⁹ ABC News, *ABC News Poll: Life in Afghanistan*; ABC News/BBC World Service Poll, *Afghanistan: Where Things Stand*.
- ¹⁹⁰ WorldPublicOpinion.org, "WorldPublicOpinion.org Poll of Afghanistan."
- ¹⁹¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁹² ABC News, *ABC News Poll: Life in Afghanistan*.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁵ ABC News/BBC World Service Poll, *Afghanistan: Where Things Stand*.
- ¹⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid, also see The Rendon Group. *Polling Results*

²⁰³ See The Pew Global Attitudes Project, *Global Opinion Trends 2002-2007: A Rising Tide Lifts Mood In The Developing World*, 24 July, 2007. www.pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/257.pdf

²⁰⁴ For a time series on Palestinian support using different data that includes all Palestinians, not just the West Bank, see Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," p. 172. Without detailed information about the sample construction used in Hafez' work and Pew, it is impossible to determine whether or not these data are comparable.

²⁰⁵ These instruments include the following: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

²⁰⁶ UNAMA Human Rights calculations using daily security reports from field offices from 2004 to 2007. Note that data collected by UNAMA Human Rights differ from that of DSS because they track different issues. See also Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost*, pp. 71-73.

²⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost*, pp. 67, 73.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 67

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 68

²¹⁰ A suicide attacker killed 10 and injured over 25 police personnel in the Afghan National Police compound in Kunduz City on 16 April 2007. Significant itself in its scale, this was the first suicide attack in

the city since June 2006. See UNAMA Northeast Region Monthly Report for April 2007, internal document.

²¹¹ On 14 January a BBIED prematurely detonated close to a bus station on the main Kandahar-Kabul road in Qalat city, Zabul province. Three (3) civilians, including a ten-year old child, were seriously injured. UNAMA internal document.

²¹² Barry Bearak, "As War Enters Classrooms, Fear Grips Afghans," *The New York Times*, 10 July, 2007. www.nytimes.com/2007/07/10/world/asia/10afghan.html?ex=1341720000&en=ea4ed84b2bdbaa21&ei=5088.

²¹³ Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost*, pp. 41-42

²¹⁴ UNAMA internal document.

²¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, *The Human Cost*, p. 64

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 64-65.

²¹⁷ Principle 2, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, UN General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV), 20 November 1959. Afghanistan ratified the CRC on March 28, 1994.

²¹⁸ Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, article 38(3).

²¹⁹ Michael Wessells, "Child soldiers, peace and education, and post-conflict reconstruction for peace," *Theory into Practice* Vol. 44, No. 4 (2005), p.365.

http://www.ucm.es/BUCM/compludoc/W/10510/00405841_1.htm

²²⁰ According to a UNAMA analyst, the "profile of a would-be suicide attacker is a young (14-25 years old) male Afghan, or Pakistani who is introverted, poor and perceived to be impressionable. 5 May 2007, p.1. The report goes onto further state that "once identifiable, the young taleb is isolated from the group and indoctrinated to become a suicide attacker" and describes the different techniques of indoctrination. UNAMA, "UNAMA South-East Region: Special Report: Suicide Attacks in the Southeast Region."

²²¹ Hasan, "Recruiting Taliban 'child soldiers'."

²²² Amnesty International, *Afghanistan: all who are not friends, are enemies: Taliban abuses against civilians*, April 2007, p.29. web.amnesty.org/library/index/engasa110012007.

²²³ Monte Morin, "Taliban recruiting Afghan children for suicide attacks," *Stars and Stripes Online*, 27 June 2007. www.estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=54538&archive=true

²²⁴ Hasan, "Recruiting Taliban 'child soldiers'."

²²⁵ The Layeha, the Taliban military rulebook, is comprised of 30 rules and is reportedly used by mujahideen during jihad. It is signed by the highest leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. During Ramadan 2006, the Taliban's former Defence Minister, Haji Obaidullah had originally distributed the Layeha to the Taliban's highest council, the Rahbari Shura. There have been reports of Taliban carrying the rulebook during fighting.

²²⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Child Soldiers and the West Asian Crisis*, n.d.

www.hrw.org/campaigns/september11/children.htm

²²⁷ "Taliban set up six year old suicide attacker," *Daily Telegraph*, 28 June 2007.

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/06/27/wtaliban127.xml

²²⁸ Amnesty International, *Afghanistan: all who are not friends, are enemies*.

²²⁹ Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism;" Atran, "Trends in Suicide Terrorism: Sense and Nonsense;" Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," 44-45; Hafez, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," pp. 178-180.

²³⁰ Atran, "Trends in Suicide Terrorism: Sense and Nonsense;" Bloom, "Dying to Win: Motivations for Suicide Terrorism," pp. 44-45.

²³¹ Atran, "The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism."

²³² Yoram Schweitzer, "Al Qaeda and the Global Epidemic of Suicide Attacks," in Ami Pedahzur Ed. *Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism: The Globalization of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 132-151).