Spring 5-2013

SUICIDE ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN: WHY NOW?

Ghulam Farooq Mujaddidi
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Mujaddidi, Ghulam Farooq, "SUICIDE ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN: WHY NOW?" (2013). *Political Science Department -- Theses, Dissertations, and Student Scholarship*. 25.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/poliscitheses/25

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Political Science, Department of at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Department -- Theses, Dissertations, and Student Scholarship by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

SUICIDE ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN: WHY NOW?

by

Ghulam Farooq Mujaddidi

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: Political Science

Under the Supervision of Professor Patrice C. McMahon

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2013

SUICIDE ATTACKS IN AFGHANISTAN: WHY NOW?

Ghulam Farooq Mujaddidi, M.A.

University of Nebraska, 2013

Adviser: Patrice C. McMahon

Why, contrary to their predecessors, did the Taliban resort to use of suicide attacks in the 2000s in Afghanistan? By drawing from terrorist innovation literature and Michael Horowitz's adoption capacity theory—a theory of diffusion of military innovation—the author argues that suicide attacks in Afghanistan is better understood as an innovation or emulation of a new technique to retaliate in asymmetric warfare when insurgents face arms embargo, military pressure, and have direct links to external terrorist groups. The findings of my in-depth case study of Afghanistan between 1978 and 2010 support the proposition and show that it was an arms embargo, coupled with what I call military pressure, and a direct link to an external terrorist network that made the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attack in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

I.   INTRODUCTION

> *How could this evil have come to us? ... We never had these things before. Not even when the Soviets occupied our lands. What are these killers trying to achieve?*
>
> *an Afghan elder, Ghazni - Afghanistan, 2007.[1]*

> *Fighting a U.S. armored vehicle or aircraft with an AK-47 is not much different from putting on an explosive vest. Either way you'll be killed.*
>
> *Mullah Sabir, a senior Taliban commander, 2007.[2]*

> *It's not easy being in the Taliban. It's like wearing a jacket of fire. You have to leave your family and live with the knowledge that you can be killed at any time.*
>
> *Bari Khan, a Taliban commander, 2009.[3]*

For the last three and a half decades, Afghanistan has been experiencing both externally led (1979-89 & 2001-present) and internally fueled civil wars (1978-1979 &1989-2001). However, what has been interesting but thus far largely ignored is the different tactics used by Afghans in responding to these wars. From the late 1970s to early 1990s, Afghans heavily relied on guerilla warfare tactics in their fight against the Soviets and their puppet regime in Afghanistan. Once the Afghan Mujahidin took over the central government in 1992, the ensuing civil war witnessed conventional military tactics among warring Jihadi parities. However, after 9/11 and the overthrow of the Taliban regime by a US-led international coalition, suicide attack – a previously unknown tactic – has become a common phenomenon in Afghanistan. Taliban are increasingly using suicide attack as a tool in their fight against the US, NATO and Afghan forces. But why now?

Afghans did not resort to use of suicide attacks[4] in their national uprising against

---

[1] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan," (*Middle East Policy*. Vol. 15, No. 4: pp. 26-46), p. 27.
[2] Yousafzai, Sami and Ron Moreau. 2007. "Suicide Offensive." *Newsweek*. Vol. 149, Issue 16: pp. 34-36.
[3] Yousafzai, Sami and Ron Moreau. 2009. "The Taliban in their Own Words." *Newsweek*. Vol. 154, Issue 14: pp. 34-44.

the Soviet invasion and its puppet regime that cost them an estimated 1.24 million lives,[5] 4.2 million wounded and maimed,[6] and another 5 million refugees,[7] even though the strategy was quite successful in places like Lebanon and Sri Lanka in the 1980s.[8] Similarly, while suicide attacks were becoming a relatively popular tactic throughout the Middle East, and parts of South Asia in the 1990s,[9] there was no use of suicide bombings among various Afghan factions struggling for political dominance and control between 1992 and 2001.[10] Therefore, the question we need to ask is *why, contrary to their predecessors, did the Taliban resort to use of suicide attacks in the 2000s in Afghanistan?*

Despite a large literature on suicide bombing and terrorism more generally, existing theories[11] do not provide a convincing explanation to this question. Meanwhile, to the best of my knowledge, the only three pieces that directly or indirectly deal with suicide attacks in Afghanistan—UNAMA Report (2007),[12] Brain Glyn Williams (2008) fieldwork,[13] and Seth Jones (2009) book[14]— are neither systematic nor rigorous.

---

[4] "The Afghan Mujahidin rebels never resorted to suicide bombings against the Soviets in the 1980s..." Source: Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 202.
[5] According to Asia Watch an estimated 1.24 million dead, and five million refugees (Asia Watch 1991, 9)
[6] Hilali, A. 2005. *US-Pakistan relationship: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co.
[7] According to Asia Watch an estimated 1.24 million dead, and five million refugees (Asia Watch 1991, 9)
[8] See Pape's (2005) *Dying to Win* p.22 for success of suicide bombing campaigns.
[9] See Pape's (2005) *Dying to Win* p.22; and Richardson's (2006) *What Terrorist Want* p. 113 for spread of suicide attacks.
[10] "The Afghan Mujahidin rebels never resorted to suicide bombings against the Soviets in the 1980s, nor did the Taliban in the 1990s." Source: Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 202.
The really first suicide attacks in the history of Afghanistan happened two days prior to 9/11 when two Arab terrorists assassinated the legendary leader of Afghan guerrilla warfare and anti-Taliban resistance, Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001. Source: Coll, Steve. 2004. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10 2001*. New York: Penguin Press.
[11] Pape's occupation theory (2005, *Dying to Wing*); Bloom's outbidding thoery (2005, *Dying to Kill*); Moghadam's diffusion of Al-Qaeda's Jihadi ideology (2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*)
[12] United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Report. 2007. "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)." Available at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf
[13] Williams, Brian Glyn. 2008. "Mullah Omar's Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan." *Middle East Policy*. Vol. 15, No. 4: pp. 26-46.

While the UNAMA report highlights individual level factors influencing suicide bombers, it doesn't say why the Taliban, as an organization, resorted to the use of suicide attacks. On the other hand, while Williams's fieldwork provides a detailed and valuable insight about diffusion of suicide attacks from Iraq to Afghanistan, he does not consider other factors and explanations. And finally, Seth Jones's assertion on the Taliban's reliance on Al-Qaeda, effectiveness of the tactic, and media attention as a motivational factor, fail to address what made suicide attacks attractive in the first place.

Therefore, with the aim of providing an explanation for the Taliban's resort to the use of suicide attacks in the 2000s, this paper is the first systematic assessment of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, and a country-specific contribution to existing literature on suicide bombings. It should be noted that this paper is not about the resurgence of the Taliban and increased insurgency in Afghanistan, but rather an attempt to explain what made the Taliban resort and heavily rely on suicide attacks in their retaliatory campaign since the fall of their regime in December 2001.

In so doing, the author argues that arms embargo, coupled with what I call military pressure, and direct links to an external terrorist network made the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attacks. I would like to point out that what I propose here is not a groundbreaking or a general theory of suicide attacks, rather it is an integration of diffusion and innovation literature to provide a new framework for explaining suicide attacks in Afghanistan.

My dependent variable is suicide attacks in Afghanistan, which is defined in this paper as an act of using one's body as a weapon to kill or destroy the enemy or the target

---

[14] Jones, Seth G. 2009. "In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan." New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

(e.g., human, building, vehicle).[15] Although scholars agree on the content and meaning of suicide attack, specifically the death of the perpetrator as a condition, they vary on labeling the term. There are at least four terms—'suicide terrorism,' 'suicide mission,' 'suicide bombing,' 'suicide attack'—used to refer to the same phenomena of killing the enemy by using one's body as a weapon. Due to controversy surrounding the terms suicide terrorism[16] and suicide mission,[17] I refrain from using them and instead use suicide attack[18] and suicide bombing[19] interchangeably. [20]

My independent variables—arms embargo, military pressure, and diffusion—are derived from explicit assertion or implicit assumption of terrorist innovation literature[21] and Michael Horowitz's (2010) adoption capacity theory, a system level theory of

---

[15] This definition is drawn from and is in line with those offered by Pape (2005, p. 10), Bloom (2005, p. 76), Pedahzur (2005, pp. 8-12), and Moghadam (2008, p. 6).

[16] Here I am on board with Assaf Moghadam (2008), who refutes the use of 'suicide terrorism.' Moghadam (2008) argues that the term is problematic because "no agreed upon definition of suicide terrorism is possible as long as the word terrorism itself is subject to various different interpretations" (p. 5). Furthermore, by accepting the term suicide terrorism based on a commonly cited definition of terrorism, an "attack … aimed at noncombatants" (p. 5), we will intentionally exclude all those incidents of suicide bombings that were directed towards "uniformed men and women on active duty" (p. 5).

[17] Here, I am in line with Rober Pape (2005) and Michael Horowitz (2008), for refraining from the use of 'suicide mission.' Pape (2005) argues that "suicide missions are hard to identify reliably since we rarely know for certain that an attacker who did not kill himself or herself actually expected to die" (p. 11). Along the same line, Horowitz (2008) notes that "the means of destruction in this case [suicide mission], the way they perpetrate the attack, is the machinegun they fire, the grenade they throw, or the bomb they drop. They know they are probably going to die, but it is not their deaths that cause the mission to succeed. They are simply going to die accomplishing their mission. That is very different than a suicide attack where it is through your death that your mission, the killing of others or destruction of a target, is accomplished. The mission is accomplished through your death." Source: Horowitz, Michael. 2008. "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism." Essay based on presentation at *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)*. Available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicideterrorism.html

[18] Horowitz, Michael. 2008. "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism." Essay based on presentation at *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)*. Available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicide terrorism.html

[19] Bloom, Mia M., 2005, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 76.

[20] These terms are widely used by Robert Pape (2005, p. 10), Mia Bloom (2005, p. 76), Ami Pedahzur (2005, pp. 8-12), and Assaf Moghadam (2008, p. 6).

[21] Rasmussen, Maria J. and Mohammed M. Hafez. 2010."Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect: Preconditions, Causes, and Predictive Indicators." *Workshop Report*. Defense Threat Reduction Agency - US Department of Defense. Available at http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Centers/CCC/Research/2010%200 19%20Terrorist%20Innovations%20in%20WME.pdf

Hafez, Mohammed M. and Maria Rasmussen. 2012."Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect,

diffusion of military innovation.[22]

The first independent variable, arms embargo, is inferred from terrorist innovation literature's emphasis on battlefield obstacle.[23] Arms embargo imposed against insurgent groups present a challenge that insurgents would try to overcome by looking for alternative weaponry and tactics. Arms embargo, for the purpose of this paper, is defined as the prevention of "direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer… of arms and related materiel of all types including weapons and ammunition … [and] paramilitary equipment" to the insurgent groups.[24] To operationalize arms embargo, I will look at the presence or absence UN imposed arms embargoes against the various Afghan insurgent groups along with the presence or absence of third party nation-states supplying weaponry to the Mujahidin and/or the Taliban throughout the period under analysis (1978 - 2010).

My second independent variable, military pressure, is inferred from Horowitz (2010) and terrorist innovation literature's assumptions that "asymmetrical military disadvantages"[25] and ensuing "constraints in the security environment"[26] present a grave challenge to the insurgents, which should drive them to innovate and find 'equalizers.'[27] I refer to this power disparity that exerts force on the insurgents and limits their operational freedom as military pressure. I will define military pressure as governments' exercise of force through their security forces with a clearly stated objective of killing or capturing

Phase II." *Workshop Report*. Naval Post Graduate School – Center on Contemporary Conflict. Available at http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=142894

[22] Horowitz, Michael C. 2010. *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[23] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4; Rasmussen and Hafez, 2010, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 9.

[24] UN.org. "ARMS EMBARGO: EXPLANATION OF TERMS." Available at http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/pdf/EOT%20Arms%20embargo_ENGLISH.pdf

[25] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.

[26] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.

[27] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.

and targeting insurgents' infrastructure to eliminate insurgency.

To operationalize military pressure, I will look at number of factors such as number of troops, military operations, killing the enemy, and holding the ground that are meant to eliminate the enemy, but are dependent on data availability. However, I would like to mention that data for operationalizing these factors is severely restricted to military operations conducted between 2002 and 2007, and the number of military personnel deployed between 2002 and 2009. Similarly it is impossible to find systematic data on the number of insurgents killed each year. This means that any reference to military pressure in the 1980s and 1990s is less systematic and more descriptive in nature, but nonetheless provides a picture of military pressure prior to 2002.

And finally, diffusion, my third independent variable, is derived from Horowitz's proposition about diffusion of military innovation and the importance of external links to the non-state actors. Horowitz describes diffusion as "the process by which (1) an innovation (2) is communicated through certain channels (3) over time (4) among the members of a social system."[28] I will use diffusion and link to external groups interchangeably throughout this paper. For operationalizing diffusion, I will look at the presence or absence of a direct link between the Afghan insurgent groups and external terrorist groups or militant organizations.

My method of analysis is qualitative case study, because neither the nature of this study nor the available data was suitable for any type of quantitative analysis. Indeed, one of the most difficult aspects of research on suicide bombings is the dearth of data. The findings of my in-depth case study support the proposition and show that it was an arms

---

[28] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 19.

embargo, coupled with what I call military pressure, and direct links to an external terrorist network that made the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attacks.

The paper is organized in the following manner. First, I go through the current body of suicide bombing literature to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The next section is the theory and method. Here I present Michael Horowitz's adoption capacity theory along with terrorist innovation literature to provide theoretical background for hypothesis. This will be followed by a brief overview of methodology. Section four presents the empirical findings and analysis. The last section concludes the paper.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Suicidal attacks are centuries old phenomena and weapons of choice that human beings have used across times, cultures, and religions for particular purposes. In the earliest instances of suicide attacks, the perpetrators (e.g., Jewish Zealots - 4 BC-70 AD; Ismaillis-Nazari - 1090-1256) used conventional military tools of the time (e.g., swords, firearms) to kill the target(s) without caring for their own safety and lives.[29] Due to the intention of the perpetrators, scholars regard those early instances as suicide attacks.[30] There is a whole body of descriptive literature that deals with the historical manifestations of suicide attacks.[31]

---

[29] Bloom, Mia M. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press; Pape, Robert A. 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House.; Moghadam, Assaf. 2008. *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press*;* Hassan, Riaz. 2011. *Suicide Bombings*. Routledge.

[30] Bloom, Mia M. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror*. New York: Columbia University Press; Pape, Robert A. 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New York: Random House.; Moghadam, Assaf. 2008. *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press*;* Hassan, Riaz. 2011. *Suicide Bombings*. Routledge.

[31] Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*; Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill*; Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*; Hassan, 2011, *Suicide Bombings*; Dale, Stephen Fredrick. 1988. "Religious Suicide in Islamic Asia: Anticolonial Terrorism in India, Indonesia and the Philippines." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 32, No 1: pp. 37-59; Richardson, Louise. 2006. *What Terrorist Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the*

Modern day (post-1980) suicide attacks, in general, and the events of 9/11 in particular, have led scholars to vigorously study and hypothesize the root causes of this phenomena. Some scholars have looked at isolated individual or societal level factors such as psychopathology, religion, or poverty; whereas, recent scholarly findings emphasize at broader approach, integrating individual and societal with organizational level factors.[32] Thus, I will explore suicide attack literature and its main theories around the framework of "three levels of analysis."[33]

A. Individual Level Theories

Individual level explanations "have attempted to explain this phenomenon as the result of brainwashing, extreme poverty, emotional dysfunction, or feelings of despair."[34]

One of the early theories of suicide bombing at the individual level attributed it to psychological factors. Some scholars argue that psychological factors such as powerlessness, humiliation, and hopelessness combined with sense of power that comes from deciding about ones own and others lives and deaths, make individuals carry out suicide bombing.[35] Furthermore, according to Riaz Hassan (2011), psychological theorists

Threat. New York: Random House; Reuter, Christoph. 2004. *My Life Is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing*. Princeton University Press; Dzikansky, Mordecai, Gil Kleiman, and Robert Slater. 2012. *Terrorists Suicide Bombings: Attack Interdiction, Mitigation, and Response.* Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press; Winkates, J. 2006. "Suicide terrorism: martyrdom for organizational objectives." *Journal of Third World Studies*. Vol. 23, No.1: pp.87-110.

[32] Hassan, 2011, *Suicide Bombings;* Hassan, Riaz. 2010. *Life as a Weapon: The Global Rise of Suicide Bombings*. Routledge; Hassan, Riaz. 2009. "What Motivates the Suicide Bombers? Study of a comprehensive database gives a surprising answer." Available at http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/what-motivates-suicide-bombers-0; Gill, Paul. 2007. "A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing." *International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV)*. Vol. 1, No. 2: pp. 142–159; Hafez, Mohammed M. 2006b. "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 29, Issue 2: pp. 165-185; Moghadam, Assaf. 2005. "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach." Working draft Presented in Harrington Workshop on the Root Causes of Suicide Terrorism. University of Texas at Austin. Available at http://tamilnation.co/terrorism/sri_lanka/moghadam.pdf.

[33] Hafez, 2006b, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," p. 165.

[34] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill*. p. 1.

[35] Speckhard, Anne. 2008. "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 31, Issue 11: pp. 1023–1051; Speckhard, Anne and Khapta Akhmedova. 2008. "Black Widows and

label terrorists as "mad and bad men and women … [who] suffer from various forms of mental deficiency and personal disorder."[36] Meanwhile, such individuals are demographically characterized as "uneducated, unemployed, socially isolated, single men in their late teens and early twenties."[37]

However, these studies have failed in producing tangible results[38] and "cannot explain why suicide terrorism occurs only in certain societies and at certain point [and] why over 95 percent of all suicide terrorist attacks occur in organized campaign that are concentrated in time."[39] Meanwhile, there is an inconsistency between "demographic profile" of "suicidal individuals" and suicide bombers. Contrary to psychological theorists' demographic framing of suicide bombers, Pape (2005) found that suicide bombers' "lifestyle" greatly vary, meaning "they have been college educated and uneducated, married and single, men and women, isolated and socially integrated; they have ranged in age from fifteen to fifty-two."[40]

Poverty is deemed as another potential factor affecting both individual and broader society in harboring terrorism. It had a strong appeal among academia and echoed among policy circles, which is evident from the speech of George W. Bush, then President of the United States: "We fight poverty because hope is the answer to terror. … We will challenge the poverty and hopelessness and lack of education and failed governments that too often allow conditions that terrorists can seize."[41] However, a growing body of

---

beyond: Understanding the motivations and life trajectories of Chechen female terrorists." In *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organization,* edited by Cindy D. Ness. New York: Routledge. Pp. 100–121.

[36] Hassan, 2011, *Suicide Bombings.* p. 36.

[37] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*, p. 17.

[38] Hassan, 2011, *Suicide Bombings*.

[39] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*, p. 17.

[40] Ibid., p. 17.

[41] As qtd. in Scott Atran, 2003, *"Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,"* para. 18. Available at

literature questions the argument linking suicide bombings to poverty at the individual level.[42]

But some still argue that its 'indirect effects' in broader socio-political context cannot be disregarded.[43] Economically poor countries with weak state apparatus not only provide fertile operational ground for terrorist organizations and networks, but also enable these groups to exploit citizens' perceived notion of relative deprivation in recruiting them.[44] This argument, however, is also refuted with quantitative empirical findings. Robert Pape (2005) illustrates that "the countries plagued by suicide terrorism from 1980 to 2001 are by no means the worst off in the world … [and meanwhile,] the most economically hopeless states in the world … [did not experience] a single suicide terrorist attack during this period."[45]

Meanwhile some argue that "Suicide attackers do not usually claim to act out of despair, or for personal, fatalistic reasons. Instead, they usually claim to act as martyrs for altruistic reasons—that is, for the sake of their larger community, their country, or religion."[46] This postulation is referred to as altruistic reasons for suicide bombing. For Barbara Victor (2003), the main factors influencing individuals' participation in suicide

---

http://www.sciencemag.org/content/299/5612/1534.full#ref-21

[42] Haddad, S. 2004. "A comparative study of Lebanese and Palestine perceptions of suicide bombing: the role of militant Islam and socioeconomic status." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*. Vol. 45: pp. 337-363; Berrebi, Claude. 2007. "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians." *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy.* Vol. 13, Issue 1, Art. 2; Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Maleckova. 2004. "Education, Poverty And Terrorism: Is There A Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 17, Issue. 4: pp. 119-144; Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Maleckova. 2002. "The Economics and the Education of Suicide Bombers." *New Republic* Issue 24: pp. 27-34; Bergen, Peter and Swati Pandey. 2006. "The Madrasa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 29, Issue 2: pp. 117–125.

[43] United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Report. 2007. "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)." Available at http://www.securitycouncil report.org/atf/cf/%7B65 BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007SuicideAttacks.pdf

[44] Moghadam, 2005, "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach."

[45] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*, p. 18.

[46] Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, p. 8.

bombings are personal vengeance and retaliation to losses in the family or close

associates, and peer pressure. Meanwhile others argue that altruistic reasons such as

feeling of responsibility towards member of the community compel individuals to conduct

suicide attacks.[47] Adding to that Ami Pedahzur (2005) argues that sense of responsibility

and dedication to an even greater cause, especially an ideological one, motivates some of

the suicide bombers to sacrifice themselves.

To sum up, factors that influence individuals to participate in suicide bombings are

complex and beyond dying to inflict damage; rather these factors have:

> … a broader significance for achieving multiple purposes – from personal to communal.
> These include gaining community approval and political success; liberating the homeland;
> achieving personal redemption or honor; using martyrdom to effect the survival of the
> community; refusing to accept subjugation; seeking revenge for personal and collective
> humiliation; conveying religious or nationalistic convictions; expressing guilt, shame,
> material and religious rewards; escaping from intolerable everyday degradations of life
> under occupation, boredom, anxiety and defiance.[48]

As Mia Bloom (2005) points out, "the individual bombers might be inspired by several—

sometimes complementary—motives,"[49] however this paper is particularly interested in

understanding what makes organizations, in our case the Taliban, to resort to the use of

suicide attacks. Therefore, with an eye on individual level factors, this paper mainly

concentrates on organizational causes and motives. However, prior to evaluating

organizational theories of suicide attack, I would like to go through the societal level

explanations of suicide attacks.

---

[47] Pedahzur, Ami, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg. 2003. "Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists." *Deviant Behavior*. Vol. 24, Issue 4: pp. 405-23; Gupta, D., A. Mirari, M. Crenshaw, and C. McCauley. 2002. "Selfish Selflessness?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Vol. 48, Issue 32: B4.
[48] Hassan, Riaz. 2009. "What Motivates the Suicide Bombers? Study of a comprehensive database gives a surprising answer." Available at http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/what-motivates-suicide-bombers-0
[49] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill*, p. 3.

B. Societal Level Theories

It has been claimed that the broader environment (e.g., culture, history, religion, politics…) lays out the rules and norms for acceptable and unacceptable deeds, and at times, provides pathways for conducting such notorious acts that were previously regarded as unacceptable.[50]

Some scholars perceive religion, especially Islam, as the main factor influencing suicide bombers.[51] Sam Harris (2004) argues that there is ample undisputed evidence that Islamic doctrine, the Quran, encourages terrorism, and as such, rather than being manipulated, the religion of Islam is the source of violence.[52] However, a growing body of scholarly findings refute such notions,[53] arguing that religion is neither "necessary" nor "sufficient cause" for suicide bombings.[54] Pape (2005) argues that "Religion is rarely the root cause, although it is often used as a tool by terrorist organizations in recruiting and in other efforts in service of the broader strategic objective."[55] Along the same line, Bloom (2005) asserts that "even the most religious organization that employs suicide terror is pragmatic and power seeking. Their political survival is ultimately more important than any ideology."[56]

---

[50] Pedahzur, 2005, *Dying to Win*.
[51] Harris, Sam. 2004. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co; Shay, Shaul. 2004. *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers; Israeli, Raphael. 2003. *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology*. London: Frank Cass.
[52] Harris, 2004, *The End of Faith,* p. 109.
[53] Hafez, Mohammad M. 2006a. *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The making of Palestinian suicide bombers*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press; Hafez, Mohammed M. 2006b. "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 29, Issue 2: pp. 165-185; Pedahzur, 2005, *Suicide Terrorism*; Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*; Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill;* Reuter, 2004, *My Life Is a Weapon*; Victor, Barbara. 2003. *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*. Rodale: Distributed to the book trade by St. Martin's Press.
[54] Crenshaw, Martha, 2007, "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay," (*Security Studies*. Vol. 16, No.1: pp.133-162), p.149.
[55] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win,* p. 4.
[56] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill,* p. 89.

Meanwhile, historical antecedents of suicide attacks (e.g., Jewish Zealots,[57] Japanese kamikaze[58]) and its modern manifestations (e.g., Sri Lankan Hindu Tamil Tigers[59] and secular Vietnamese Viet Cong units[60]) demonstrate that Muslims were not the sole perpetrators of suicide attack. According to Assaf Moghadam (2008), the Muslim groups initially had difficulty justifying suicide attacks because *Islam does not allow suicide* (my emphasis).[61] Overall, the evidence suggests that religion (e.g., Islam) is not the cause or reason behind suicide attacks, but rather used as a tool by the insurgent organizations in pursuit of their objectives.

Besides religion, domestic support for suicide campaign is perceived to be a crucial societal factor in sustaining the campaign. Local support tends to be high in places where suicide bombing is perceived as "a legitimate military tactic" against specific targets (e.g., security forces, political elites) or in cases where "the hatred for others is very high."[62] Otherwise, if used indiscriminately against civilian population, the tactic "will fail to win over the hearts and minds of the public … [and] will only deepen the gap between the insurgents and the masses."[63]

Adversaries' harsh counter-terror tactics and strategies are major factors in influencing domestic support for suicide attacks. According to Mohammad Hafez (2006b), prior to the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa* Intifada (second Palestinian uprising, Sept 2000 - Feb 2005), two-thirds of Palestinians were against indiscriminate suicide bombings – specifically targeting Israeli civilians. However, "Israel's heavy handed tactics, of

---

[57] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win,* p. 11.
[58] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill,* p. 14; Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win,* p. 13.
[59] Moghadam, 2008, *The Gloablization of Martyrdom*, p. 22.
[60] Ibid., pp. 15-16
[61] Ibid., pp. 17, 21-22.
[62] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill,* p. 81.
[63] Ibid., p. 81.

targeted assassination, preemptive attacks to root out the terrorists, and destruction of their

infrastructure" dramatically altered Palestinians' perception about the use of suicide

attacks against Israeli population.[64] As a result public support for indiscriminate use of

suicide bombings increased from one-third-approval rating of the Oslo peace years (1993-

2000) to two-thirds during Intifada, only to reach its peak (74.5%) in October 2003.[65]

With the increase of approval ratings among the Palestinian population for suicide attacks,

the number of suicide attacks increased from 28 attacks of the Oslo peace era (1993-2000)

to "110 suicide attacks" in the subsequent three years of post-Oslo peace, which means

the average suicide attacks per year increased from 4 to 36.[66]

Meanwhile, use of advanced military capabilities (aerial power) against insurgent

groups often causes civilian casualties, which increases the propensity of domestic

support for the insurgent groups and increases the pool of their recruitment for suicide

attacks.

The evidence presented above shows that domestic support is crucial for sustaining

suicide attacks, but it is not the initial cause of suicide attacks. Although Hafez (2006a)

claims that some militant organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad in 1994, and Al-

Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in 2000, adopted

suicide bombings due to extreme pressure from society suffering under occupation, the

triggering effects were something else. In the case of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, "the

Israeli decision to deport 415 Palestinian militants to Lebanon in 1992 had disastrous

unintended consequences as the Palestinians learned the value of the tactic from

---

[64] Ibid., p. 82.
[65] Hafez, 2006b, "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers," p. 172.
[66] Ibid., p. 172.

Hezbollah."[67] Whereas, the latter groups – Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – adopted suicide attacks due to competition among various rebel organizations for popularity and local support.[68] Therefore, rather than extreme societal pressure, diffusion and intergroup rivalry were the reasons behind the Palestinians groups resort to the use of suicide attacks.

One might ask that given the Taliban's low level of domestic support (less than 10%),[69] how did the Taliban manage to sustain their suicide attack campaign. There are two explanations for this trend. The first one, although contested, is the availability of foreigners ready to blow themselves up for the cause of the Taliban.[70] The second explanation is the presence of Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan[71] along with Pakistani *madrasas* (religious school) that provide fertile ground for the Taliban's recruitment.[72] Meanwhile, causalities caused by the use of coalition aerial bombings and drone strikes also increases the pool of the Taliban's recruits. According to Pakistani Television Network's chief news correspondent, Mushtaz Mihans, "whenever a village or houses are bombed in tribal areas, it creates more suicide bombers. It's not just because they have been lured by a cleric with a promise of heaven, it's also because of the Pashtun *badal* tradition [which means revenge at any cost]."[73]

---

[67] Richardson, 2006, *What Terrorist Want,* p. 113.

[68] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill.*

[69] Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon, 2012, *Afghanistan Index*, p. 32. Available at http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Programs/foreign%20policy/afghanistan%20index/index20120516.pdf

[70] UNAMA Report, 2007, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)," p. 84.

[71] "Many of the initial suicide bombers were Pakistani and Afghan orphans or mentally unstable teenagers recruited from asylums, orphanages, and Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan ... Fervent teenagers are being recruited from the Pakistani madrasas in the Pashtun tribal region along the border with Afghanistan." Source: Rashid, Ahmed. 2008. "Jihadi Suicide Bombers: The New Wave." *New York Review of Books.* Vol. 55, No 10: pp. 17-22.

[72] "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 student" (UNAMA Report, 2007, p. 27). Available at http://www.securitycouncil report.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh%202007Suicide Attacks .pdf

[73] Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom,* as qtd. in p. 185.

After assessing the individual level theories and societal level postulations, which were unable to provide convincing explanations for Taliban's resort to the use of suicide attacks, the paper turns to organizational theories of suicide attacks for possible explanations.

C. Organization Level Theories

Scholars studying suicide attacks at the organizational level highlight that organizations employ suicide bombing due to its materialistic dimension and incentives.[74] According to these scholars, suicide bombing is an effective strategy for organizations fighting a technologically advanced and superior adversary for various reasons. First, it inflicts comparably more physical and material damage than any other sort of assault. Second, with such great efficacy, suicide bombing requires minimal resources in terms of equipment, training and manpower.[75] Third, it not only affects perception and sentiment of democratic citizens towards the war, which is crucial for changing the attitude of their political representatives to withdraw their troops, but also delegitimizes the local governments by creating instability and sense of chaos among ordinary citizens.[76]

However, adopting suicide bombing is not an easy task for organizations. Prior to endorsing suicide bombings, organizations go through cost-benefit analysis and evaluate opportunities and risks associated with such strategy. Pedahzur (2005) argues that organizations willing to endorse suicide bombing go through three stages prior to making any final decision. In the first stage, decision makers rationally calculate the choice of pursuing suicide bombing with the probable consequences of losing domestic support.

---

[74] Pedahzur, 2005, *Suicide Terrorism*; Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill*; Hafez, 2006a, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*; Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*; Hoffman, Bruce. 2003. "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *The Atlantic Monthly*. Vol. 291, Issue 5: pp. 1-10.
[75] Pedahzur, 2005, *Suicide Terrorism*; Hafez, 2006a, *Manufacturing Human Bombs*.
[76] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*; Hoffman, 2003, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism."

Next comes the issue of recruiting ideologically motivated individuals. The third and final stage involves training and mentally preparing the suicide bombers. This involves isolating individuals from the rest of the community, and the process is continued until they are totally brainwashed.[77]

These scholars, however, differ on their account of what motivates insurgent groups to resort to the use of suicide attacks. For Moghadam (2008), the spread and dramatic increase of recent suicide attacks are indebted to Al-Qaeda's "Salafi-Jihadist ideology."[78] Meanwhile, rather than blaming "religious fanaticism," Pape (2005) regards nationalism and home land liberation as a driving force behind individuals' and organizations' motivation to use suicide attacks in their fights against occupying forces. And finally, Bloom (2005) argues that competition among various rebel organizations for dominance and local support, make these groups to endorse suicide bombing. These postulations have led to three main organizational theories of suicide bombing.

1. Counter-Occupation Strategy

One of the prominent theories of suicide attacks blames occupation for endorsement and rise of suicide attacks.[79] Orchestrated by Robert Pape (2005), the theory counters conventional wisdom that linked suicide attacks to Islam, poverty or psychopathological factors, and instead regards suicide bombing as a strategic tool used by groups pursuing nationalistic goals and objectives. His empirical analysis of more than three hundred incidents of suicide attacks over a period of more than two decades (1980 - 2003) supports his theoretical postulation that a "secular and strategic goal" such as nationalism and emancipation of homeland from foreign invaders or occupiers, is the driving force behind

---

[77] Hoffman, 2003, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism."
[78] Moghadam, 2008, *The Gloablization of Martrydom,* p. 26.
[79] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win,* p. 46.

suicide bombings.[80] As such, suicide bombing is used as a "strategy of coercion" to make the occupier, mainly democratic countries, rethink their policy of occupation.[81]

However, according to Moghadam (2008), there are some flaws in Pape's theory of nationalism and emancipation of homeland from invaders. First of all, the rising number of suicide attacks occur in countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Indonesia, Morocco, UK, US, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Uzbekistan that are not under any "discernible occupation."[82] Second, Moghadam argues that most of the attacks in Iraq are not directed towards the occupiers, who should be the target according Pape; rather the victims are various Iraqi ethnicities. Third, he notes that even in the case of attacks against foreign invaders in Iraq, the perpetrators are foreign nationals (Saudis, Kuwaitis, Syrians and other North African Jihadis) rather than Iraqis, who according to Pape's theory should conduct such acts because they are victims of occupation. Meanwhile, according to Michael Horowitz (2008):

> … while occupation can explain some cases of suicide bombing, it cannot explain non-adoption by prominent groups… Consider the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) in Northern Ireland, a violent terrorist group whose members had no problem dying for the cause but which never adopted suicide terrorism (on a few occasions they kidnapped families and forced the husband to drive a bomb loaded with explosives towards a checkpoint, but those are coercive rather than voluntary).[83]

The counter-arguments show that although an important contribution, Pape's occupation theory does not explain most cases of suicide attacks. Occupation is definitely not the reason behind post-9/11 suicide attacks in Afghanistan for two main reasons: first, Afghans perception of foreign troops presence; and second, their hatred for the Taliban.

---

[80] Ibid., pp. 4; 21.
[81] Ibid., p. 28.
[82] Moghadam, 2008, *The Gloablization of Martrydom,* p. 34.
[83] Horowitz, Michael. 2008. "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism." Essay based on presentation at *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)*. Available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicide terrorism.html

Rather than viewing the US and NATO-led coalition troops as invaders, Afghans warm-heartedly welcome and want international forces to remain in Afghanistan until the Afghan forces can provide Afghans with security. A UNDP and Afghan Interior Ministry's survey shows that two-thirds (68%) of Afghans support the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan.[84]

Meanwhile, other surveys conducted over the past years (2005-2010) show people's support for the current government and distaste for the Taliban.[85] In response to a survey question, "Who Would You Rather Have Ruling Afghanistan Today," asked repeatedly over the years (2005-2010), a majority of the Afghans (80 to 90%) preferred the current government to the Taliban (less than 10% support).[86]

2. 'Outbidding' Theory

Another organizational theory of suicide bombing is Mia Bloom's (2005) 'outbidding' hypothesis. While not totally disregarding the impact of occupation, Bloom argues that competition among various rebel organizations for dominance and local support, especially, when other tactics fail in enhancing the groups' prestige and reputation, make the militant organizations to endorse suicide bombing. Therefore, rather than religious ideology, 'pragmatic and power seeking' attitudes along with 'political survival' are the reason behind militant groups resort to the use of suicide attacks.[87]

Bloom's theory is also not immune from shortcomings and criticisms. Horowitz (2008) notes that the main problem of 'outbidding' theory is that "it does not explain suicide campaigns where there are not elite competitions for control. For example, in the

---

[84] Johnson, Kay. (Jan 31, 2012). "Afghan police weak, NATO support grows: poll." The Associated Press. Available at http://www.armytimes.com/news/2012/01/ap-afghan-police-weak-nato-support-grows-poll-013112/
[85] Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon, 2012, *Afghanistan Index*, p. 32.
[86] Ibid., p.32.
[87] Bloom, 2005, *Dying to Kill,* p. 89.

Tamil case, the struggle for influence among Tamil resistance groups was over before the Tamil Tigers' suicide terror campaign began."[88]

Similarly in Afghanistan, competition for domestic support and dominance among various Mujahidin groups in the 1980s and 1990s did not result in the use of suicide attack. On the other hand, lack of competition among current insurgent groups (the Taliban, Haqani network, Hizb-i-Islami Gulbuddin, Al-Qaeda and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) that are fighting the U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces, resulted in the use of suicide attacks. Furthermore, Moghadam (2008) argues that the theory is incompatible with the nature and goals of transnational groups such as Al-Qaeda that are vying for transnational rather than domestic support. All these hint that while 'outbidding' theory can explain certain cases (Palestinian factions), it fails to provide explanation for other ones, especially, the Taliban.

3. Diffusion of Al-Qaeda's 'Salafi-Jihadist Ideology'

Contrary to Pape's occupation and Bloom's outbidding theories, Assaf Moghadam (2008) blames Al-Qaeda's "Salafi-Jihadist ideology" for the rise and spread of suicide attacks among militant organizations.[89] According to Moghadam, three factors contributed to the expansion of Al Qaeda's operations. The first was "the core doctrine of Al Qaeda" which is based on assumption that the group would act "as a vanguard of a new global Islamic insurgency devoted to the defense of the *umma* [Muslim community] wherever its well-being would be imperiled … [and] fight and defeat infidel and apostate countries the world over."[90] The second reason was the return of Arab fighters to their respective

---

[88] Horowitz, Michael. 2008. "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism." Essay based on presentation at *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)*. Available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicide terrorism.html
[89] Moghadam, 2008, *The Gloablization of Martrydom,* pp. 26, 43-5, 49.
[90] Ibid., p. 44.

countries after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, which diffused Al-Qaeda mentality. And finally, the strategic shift in the organizations' *modus operandi* after 1995; rather than fighting their Arab puppet regimes, Al Qaeda decided to target the west, especially the United States.[91]

However, there are some problems in Moghadam's overwhelming emphasis on Al-Qaeda and its Salafi-Jihadist ideology in promoting and prompting the global rise of suicide attacks. "The idea of suicide terrorism traveled from Iran to Lebanon, but from Lebanon it spread a long way... the skill set was transferred from Shiite (Iran and Hezbollah) to Sunni (Hamas and later al-Qaeda) Muslims, as well as to secular Palestinian and [non-Muslim, secular Hindu,] Tamil Groups."[92] Thus, rather than Sunni Al-Qaeda, the Shiite Muslims, Iranians and Hezbollah of Lebanon, were the pioneering forces in justifying and promoting the use of suicide attacks among Muslims. Furthermore, Hamas was the first Muslim Sunni group that adopted the use of suicide attacks from Shiite Hezbollah and as such provided a legitimate foundation for future Sunni Muslims groups, including Al-Qaeda

Similarly, Moghadam's method of blending and labeling some groups as Salafi-Jihadist or overwhelmingly influenced by them is problematic. Contrary to his portrayal of the Taliban as Salafi-minded, they are followers of the Hanafi Deobandy School, which is different from Salafism – a distinction that even Moghadam acknowledges.[93] The Taliban follows an established and well-defined school (Hanafi Deobandy School), whereas Salafis (to which Al-Qaeda adhere) do not constrain themselves with any of the four Sunni jurisprudence schools of thought (Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafie, Maliki). Rather they

---

[91] Ibid., p. 44.
[92] Richardson, 2006, *What Terrorist Want,* p. 113.
[93] Moghadam, 2008, *The Gloablization of Martrydom,* p. 157.

have the freedom to follow any one of them in a given matter based on authenticity of their sources, which in some cases make manipulation of religious texts easier.

Furthermore and most importantly, while Al-Qaeda has a global aim and intention— defending the Muslim Umma, waging global Jihad, installing the Caliphate;[94] the Taliban's objective are clearly domestic—regaining power in Afghanistan, and that is all.[95] The Taliban and Al-Qaeda were and are allies, but that is different from sharing the same worldview.[96] Therefore, to say that the Taliban were mainly influenced by Al-Qaeda's Salafi-Jihadist ideology, and branding them as Salafi Jihadist is counterintuitive.

The evidence presented above suggests that Pape, Bloom, and Moghadam's theories of occupation, outbidding, and diffusion Al-Qaeda's *Jihadi* ideology (respectively) fail to provide sufficient explanation for the Taliban's resort to the use of suicide attack. Therefore, the paper turns to Horowitz's diffusion of military innovation or adoption-capacity theory and terrorist innovation literature for a testable hypothesis.

III.   THEORY & METHOD

Michael Horowitz's (2010) adaption-capacity theory is an attempt to explain the variation in the diffusion of military innovation and the emulation of new techniques and technologies. The main puzzle he tries to resolve is why do certain military innovations diffuse throughout the system, while others (innovations) don't? To this end, he postulates that "the diffusion of military power is mostly governed by two factors: the level of financial intensity required to adopt a military innovation, and the amount of

---

[94] Ibid*.,* p. 44.
[95] Stenersen, Anne, 2010. "The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan – organization, leadership and worldview," (*Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI)*), p. 3. Available at http://www.humans ecuritygateway.com/documents/FFI_TheTalibanInsurgencyInAfghanistan_OrganizationLeadershipWorldvi ew.pdf
[96] Ibid., p. 3.

organizational capital required to adopt an innovation."[97] This means military

innovations with a high *financial intensity* and *organizational capital* are less likely to

diffuse, whereas, those with low financial intensity and organizational capital are more

likely to diffuse and be adopted.

Horowitz (2010) argues that his theory can also explain non-state actors'

behavior, specifically the adoption of suicide bombings. According to Horowitz (2010),

while "the financial intensity of a suicide terror campaign is quite low… $150," it

requires a high level of organizational capital.[98] "Given the high levels of organizational

capital and low levels of financial intensity required to adopt suicide bombing, adoption

capacity predicts that groups lacking a high level of organizational capital will be

unlikely to adopt."[99] This means "more bureaucratized groups … with older

organizational ages" that have developed "particular tactics" are unlikely to adopt

suicide bombing.[100]

Meanwhile, in the case of non-state actors, linkages to external terrorist groups

are crucial in facilitating the process of diffusion or adoption of suicide attacks.[101]

According to Horowitz, a direct link to external terrorist network or groups provides the

opportunity to "coordinate and train together," which makes it faster and easier to

transfer the knowledge about new tactics.[102] Therefore, "where there are direct links

between terrorist groups, knowledge and suicide tactic should diffuse faster."[103] I

therefore argue that diffusion through links to external terrorist groups is a key factor in

---

[97] Horowitz, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power,* p. 9.
[98] Ibid., p. 177.
[99] Ibid., p. 179.
[100] Ibid., p. 178.
[101] Ibid., p. 181.
[102] Ibid., p. 170.
[103] Ibid., p. 181.

explaining suicide attacks.

While Horowitz is right about the importance of organizational capital and links to external terrorist groups for emulating suicide attacks, it is equally important to remember that militant groups do not emulate or innovate for the sake of new tactics only or just because they are flexible; rather they do so to overcome an obstacle.[104] It has been argued that "terrorist innovation is usually motivated by problem solving intended to overcome constraints in the security environment…"[105] Innovation, at the non-state actor level, is defined "as the adoption of a tactic or technology that the *given organization* has not used or considered using in the past."[106] Thus, "problem solving rather than advantage-seeking drives the process to learn, adapt, and invent," specially, when the terrorists are unable "to meet their objectives with extant methods."[107]

But what are some of the 'constraints in the security environment' that might cause insurgents to innovate or emulate a new tactic. Lack of "access to the full range of hardware and equipment sought by guerrillas" are pointed out as crucial factor.[108] It has been argued that "in campaigns against capable counterinsurgent forces, it may be difficult for insurgents to acquire weapons … Security services may monitor borders and local markets and closely scrutinize local military forces to avoid illicit weapons diversions."[109] If the adversary is a very powerful country, it can also prevent insurgents from buying "weapons on international markets."[110]

---

[104] Rasmussen and Hafez, 2010, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 9; Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.
[105] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.
[106] Dolnik, Adam, 2009, *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics and Global Trends.* (New York: Routledge), p. 6.
[107] Rasmussen and Hafez, 2010, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 9.
[108] Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, 2001, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, (RAND Corporation), p. 95. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2007/MR1405.pdf
[109] Ibid., p. 95.
[110] Ibid., p. 95.

Based on this line of reasoning, arms embargo imposed by a strong adversary or the international community against insurgent groups should present a challenge and make insurgents to look for alternative tactics or homegrown weaponry "to overcome constraints in the security environment."[111] The main reason for the gravity of arms embargo imposed by a strong adversary (e.g., U.S.) or the international community against insurgent groups is that they are better able to monitor the arms embargo. Furthermore, fear of retaliation by a strong adversary (e.g., U.S.) or the international community is more likely to deter third party nation-states from supplying effective weaponry to the insurgent groups. Therefore, militant organizations finding themselves in such circumstance should be more likely to look for alternative solutions.

Meanwhile, both Horowitz and terrorist innovation literature assume "asymmetrical military disadvantages"[112] and the ensuing "constraints in the security environment"[113] to be a crucial factor in driving insurgents to innovate and find 'equalizers.'[114] I refer to this power disparity that exerts force on the insurgents and limits their operational freedom as military pressure. I define military pressure as governments' exercise of force through their security forces with a clearly stated objective of killing or capturing and targeting insurgents' infrastructure to eliminate insurgency.

Based on the above theoretical background, this paper argues that suicide attack is better understood as an innovation or emulation of a new technique to retaliate in asymmetric warfare, especially when insurgents face arms embargo, military pressure,

---

[111] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.

[112] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.

[113] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.

[114] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.

and have direct links to external terrorist groups. Thus, I hypothesize:

> *H1: The existence of an arms embargo, the greater the military pressure, and/or the more direct the links to external terrorist groups, the more likely insurgents will resort to the use of suicide attacks.*

To test this hypothesis, I will be doing a case study using qualitative and quantitative data and systematically analyze these data drawn from variety of sources: books, articles, interviews, anecdotal accounts, newspapers, speech notes, reports, and surveys. However, it should be noted that when it comes to issues like insurgency or particular insurgent groups, and countries like Afghanistan, it is almost impossible to find systematic data even using various sources. Because of the lack of systematic data, there are some time periods that there are no data, and other times where there are data available.

That being said, there are three independent variables in my hypothesis: arms embargo, military pressure, and diffusion. However, prior to elaborating more about their definition and operationalization, I would like to reiterate that my dependent variable is suicide attacks in Afghanistan, which is defined in this paper as an act of using one's body as a weapon to kill or destroy the enemy or the target (e.g., human, building, vehicle).[115] The more than three decades of Afghan conflict is a good representative of both non-suicide and suicide attacks campaigns, starting in 1978 to 2010.[116] To operationalize my dependent variable, I will be looking at the number of suicide attacks carried out in Afghanistan each year between 1978 and 2010.

My first independent variable, arms embargo, is inferred from terrorist innovation

---

[115] This definition is drawn from and is in line with those offered by Pape (2005, p. 10), Bloom (2005, p. 76), Pedahzur (2005, pp. 8-12), and Moghadam (2008, p. 6).
[116] 1978 to 2010 are the years for which reliable data is available.

literature's emphasis on 'constraints in security environment.'[117] As already defined in the introduction of this paper, arms embargo means prevention of "direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer… of arms and related materiel of all types including weapons and ammunition … [and] paramilitary equipment" to the insurgent groups.[118] Due to nature of insurgency and secrecy surrounding their activities, it is impossible to attain systematic data for the operationalizing the impact of arms embargo over the years.

One way to overcome this challenge is to look at the presence or absence of UN Security Council resolutions imposing arms embargo against the various Afghan insurgent groups and their affiliates between 1978 and 2010, and similarly whether or not the different insurgent groups (e.g., Mujahidin and Taliban) had third party nation-states explicitly arming them throughout the period under analysis (1978- 2010). Thus to operationalize arms embargo, I will look at the presence or absence of UN imposed arms embargoes along with the presence or absence of third party nation-states supplying weaponry to the Mujahidin and/or the Taliban between 1978 and 2010.

Military pressure, my second independent variable, is inferred from Horowitz (2010) and terrorist innovation literature's assumptions that "asymmetrical military disadvantages"[119] and ensuing "constraints in the security environment"[120] present a grave challenge to the insurgents, which should drive them to innovate and find 'equalizers.'[121] I define what I call military pressure as governments' exercise of force through their security forces with a clearly stated objective of killing or capturing and

---

[117] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4; Rasmussen and Hafez, 2010, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 9.
[118] UN.org. "ARMS EMBARGO: EXPLANATION OF TERMS." Available at http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/pdf/EOT%20Arms%20embargo_ENGLISH.pdf
[119] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.
[120] Hafez and Rasmussen, 2012, Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect, p. 4.
[121] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 179.

targeting insurgents' infrastructure to eliminate insurgency.

To operationalize military pressure, I will look at a number of factors such as number of troops, military operations, enemy casualties, and holding the ground that are dependent on data availability. The increase in the number troops over the years means an increase in military pressure on the insurgents. The longer the military operations and the more troops involved in them should translate into increasing military pressure. The more the insurgents are killed, the more they are under military pressure. And finally, the more the military expands and holds the ground, the more pressure they exert on the insurgents by denying them safe havens.

However, there are certain limitations with data for operationalizing military pressure. First the data are restricted to military operations conducted by the Afghan and foreign troops between 2002 and 2007, and number of the Afghan and foreign troops deployed between 2002 and 2009. This means my analysis of military pressure is restricted to the aforementioned time periods, whereas, reference to military pressure in the 1980s and 1990s is less systematic and more descriptive in nature, but nonetheless provides a picture of military pressure prior to 2002.

Second, due to sensitivity surrounding military campaigns and the officials' reluctance to release detailed data on all aspects of military operations, the number of troops that participated in each military operation and the duration of some of the military operations conducted between 2002 and 2007 are unknown. Meanwhile, it is hard to find systematic data on the numbers of insurgents killed each year. Finally, due the same reason of secrecy surrounding military operations, the number of military operations conducted each year presented in this paper (2002-2007) might vary from the

actual number. Still I have tried to be as accurate and inclusive as possible by making sure to at least have two sources, such as two different news media outlets, a media outlet with a congressional report or any other two combinations of different sources, for each of the military operations listed in this paper. Thus, due to data limitations, while it might be possible to see elements of military pressure emanating from some factors at one point, it might not be evident to see the same factors at other points.

Finally, diffusion, my third independent variable, is derived from Horowitz's proposition about diffusion of military innovation and the importance of external links to the non-state actors. As explained earlier, Horowitz describes diffusion as "the process by which (1) an innovation (2) is communicated through certain channels (3) over time (4) among the members of a social system."[122] For operationalizing diffusion, I will look at the presence or absence of a direct link between Afghan insurgent organizations and external terrorist groups or militant organizations throughout the period under analysis. Again, due to data limitations, there are periods with no systematic data on diffusion variable. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

---

[122] Horowitz, Michael C, 2010, *The Diffusion of Military Power*, p. 19.
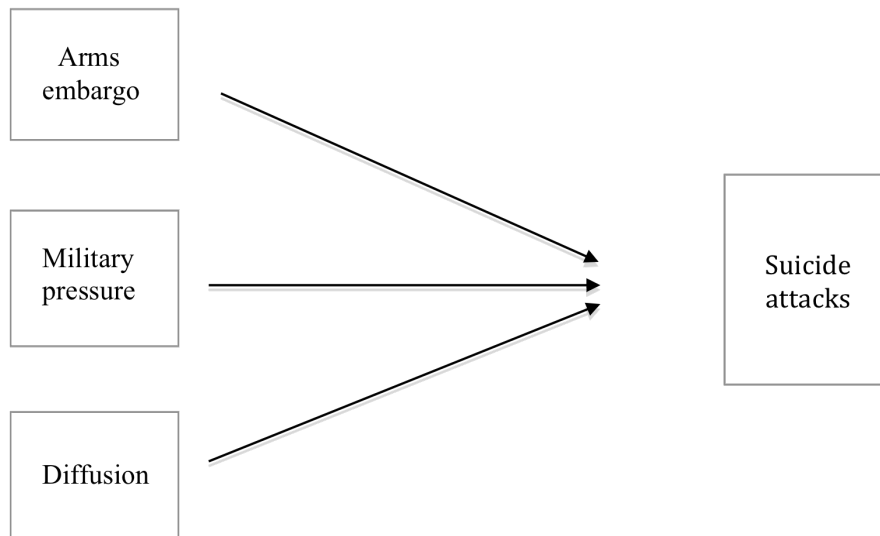
Figure 1.   Causes of Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan

As depicted in Figure 1, there are three independent variables – arms embargo, military pressure, and diffusion – that are causing suicide attacks. Individually, these variables might exert some influence on the occurrence of suicide attacks, however, I argue that the combination or presence of all three factors at one point in time makes it more likely that the Afghan insurgents will resort to the use of suicide attacks.

IV. ANALYSIS

In its more than three decades of insurgency and civil war (1978-2010), Afghanistan has only experienced suicide attacks in the 2000s. From 1978 to 2000, there was no incident of suicide attacks in Afghanistan.[123] However, since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, Afghanistan has increasingly experienced suicide attacks. Although accounts vary

---

[123] "The Afghan Mujahidin rebels never resorted to suicide bombings against the Soviets in the 1980s, nor did the Taliban in the 1990s." Source: Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 202.
The really first suicide attacks in the history of Afghanistan happened two days prior to 9/11 when two Arab terrorists assassinated the legendary leader of Afghan guerrilla warfare and anti-Taliban resistance, Ahmad Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001. Source: Coll, Steve. 2004. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10 2001*. New York: Penguin Press.

on the exact number of suicide attacks carried out each year since 2001, there is consensus

on its dramatic rise since 2006.[124] From 2001 to the end of 2005, Afghanistan witnessed a

total of thirty-seven incidents of suicide attacks – one in 2001, one in 2002, two in 2003,

six in 2004, twenty-seven in 2005.[125] However, since 2006, the Taliban has employed

over hundred suicide attacks each year up to 2010.[126] Figure 1 illustrates the number of

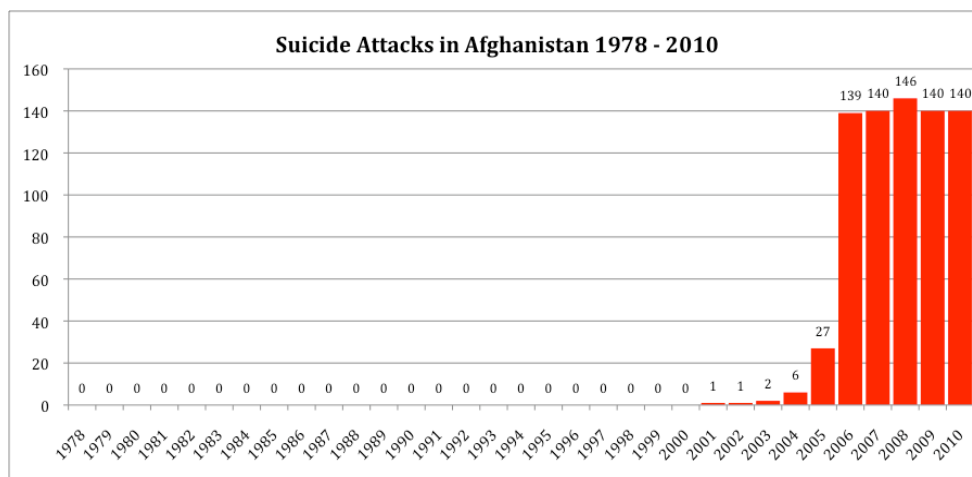suicide attacks in Afghanistan between 1978 and 2010.

Figure 2.   Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan 1978 – 2010.[127]

As Figure 2 depicts, the tactic that was totally unfamiliar to Afghans prior to 2001, has

become a common phenomenon in Afghanistan. Taliban are increasingly using suicide

---

[124] Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (RAND Corporation), p. 64; Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), pp. 202-203; Goodenough, Patrick, "Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan, Pakistan Have Soared in Decade Since 9/11." *CNS News*. September 7, 2011. Available at http://cnsnews.com/news/article/suicide-bombings-afghanistan-pakistan-have-soared-decade-911
[125] Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (RAND Corporation), p. 64.
[126] The year for which data is available. Source: Goodenough, Patrick, "Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan, Pakistan Have Soared in Decade Since 9/11." *CNS News*. September 7, 2011. Available at http://cnsnews.com/news/article/suicide-bombings-afghanistan-pakistan-have-soared-decade-911
[127] *Source of 1978 to 2001 Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan*: Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 202; Coll, Steve. 2004. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10 2001*. New York: Penguin Press.
Source for 2002 to 2010 Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan: Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (RAND Corporation), p. 64; Goodenough, Patrick, "Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan, Pakistan Have Soared in Decade Since 9/11." *CNS News*. September 7, 2011. Available at http://cnsnews.com/news/article/suicide-bombings-afghanistan-pakistan-have-soared-decade-911

attacks as a tool in their fight against the US, NATO and Afghan forces. This presents a

puzzle that *why, contrary to their predecessors, did the Taliban resort to use of suicide*

attack in the 2000s in Afghanistan? To that end, the author argues that, in Afghanistan,

three factors – arms embargo, military pressure, and direct link to an external terrorist

network – combined to foster the use of suicide tactics.

The paper now turns to analyze the impact of each one the three independent

variables on suicide attack in Afghanistan.

A. Arms Embargo

Since 1978, Afghanistan has been experiencing insurgency and civil war. The conflict,

which initially started with small-scale armed reaction to the People Democratic Party of

Afghanistan's (PDPA) power grab in a bloody coup and ensuing repression in 1978, soon

took the form of national uprising once the Soviets invaded the country a year later in

1979. The fierce Afghan backlash to these un-welcome developments – communist

PDPA's power grab and Soviet invasion – led to the formation of several Mujahidin

resistance groups in neighboring Pakistan and Iran.[128] The resilience of Afghan Mujahidin

against the Soviets attracted Western and Islamic countries' attention to the Afghan Jihad,

which translated into moral and material support.[129]

Recalling his memories of the Afghan-Soviet war in a book co-authored with Mark

Adkin, Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence's (ISI) chief of Afghan Bureau, Brigadier

Mohammad Yousaf, wrote:

> As I was about to discover, nothing moves, in peace or war, without money. The
> Mujahideen could achieve nothing without financial support. No matter how brilliant my
> strategy might be, the implementation depended on the availability of a vast reservoir of

[128] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad: The Mujahidin, the Taliban and Bin Laden*. (The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism), pp. 52-58.
[129] Maley, William, 2002, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 76-84.

cash with which to arm, train and move my forces. Almost half of this money originated from the US taxpayer, with the remainder coming from the Saudi Arabian government or rich Arab individuals.[130]

It has been reported that the United States provided "between $4 billion and $5 billion to the mujahideen between 1980 and 1992," with Saudi Arabia matching each U.S. dollar bill in "aid to the mujahideen" around the same period.[131] Besides cash to support training and their other needs, Mujahidin were "well armed with US-supplied surface-to-air missiles, rockets, mortars, and communication equipment" that won them confrontations and made "successful ambushes" against Soviets "a daily phenomenon."[132]

The abundance of advanced weaponry and other military equipment along with generous funds explains a lot. It explains why the Afghans did not resort to the use of suicide attacks in their national uprising against Soviet invasion and their repressive puppet regime, which cost them an estimated 1.24 million lives,[133] 4.2 million wounded and maimed,[134] and another 5 million refugees.[135] That is, although the tactic was quite successful in places like Lebanon and Sri Lanka in the 1980s, it was simply not necessary in Afghanistan.[136]

After nearly a decade of occupation, the Soviet troops withdrew (1989) and their puppet regime collapsed into the hands of the Mujahidin in 1992. The Mujahidin, however, failed to reach consensus on establishing an overarching and inclusive

[130] Yousaf and Adkin, 2001, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower,* pp. 50-51.
[131] Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, (RAND Corporation), pp. 32-33. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf
[132] Reuveny and Prakash, 1995, "The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union"; Katzman, Kenneth, 2012, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy." (CRS Report for Congress), pp. 2-3.
[133] According to Asia Watch an estimated 1.24 million dead, and five million refugees (Asia Watch 1991, 9)
[134] Hilali, A. 2005. *US-Pakistan relationship: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co.
[135] According to Asia Watch an estimated 1.24 million dead, and five million refugees (Asia Watch 1991, 9)
[136] See Pape's (2005) *Dying to Win* p.22 for success of suicide bombing campaigns.

government.[137] As a result, the country went to a destructive civil war and witnessed the emergence of a new group called the Taliban in 1994.[138]

It is believed that Mullah Omar established the Taliban movement in August 1994; however, their first major military encounter took place some two months later when they fought Gulbudin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami forces on 13 October 1994. Soon after, they marched towards provincial capital of Kandahar province, and took it over from forces loyal to Hekmatyar on November 5, 1994.[139]

The Mujahidin government in Kabul, led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, initially welcomed the Taliban movement for bringing security and order in Kandahar and collaborated with them in defending the Ghazni province from Hizb-e-Islami's assault on January 25, 1995. With the conquest of the Wardak province from Hekmatyar's forces on February 4, 1995, the Taliban became a viable force, controlling one-fifth of the Afghanistan's provinces (six out of the thirty) in less than six months of their initial major military assault against Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami forces in Kandahar.[140]

In early March of 1995, the Taliban movement secured a deal with Hizb-e-Wahdat, "an umbrella organization of seven Shiite Movements," which enabled them to move to the western parts of the Kabul, previously controlled by Hizb-e-Wahdat.[141] This bold move was threatening to the Rabbani-led Mujahidin government, which immediately launched a "surprise attack" that pushed back the Taliban and their newly allied Hizb-e-Wahdat from Kabul, marking the "first defeat" of the Taliban since their uprising.[142]

---

[137] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad*, p. 46.
[138] Ibid., pp. 67-69.
[139] Ibid., p. 81.
[140] Ibid., p. 81.
[141] Ibid., pp. 82, 87.
[142] Ibid., p. 82.

Although not totally abandoning their assault on Kabul, the Taliban concentrated heavily

on Heart province and eventually took it over from President Rabbani's ally, Ismail Khan,

on September 5, 1995. By October of the same year, once again the Taliban closed

themselves to Kabul and brought it under siege by conquering some of the key peripheral

districts such as Charasyab, Rishkhor, and Khairabad hills.[143]

Meanwhile on the western front of the country, the Taliban made further gain by

conquering the Ghor province in June 1996, and maintaining the pressure on Kabul with

"heavy missile attacks."[144] Three months later on September 11, 1996, the Taliban

conquered three eastern provinces including the vital city of Jalalabad, capital of

Ningarhar province, which opened new logistical routes from Pakistan to the Taliban.[145]

These gains put further pressure on the Rabbani government in Kabul, making it

impossible to hold the capital. As a result the Rabbani-led Mujahidin forces withdrew

from Kabul on September 27, 1996, paving the way for the Taliban to take it over without

any resistance.[146] The Taliban didn't stop there and started pushing towards northern

provinces, conquering the Bagram Airport, the key military airfield of the country located

in north of Kabul, in January 1997. In May of the same year, the Taliban made a surprise

short-lived advance in the north of the country by conquering Mazar-e-Sharif. However,

due to their uncompromising policy, their newly won ally, General Malik, turned against

them which cost the Taliban thousands of fighters and loss of the important northern city

of Mazar-e-Sharif.[147] In October 1997, the Taliban regrouped to retake Mazar-e-Sharif,

however, their endeavor failed. Eventually the city fell to the Taliban a year later in

---

[143] Ibid., p. 82.
[144] Ibid., p. 82.
[145] Ibid., p. 83.
[146] Ibid., p. 83.
[147] Ibid., p. 80.

August 1998.[148] By 2001, "the Taliban controlled over 90 percent of Afghanistan,"

pushing their opponent – Northern Alliance – into northeast corner of the country.[149]

The Taliban's miracle-like swift advances were not possible without extensive

support from Pakistan and Gulf countries. "The Taliban movement … drew on the

military backing of Pakistan and financial support of Saudi Arabia."[150] It has been

reported that Pakistan directly contributed "to the Taliban's military campaign with its

own forces … [and] at times provided air cover … This support was in addition to, and

quite separate from, the weapons consignments dispatched to Afghanistan as part of

Pakistan's publicly stated support for the Taliban."[151] According to one account, "As

many as 30 trucks a day crossed the border [from Pakistan] into Afghanistan carrying

artillery shells, tank rounds, and rocket-propelled grenades."[152] Not only that, "the

Pakistani aircraft assisted with troop rotations of Taliban forces during combat

operations."[153] Furthermore, "between 1994 and 1999, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000

Pakistanis trained and fought in Afghanistan," which led one commentator to label it a

"creeping invasion."[154]

That is why the Taliban didn't resort to the use of suicide attack prior to 2001,

simply because they were not under arms embargo and received extensive military

equipment and support from Pakistan. However, after the incident of 9/11 and the

Taliban's refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden and the subsequent U.S. attack on

---

[148] Ibid., p. 83.
[149] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*, (PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press), p. 180.
[150] Byman, et. al., 2001. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, p. 64. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2007/MR1405.pdf
[151] Ibid., p. 65.
[152] Maley, William, 2002, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 222.
[153] Ibid., p. 222.
[154] Ibid., p. 221.

Afghanistan, the Taliban's fortune and circumstances changed.

The day after 9/11, the U.S. deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, called General Mahmood Ahmad, chief of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), who was in the United States visiting the CIA at the time. During the 15 minute "short and … hard-hitting conversation," Armitage conveyed President Bush's message to Pakistanis: "You're with us or against us."[155] Armitage told General Mahmood that "The president was speaking out forcefully, not only against those who conducted operations of terror, but those who supported terrorism or allowed terrorists to exist, and to think carefully."[156]

The next day, Richard Armitage summoned the Pakistani ambassador, Dr. Maleeha Lohdi, along with General Mahmood Ahmad and "laid out seven non-negotiable steps the Pakistanis must take" in regards to the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. The list included "ending … logistical supports to Al-Qaeda," preventing Taliban's recruit "from reaching" Afghanistan, providing "overflight and territorial access rights … to U.S. military forces and intelligence agencies," and breaking all ties "with the Taliban government" if they fail to hand over Osama.[157] Within the next 24 hours, the Pakistani "President Musharaf … agreed to all seven demands."[158]

Pakistan wanted to immediately cut off its relationship with the Taliban prior to launch of the US invasion, but the United States asked Pakistanis to "maintain a hold and a contact with the Taliban – if only a tenuous one … to resolve the fate of the [western] hostages" taken by the Taliban.[159] However, when the Taliban refused to hand over

---

[155] PBS.org. "Interview: Richard Armitage." Available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/interviews/armitage.html
[156] Ibid.
[157] Bird, Tim and Alex Marshall, 2011, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way*, (Yale University Press), p. 63.
[158] Ibid., p. 63.
[159] PBS.org. "Interview: Richard Armitage." Available at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/interviews/armitage.html

Osama bin Laden, and the U.S. launched Operation Enduring Freedom, Pakistani

President Musharaf dismissed General Mahmood Ahamd, head of ISI and a Taliban

sympathizer, in a show of resolve and signal to the United States about his dedication in

supporting the U.S. campaign and "going in a new direction."[160]

The next blow came to the Taliban on September 22, 2001, when the United Arab

Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, two of its three allies, "withdrew their

recognition of the Taliban as the legal government of Afghanistan."[161] Finally, after the

U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and disintegration of the Taliban regime, "The UN Security

Council, on January 16, 2002, unanimously established an arms embargo and the freezing

of identifiable assets belonging to bin Laden, al-Qaeda, and the remaining Taliban." [162]

Although Pakistan initially cut its official ties with the Taliban and supported the

U.S. led campaign by deploying more than 70,000 troops along the Afghan border and

launching several military operations throughout the years, the Afghan Taliban were

tacitly allowed to shelter in Pakistan and were not made the real targets of these military

operations.[163] However, it was not until 2005 that sporadic reports emerged about some

elements within the Pakistani intelligence establishment (ISI) assisting Taliban with

"tactical, operational, and strategic" intelligence to evade the US and NATO led military

operations.[164] The Pakistanis started doing this due to the fear of growing Indian influence

---

[160] Ibid.

[161] Martinfrost.ws. "Taliban." Available at http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/june2006/taliban1.html

[162] Ibid.

[163] Lafraie, Najibullah, 2009, "Resurgence of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: How and why?", (International Politics. Vol. 46, No 1: pp.102-113), p. 106; Feickert, Andrew, 2006, "U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress," p. 6. Available at http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/70042.pdf; Feickert, Andrew, 2005b, "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia," (*CRS Report for Congress),* pp. 3-4. Available at http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html& identifier=ADA458286; Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, pp. 59-60.

[164] Jones, Seth G, 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, p. 56.

in Afghanistan.[165] However, there is no hard evidence to prove that the Taliban receive state-sponsored large caches of effective weaponry even from the United States' bitter rival in the region–the Islamic republic of Iran–since the UN imposed arms embargo.[166] Robert M. Gates, then Defense Secretary of the United States, "said during a visit to Kabul … that there was no evidence as yet that Tehran government officials are involved in shipping weapons to the country for use against U.S. and NATO forces."[167]

Thus the Taliban, which used to be endowed with abundant external resources and support from Pakistan and Gulf States in their fight against the Mujahidin government (1994-96) and later against the Northern Alliance (1996-2001), faced the lack of effective military equipment in the post 9/11 era. In such circumstances, scholars argue that the need for "leveling the playing field for groups that perceive themselves to be militarily disadvantaged is a key reason why groups decide to employ this tactic [suicide attacks]."[168] Therefore, "clearly the Taliban have embraced this once-taboo asymmetric tactic and see suicide bombers—who are referred to as 'Mullah Omar's missiles'—as an equalizer, much as the Stinger ground-to-air missile was in the 1980s."[169]

Given that arms embargo was in place since 2002 and suicide attacks started taking off in 2005, only to reach their climax in 2006, one might wonder what explains the gap and late showdown of the Taliban with suicide attacks? There are two complementary explanations for this puzzle. First, as will be explained in the military pressure and diffusion sections, the Taliban were badly beaten in the initial two months of the US

---

[165] Ibid., p. 56.
[166] Ibid., pp. 60 – 61.
[167] The Washington Times. "Taliban uses weapons made in China, Iran." June 5, 2007. Available at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/jun/05/20070605-121517-7394r/
[168] Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom,* p. 30.
[169] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified,* pp. 203-204.

invasion of Afghanistan, and were under military pressure since then. This means that it was hard for the Taliban to immediately regroup and come with possible alternative solutions to overcome the challenge posed by the arms embargo.

A second more likely and supplementary explanation is the timing of diffusion of suicide attacks from Iraq to Afghanistan, which will be elaborate in detail in the diffusion section. The process of diffusion of suicide attacks from Iraq to Afghanistan started sometime during 2004, but more coordination took place in 2005, making the presence of all three proposed factors possible in late 2005 to early 2006. The presence of arms embargo, military pressure and diffusion at one point in time (late 2005 to early 2006) resulted in the surge of suicide attacks in 2006. This is in line with the argument of this paper that suicide attacks are more likely when all three factors are present at one point in time.

B. Military Pressure

There is no systematic data about the number of military operations conducted by the Soviets and the People Democratic Party of Afghanistan's (PDPA) forces against the Mujahidin in the 1980s. However, what is evident is the overall number of the Soviet troops and the PDPA's forces fighting the Mujahidin. In 1978, the number of PDPA's military personnel was estimated to be 90,000.[170] This number, however, decreased to 35,000 troops over the next four years until 1981.[171] The decrease in the number of Kabul's communist government forces made the Soviets compensate with their own troops by increasing their military forces in Afghanistan from 85,000 in 1981 to 130,000 in 1985.[172]

---

[170] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 40.
[171] Ibid., p. 40.
[172] Ibid., p. 40.

Meanwhile by 1985, the number of the Afghan Mujahidin fighting the Soviets and their puppet regime were reported to be some 250,000.[173] Although in the first half of the 1980s, "the Soviets had advantage in firepower," this would soon change once the United States start supplying Stinger missiles.[174] Even in the first half of the 1980s, the Soviets were constrained to major cities, whereas the Afghan Mujahidin "were able to take control of most of the countryside."[175] The sheer number of the Afghan Mujahidin and the sixty percent decrease in the number of PDPA's armed forces vividly illustrates Afghans' bitterness towards the Soviet invaders and their puppet communist regime in Kabul, and their willingness to fight and expel the Soviets and to topple the PDPA.

The evidence presented shows that while there was battlefield power asymmetry in the initial years of the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, the Mujahidin access to outside weaponry supplies and their overwhelmingly large number changed battlefield dynamics into their favor in the second half of the 1980s. The access to weaponry and absence of severe power asymmetry mean that the Mujahidin were not challenged to the extent to look for alternative solutions. Meanwhile, the mere absence of arms embargo during the 1980s supports the author's proposition that the likelihood of suicide attacks is high when all three factors are present at one point in time. Thus the absence of arms embargo in the 1980s mean that it was less likely for the Mujahidin to resort to the use of suicide attacks.

However, for the decade of the 1990s, there is literally no evidence about the number of attacks between various warring Mujahidin parties and the number of their fighters, and similarly there is little evidence about skirmishes between the Taliban and the Mujahidin and the number of forces involved. Given the Taliban's swift rise to power

---

[173] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified,* p. 174.
[174] Ibid., p. 174.
[175] Ibid., p. 174.

in two years from rebellion to ruling (1994-1996), and their access to extensive military equipment and support from Pakistan and fund from Saudi, discussed in the previous sections, it is evident that the Taliban did not face battlefield obstacles and power asymmetry or military pressure from their adversary to resort to the use of suicide attacks. Again this is in line with the author's main argument that the presence of all three independent variables at one point in time makes it highly likely for suicide attacks to occur.

That being said, there is some systematic qualitative and quantitative data for the 2000s, albeit limited, that would help in operationalizing the military pressure variable in the aftermath of the US invasion of Afghanistan. As explained earlier, for operationalizing military pressure in the 2000s, I will be looking at the number of Afghan and foreign troops between 2002 and 2009. An increase in their number would translate into battlefield disadvantage and pressure to the Taliban.

Meanwhile, I look at the number of military operations launched by the US and NATO led coalition troops against the Taliban, which means the more the number of troops involved and the lengthier the operations, the more pressure they should exert on the Taliban by killing or capturing them and denying them safe havens. Along the same line, the more casualties caused to the insurgents from the military operations or aerial bombing should mean that the insurgents are under pressure. And lastly expansion of troops and holding the ground by establishing bases literally mean denial of safe havens to the Taliban, which mean they are under military pressure. Once again it should be reminded that our data have limitations and everything is not in the numbers.

The number of foreign troops and Afghan secrurity forces steadily increased over

the years between 2002 and 2009. Figure 3, 4, 5, illustrates the number of Afghan

National Army (ANA), U.S. troops, and NATO-led International Security Assistance
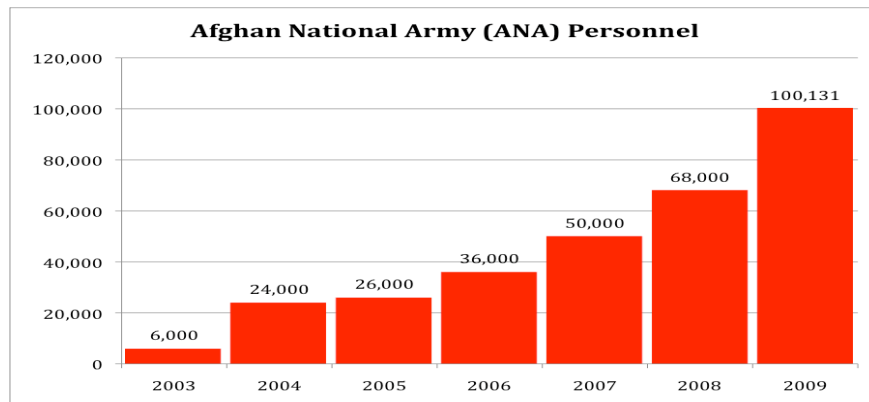
Forces (ISAF) between 2002 and 2009 respectively.

Afghan National Army (ANA) Personnel

Year	Personnel
2003	6,000
2004	24,000
2005	26,000
2006	36,000
2007	50,000
2008	68,000
2009	100,131

Figure 3. Number of Afghan National Army 2003 – 2009.[176]

Note: Figure 3 does not include approximately 30 to 60 thousand militias loyal to warlords who were involved in action against the Taliban.[177] Also excluded here is the number of Afghan National Police, which experienced the similar rate of growth and were mostly involved in action against the insurgents.[178]

US Troops Deployed in Afghanistan 2002-2009

Year	Troops
2002	9,700
2003	13,100
2004	16,700
2005	17,800
2006	22,100
2007	24,700
2008	31,800
2009	68,000
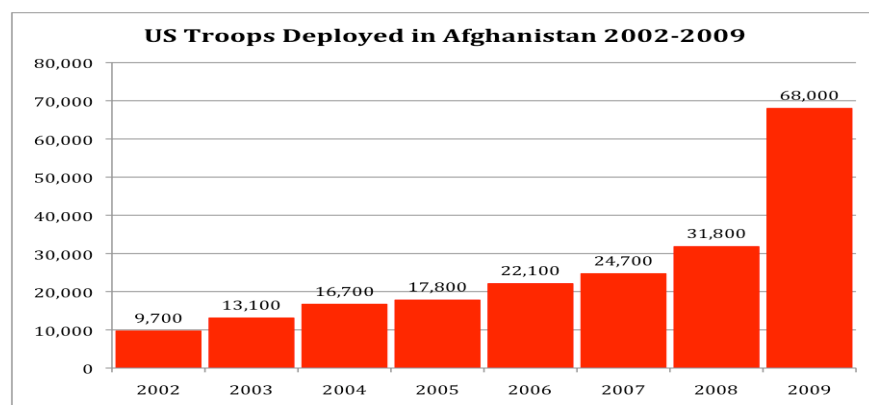
Figure 4. Number of US Forces in Afghanistan 2002 – 2009.[179]

---

[176] Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon, 2012, *Afghanistan Index*, p. 6.
[177] Sinno, Abdukder H., 2009, *Organization at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, (Cornell University Press), p. 257.
[178] Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon, 2012, *Afghanistan Index*, p. 6.
[179] The New York Times. "Troop Levels in Afghanistan Since 2001." October 1, 2009. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/10/01/world/middleeast/afghanistan-policy.html
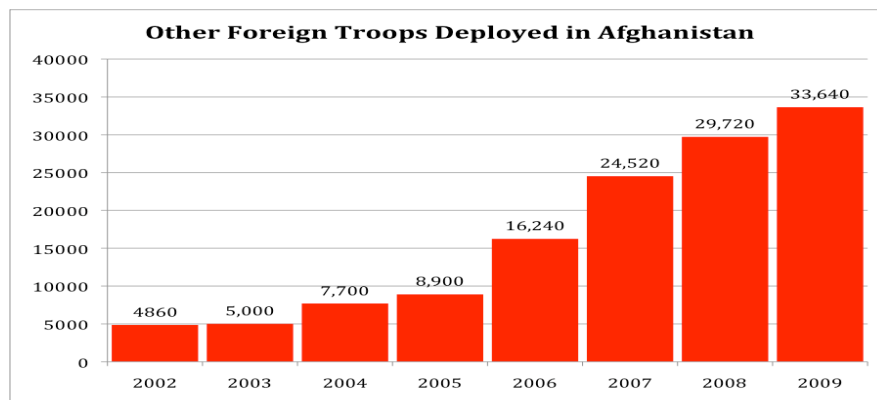
Figure 5. Number of Other Foreign Troops, Excluding US Forces 2002 – 2009.[180]

The steady increase in the number of the Afghan National Army (Feagure 3), U.S. troops (Figure 4), and NATO led ISAF forces (Figure 5) corresponds to the author's proposition that increase in the number of troops over the years should exert pressure on the insrurgents by killing, capturing, and denying them safe havens.

That being said, the paper turns to detailed discussion of these military operations that were conducted between 2002 and 2007– the years for which some systematic data was available. I would like to mention that due to data limitation, it was not possible to present the number of troops involved in each military operation, duration of each of these operations, or casualties caused to the insurgents in a table. Therefore, following part of this section is a blend of qualitative and quantitative analysis to show the impact of these military operations on restricting the Taliban's conventional fighting capabilities, which further exacerbated battlefied power asymmetry and made the Taliban to look for alternative tactics (e.g., suicide attaks).

Another crucial point before getting into detailed discsussion of military operations between 2002 and 2007, is that after killing some ten to thirty thoudand

---

[180] Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon, 2012, *Afghanistan Index*, p. 4.

Taliban fighters and their affiliates in the initial two months of invasion (Oct 07 - Dec 07, 2001),[181] the U.S. and NATO led international troops mainly started the following military operations with the intent of wiping out the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda altogether. Since the total number of the Taliban forces during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was approximated to be thirty to fifty thousands,[182] this means that the Taliban were already badly beaten before these military operations.

1. Military Operations (2002 - 2007)

After total demise of the Taliban regime on December 9, 2001,[183] Operation Anaconda was the first one of the four major military operations launched in 2002 in Afghanistan. In March 2002, a total of two thousand seven hundred troops from the U.S. (1000), NATO allies (200), and the Afghan National Army (1500) came together to wipe out the remnants of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda that were believed to be hiding in the Shah-i-Khot Valley of the Paktia province in eastern Afghanistan. The insurgents, numbering roughly 2,000, sustained a heavy loss (400 dead) from 3,500 bombs dropped on their strongholds during the US-led offensive.[184] However, due to coalition troops' heavy reliance on intensive aerial bombardments and their poor ground coordination, the rest of the insurgents managed to evade them and submerge into the Pakistani tribal areas.[185]

Operation Mountain Lion (June 2002) followed Operation Anaconda in the

---

[181] The account of the Taliban's casualties in the initial stages of war comes from a prominent former CIA officer, Henry A. Crumpton, who was responsible for leading the Afghan campaign in the immediate aftermath of 9/11. Available at http://www.contactmusic.com/celebrity-videos/cia-counter-terrorism-expert-henry-a-crumpton-discusses-fall-of-kandahar-in-2001-part-2_11893

[182] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 75.

[183] Katzman, Kenneth, 2013, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," (CRS Report for Congress), p. 9. Available at http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf

[184] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." http://www.historyandthehead lines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182&currentSection=1523498& productid=34

[185] Xtimeline.com. "Operation Anaconda." Mar 2, 2002. Available at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28053

southeastern mountains of Afghanistan. The objective of the operation was to deny safe-

havens to the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Meanwhile in early to mid 2002, British troops

conducted Operation Jacana – a series of offensives – to dismantle the Taliban's bases and

supplies in the southeastern mountains of Afghanistan.[186] As a result, larges cache of the

Taliban's weaponry and their bases, encompassing cluster of caves, were captured and

destroyed by the British-led offensive.[187] In late August 2002, Southeastern Afghanistan

witnessed Operation Mountain Sweep. During the operation, the coalition troops

unearthed five weaponry stockpiles, along with Taliban documents.[188] These operations

were so intense that even children as young as 13 years old were arrested and sent to

Guantanamo Bay.[189]

 Meanwhile, Afghanistan witnessed seven large military operations during 2003. In

January, the coalition launched Operation Mongoose. Besides seizing and destroying a

large stockpile of armaments, the coalition troops killed twenty-two and captured thirteen

insurgents during the operation.[190] Right after Operation Mongoose, the US-led coalition

troops launched Operation Valiant Strike in eastern Afghanistan on 20 March 2003. The

operation, which coincided with the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, was launched based

on the intelligence received from Khalid Sheikh Mohammad's interrogation. Six hundred

troops, including conventional and Special Forces units, were deployed in action that

---

[186] "Royal Marines - Afghanistan." Available at http://www.eliteukforces.info/royal-marines/operations/afghanistan.php
[187] CNN News. "UK Marines end Operation Snipe." May 2002. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/05/13/afghan.marines/index.html
[188] GlobalSecurity.org." "Operation Mountain Sweep." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_sweep.htm
[189] Belida, Alex. "3 Afghan Children Released from Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp." Voice of America News. Available at http://www.militaryinfo.com/news_story?textnewsid=800
[190] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182&currentSection=1523498&productid=34

resulted in confiscation of "more than 170 rocket-propelled grenades, as well as mines and mortar rounds, the third such weapons cache discovered in the area … [along with] heavy machine-guns, rocket-propelled grenades, 82mm mortar rounds, and 107mm rockets."[191]

The day Operation Valiant Strike ended, US troops launched Operation Desert Lion in northeastern Afghanistan's Kohi-Safi Mountains. During the operation, the troops found large caches of weaponry. In June of 2003 as part of new military operation called Operation Dragon Fury, a brigade-sized US and Italian forces launched an offensive which resulted in small-scale confrontation with the Taliban and twenty-one arrests.[192]

Over the next month (July 23, 2003), U.S. led coalition troops launched Operation Warrior Seep "to kill, capture and deny sanctuary to anti-coalition fighters and to disrupt anti-coalition activity" in the southern Afghanistan's villages and mountains.[193] Besides confiscating six stockpiles of the Taliban's weaponry,[194] the US-led offensive of more than 3,000 troops, killed and arrested 'dozens' of the Taliban in the action.[195]

Late 2003 witnessed two more military operations. Operation Mountain Viper (September 2003) was launched in Zabul province to clear pockets of the Taliban and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's forces from the area. Coalition troops killed some seventy to one hundred insurgent fighters during the operation.[196] The year 2003 ended with Operation Avalanche (December 2003). Operation Avalanche began in the eastern and southern part

[191] "Operation Valiant Strike." Feb 26, 2003. Available at. http://www.hk94.com/weblog/archives/75
[192] Ibid.
[193] Fineman, Mark. "Two U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan." Los Angeles Times. Sept 1, 2003. Available at http://articles.latimes.com/2003/sep/01/world/fg-afghan1
[194] Globalsecurity.org "Operation Warrior Sweep." http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-warrior_sweep.htm
[195] Fineman, Mark. "Two U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan." Los Angeles Times. Sept 1, 2003. Available at http://articles.latimes.com/2003/sep/01/world/fg-afghan1
[196] GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Mountain Viper." Available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_viper.htm

of the country.[197] The operation "uncovered caches of rifles, pistols, rocket-propelled

grenade launchers, howitzers, plus rockets, artillery shells, land mines, and other

ammunition."[198] During the offensive, more than one hundred insurgents were arrested

and ten more were killed in the action.[199]

The next year, 2004, witnessed six large military operations. The coalition troops

started their new year with Operation Mountain Blizzard (Jan 2004). During the two

months long operation, coalition troops "conducted 1,731 patrols and 143 raids and

cordon-and-search operations" that resulted in discovery of large stockpiles of weaponry

such as "3,648 rockets, 3,202 mortar rounds, 2,944 rocket- propelled grenades, 3,000 rifle

rounds, 2,232 mines and tens of thousands of rounds of small-arms ammunition."[200]

Meanwhile, twenty-two anti-coalition fighters were killed during the operation and a

bunch of others were arrested.[201] Right after Operation Mountain Blizzard, the US-led

coalition deployed more than 13,000 strong forces as part of Operation Mountain Storm

"in the south, southeast, and eastern" regions of the country to 'kill or capture' and

'search-and-destroy' the insurgents and their infrastructures.[202]

Meanwhile, June 2004 witnessed Operation Thunder Road. "The 14-day operation

netted an impressive quantity of arms, ammunition, and ordnance … [and] those enemy

[197] KOMO News. "Operation Avalanche Wraps Up In Afghanistan." August 31, 2006. Available at
http://www.komonews.com/news/archive/4113726.html
[198] GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Avalanche." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-avalanche.htm
[199] KOMO News. "Operation Avalanche Wraps Up In Afghanistan." August 31, 2006. Available at
http://www.komonews.com/news/archive/4113726.html
[200] GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Moutain Blizzard." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2004/03/mil-040313-afps01.htm
[201] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at
http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182
&currentSection=1523498&productid=34
[202] GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Mountain Storm." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_storm.htm

fighters who rose up to resist the Marines were quickly dealt with."[203] On July 2004, the

U.S.-led coalition troops launched Operation Lightening Resolve. This time, besides

hunting the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the operation also meant to provide security for

Afghanistan's election process.[204] Major Robert Ault disclosed information about the

changing nature of the insurgency and the coalition's new 'tactics' in engaging them.

According to Ault, insurgents "stood and fought, but sustained losses probably in the

hundreds … They learned every time they engage us, they lose… [Thus] we're seeing the

enemy transition into smaller formations and pick its fights more carefully."[205]

The year ended with two new military operations that were launched in December

(2004) and continued to early 2005. Operation Thunder Freedom and Operation Lightning

Freedom were jointly launched to hit the insurgents hard during their weakness – winter

season. An estimated 18,000 foreign troops participated in the winter offensive.[206]

Meanwhile, another important objective of these operations was to force the insurgents to

accept amnesty offered by the newly elected Afghan government and coalition troops. [207]

In addition to Operation Thunder Freedom and Operation Lightning Freedom that

started in December 2004 and continued to early 2005, coalition troops along with their

Afghan counterparts launched six large military operations during 2005. Operation Spurs

(Jan - Feb),[208] Operation Mavericks (Mar-Apr),[209] and Operation Celtics (May),[210] were

[203] Milks, Keith A. "22nd MEU Afghanistan Recap: Operation." Sept 2, 2004. Available at http://www.22ndmeu.marines.mil/News/ArticleView/tabid/196/Article/2178/22nd-meu-afghanistan-recap-operation-thunder-road.aspx
[204] Banusiewicz, John D. "Lightning Resolve to Protect Afghan Election Process." July 14, 2004. Available at http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=25707
[205] Ibid.
[206] BBC News. "US begins new Afghan operation." Dec 11, 2004. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4087647.stm
[207] Feickert, Andrew. 2005a. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia." Available at http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RL32758.pdf
[208] Task Force Trinity. "Operation SPURS (29 Jan – 4 Feb 05)." Jan 29, 2005. Available at http://www.taskforcetrinity.com/archives/976
[209] Mattingly, Rich. "Operation Mavericks Captures Suspected Terrorists." Apr 5, 2005. Available at

three back-to-back operations in early 2005 that resulted in disclosing several stockpiles of weaponry and explosives, and arrest of suspected militants.

However, it should be noted that most of the large caches of weaponry found during military operations throughout the years are believed to be those left behind by the Soviet Army and later by the Taliban regime.[211]

The rest of 2005 witnessed three more military operations. In June 2005, the coalition troops launched Operation Red Wings to hunt down insurgents and disrupt their activities in the Kunar province. At least 465 insurgents were killed in the ongoing battle.[212] In August 2005, the coalition launched Operation Whalers to capitalize on the achievements of Operation Red Wings in Kunar. Coalition troops along with their Afghan counterparts stormed the valleys and mountains of the Kunar province, with their fighter planes searching from the sky. The two operations eventually attained their main objective that was to terminate Ahmad Shah, a notorious militant commander with a "small army of barbarous fighters."[213] The year ended with Operation Pil (Elephant). Damages inflicted to the enemy during Operation Pil were not made public.[214] In several sporadic engagements during 2005, an estimated 235 insurgents were killed by coalition warplanes.[215]

http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/apr2005/a040505wm1.html

[210] Scavetta, Rick. "Marines Return to Tora Bora for Operation Celtics." May 31, 2005. Available at http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=31529

[211] Cryptome.org. "Afghanistan Wartime Architecture 2005." Available at http://cryptome.org/info/af-war-arch-0500/af-war-arch-05-00.htm

[212] FoxNews.com. "Remains Recovered in Afghan Chopper Crash." June 30, 2005. Available at http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,161178,00.html

[213] Librarypoint.org. "Victory Point: Operations Red Wings and Whalers: The Marine Corps' Battle for Freedom in Afghanistan." Available at http://www.librarypoint.org/victory_point

[214] Mraz, Steve. "Operation Pil targets Taliban in Kunar province." Oct 24, 2005. Available at http://www.stripes.com/news/operation-pil-targets-taliban-in-kunar-province-1.39955

[215] Feickert, Andrew. 2005b. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia." Available at http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA458286

Afghan forces with support of other allies launched Operation Medusa (Battle of Panjwaii II) to eradicate the insurgents from the area. During their two-week long operation around Kandahar city, coalition and Afghan forces killed "512 Taliban fighters" on the ground and arrested "another 136" of them.[221]

On September 16, 2006, coalition troops along with their Afghan counterparts launched Operation Mountain Fury in eastern Afghanistan.[222] Although the Taliban had started employing suicide attacks in skirmishes with the coalition and Afghan troops a year ago, the tactic was heavily used in their counter-offensive during Operation Mountain Fury. The Taliban employed some 23 suicide bombers in their retaliatory assaults during Operation Mountain Fury.[223] The four month long operation resulted in deaths of more than 1,100 Taliban and arrest of 179 of them.[224] Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Osmani, a prominent figure in the Taliban movement, was among those killed during the operation on December 19, 2006.[225]

In addition to Operation Mountain Fury, coalition and Afghan troops also launched Operation Falcon Summit in the southern Afghanistan in December 2006. The operation successfully removed the Taliban from areas around Kandahar city.[226] Meanwhile during 2006, the U.S. and NATO-led foreign troops heavily relied on aerial

---

[221] Adam, Ruxandra. "NATO Forces Complete Operation Medusa in Afghanistan." September 18, 2006. Available at http://news.softpedia.com/news/NATO-Forces-Complete-Operation-Medusa-in-Afghanistan-35772.shtml

[222] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182 &currentSection=1523498&productid=34

[223] GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Mountain Fury." Available at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28060

[224] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182 &currentSection=1523498&productid=34

[225] GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Mountain Fury." Available at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28060

[226] Hutchinson, Brian. "Operation Falcon Summit aims to oust Taliban." Dec. 16, 2006. Available at http://afghanistan.nationalpost.com/operation-falcons-summit-aims-to-oust-taliban/

bombardments, numbering "more than 2,000 air strikes," which increased civilian casualties and Afghans' resentment to such operations.[227]

The year 2007 started with a British offensive, called Operation Volcano (Jan-Feb), to secure areas around the Kajaki dam in the southern Afghanistan's Helmand Province.[228] It was the first of the seven large-scale military operations to be conducted in 2007 in Afghanistan. Soon after it successfully ended, the NATO-led troops mounted a much larger and ambitious offensive with 6,500 troops – Operation Achilles – to clear the insurgents from the whole province – Helmand.[229] The biggest achievement of the operation for coalition and Afghan troops was the assassination of Mullah Dadullah – a fierce anti-coalition campaigner and advocate of suicide attacks.[230] Mullah Dadullah was also the most prominent commander to be killed in the six-year long campaign against the Taliban's insurgency. During the three months long campaign (March 6 to May 30 2007), the coalition and Afghan troops killed approximately 700 to 1,000 Taliban fighters.[231] Around the same time two other military operations – Operation Silver and Operation Silicon – were conducted as part of an effort "to keep up pressure on the Taliban" in the southern Afghanistan.[232]

The day Operation Achilles ended (May 30, 2007), NATO led ISAF forces

---

[227] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at
http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182
&currentSection=1523498&productid=34
[228] GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Volcano." Available at
http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28063
[229] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at
http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182
&currentSection=1523498&productid=34
[230] Roggio, Bill. "Mullah Dadullah, Taliban top commander, killed in Helmand." May 13, 2007. Available
at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/mullah_dadullah_tali.php
[231] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at
http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182
&currentSection=1523498&productid=34
[232] GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Pickaxe-Handle." Available at
http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28066

launched Operation Pickaxe-Handle in Helmand province. The outcome of the operation is disputed because soon after their withdrawal, Taliban activities were reported in areas surrounding Kajaki dam.[233] To build on their disputed "momentum and strategic success of" Operation Pickaxe-Handle, the British-led NATO troops in the south of the country launched Operation Ghartse Gar.[234] The operation was a success in clearing the Taliban stronghold from Sangin district of the Helmand province. During the operation, unknown numbers of the "Taliban were destroyed, or managed to escape from the area."[235] The year ended with Operation Rock Avalanche in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province, which killed some twenty insurgents.[236]

According to one account, from 2002 to 2009, "overall insurgent losses have been estimated to be between 25,000 and 30,000, with 20,000 captured."[237] This level of casualty in itself is a good indicator of pressure on the Taliban.

Meanwhile, besides the large-scale military operations launched to search and destroy the insurgents and their hideouts, U.S. and coalition Special Forces separately tasked with 'capturing or killing' leaders of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda were also operating in Afghanistan during these years.[238] Due to the top-secret nature of Special Forces operations, the exact number of their raids per year is unknown. However, a recent leak in 2010 put the number of raids around '200 a month,' which means special forces

[233] GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Pickaxe-Handle." Available at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28066
[234] Defense of the Realm.com. "The mincer of Sangin." Available at http://defenceoftherealm.blogspot.com/2009/08/mincer-of-sangin.html
[235] "Operation Ghartse Gar." Available at http://www.royalanglianmuseum.org.uk/exhibit5_6.html
[236] "Operation Rock Avalanche In Afghanistan." Available at http://soldiersangelsgermany.blogspot.com/2007/10/operation-rock-avalanche-in-afghanistan.html
[237] Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182&currentSection=1523498&productid=34
[238] Feickert, Andrew. 2005a. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia." Available at http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RL32758.pdf

conducted 24,000 night raid operations in 2010 with 50 to 60 percent success in capturing or killing their targets.[239] The disclosed figures further show that '368 insurgents leaders' have been arrested or killed by special forces during the three months of these operations.[240]

  The detailed analysis of military operations supports the author's proposition that states' exercise of force through its security forces hinders insurgents' capabilities and denies them access to safe havens, which subsequently makes insurgents resort to alternative method or tactics to compensate for their battlefield disadvantages.

  A final note on military pressure variable is the shift in the foreign troops' earlier policy of 'kill or capture' or 'search and destroy' and leave the area to one of establishing bases and holding the grounds after clearing them from insurgents. This, I argued, exerts pressure on the insurgents by denying them access to their safe havens. Figure 6 illustrates the expansion the NATO led ISAF forces from Kabul to rest of the country between 2004 and 2006.

---

[239] Partlow, Joshua. "Karzai wants U.S. to reduce military operations in Afghanistan." Washington Post. Nov 14, 2010. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp dyn/content/article/2010/11/13/AR2010 111304001.html
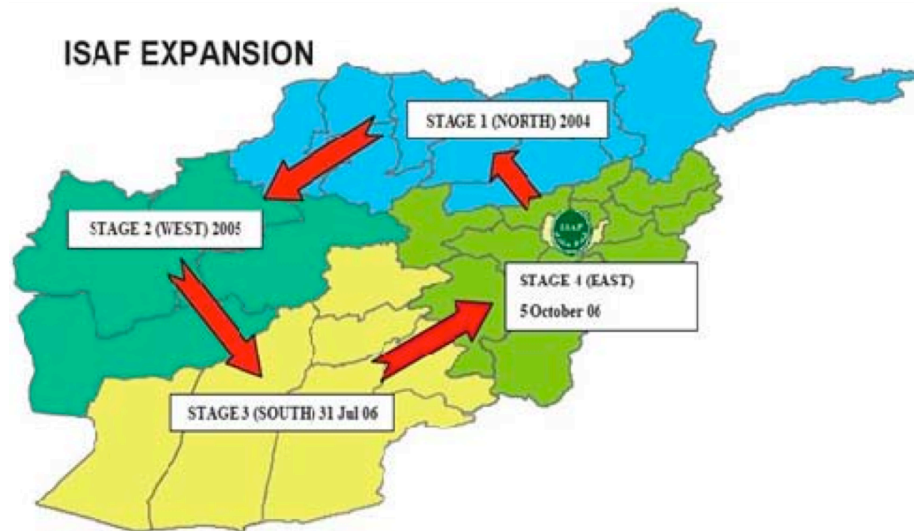[240] Ibid

Figure 6. NATO-led ISAF Forces Expansion 2004 – 2006.[241]

As illustrated by arrows in Figure 6, the first phase of NATO led ISAF troops' expansion

started from Kabul to the North of the country in a bid to support the Afghan government

in 2004. The next year (2005) witnessed the ISAF expanding its domain of operations and

bases to the Western region of the country. Since the northern and western regions of

Afghanistan were not the hubs of the insurgents, ISAF expansion did not deny them

access to their safe havens, and we should not expect a backlash. However, in early 2006

the NATO led ISAF troops announced to move to the Afghanistan's southern and eastern

regions, which were the Taliban's strongholds. ISAF's move to the insurgents' hotspots

meant to deny the Taliban access to their sanctuaries, which meant exerting military

pressure on the Taliban. Therefore, the year 2006 witnessed a five-fold increase in number

of suicide attacks from 27 in 2005 to a 139 suicide attacks.

    However, two points should be noted: first, there were some U.S. troops stationed in

the South and East of Afghanistan; and second, by the end of 2005 diffusion of suicide

---

[241] GobalSecurity.org. "International Security Assistance Force – ISAF 11." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef_orbat_isaf11.htm

attacks from Iraq to Afghanistan, had already taken place through direct connections to the Iraqi insurgents. Thus the end of 2005 to early 2006 in Afghanistan was the period when the three factors were present at one point in time, which should explain the sudden rise of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. The paper now turns to detailed discussion of diffusion.

C. Diffusion

There are no systematic data to prove the link between the Afghan Mujahidin and Hezbollah of Lebanon to explore diffusion of suicide attacks. However, there were Arab fighters fighting against the Soviets alongside the Afghan Mujahidin in the second half of the 1980s.[242] It was during this time when the Saudi-born Osama bin Laden first traveled to the region and opened a guesthouse for the Arab fighters in 1988 in Pakistan, which later become known as Al-Qaeda.[243] After the Soviets' withdrawal from Afghanistan, Osama and other Arab fighters returned to their home countries.[244] It was not until the mid 1990s that Osama would reappear in Afghanistan once again.

In 1996, under the U.S. and British led international community pressure, the Sudanese government deported Osama bin Laden.[245] Unable and uninterested to go back to Saudi,[246] Osama headed towards Afghanistan where he had spent years during the Afghan Jihad against the Soviets, and where a radical group was taking hold and becoming the main player – the Taliban.[247] The Taliban leadership welcomed their

---

[242] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 140; Williams, Brian Glyn, 2011, *Afghanistan Declassified*, p. 175.
[243] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 140; Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, p. 43.
[244] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 138.
[245] Karzai, Hekmat, 2007, Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan: Coping with the Taliban, (In *Building a New Afghanistan,* ed. Robert Rotberg. Washington: Brookings Institution Press), p. 60.
[246] "In April 1994, he was deprived of Saudi Citizenship." "He had developed an obsessive detestation … [to] the Saudi regime." Source: Maley, William, 2002, *The Afghanistan Wars*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 254.
[247] Karzai, Hekmat, 2007, Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan, p. 60.

wealthy guest who needed "security and sanctuary," but could provide "much needed financial resources," training to the Taliban fighters, and a "well trained 055 Brigade (a group of 500 to 1000 Arab fighters) for key battles" against the Northern Alliance.[248]

It was here in Afghanistan that Osama reassessed his organization's (Al-Qaeda) operational strategy. As a result of reassessment and the ensuing strategic shift in the organizations' *modus operandi*; Al Qaeda decided to target the west, especially the United States rather than fighting their so-called Arab puppet regimes.[249] As such, Al-Qaeda under Osama bin Laden's direct supervision, "planned various operations, including September 11" against the United States.[250] The total number of attacks orchestrated by Al-Qaeda against the U.S. and its allies between 1996 and 2003 is estimated to be twenty-one suicide bombings, with 9/11 marking the deadliest in the history of this lethal tactic.[251]

As evidence shows, while the Taliban benefited from the presence of al-Qaeda and its resources in their war against Northern Alliance, they did not endorse Al-Qaeda's new tactic at the time (prior to 9/11). This I argue is purely due to resource endowment and battlefield dynamics that were in favor of the Taliban at the time; a scenario that rapidly shifted after 9/11.

Just within the first two months (Oct 07 - Dec 07, 2001) of Operation Enduring Freedom – the United States retaliation to 9/11 incident that mainly aimed at hunting down Al-Qaeda leader and overthrowing the Taliban regime – the U.S. and its allied forces killed some ten to thirty thousand of the Taliban and their al-Qaeda affiliates,[252]

---

[248] Ibid., p. 60.
[249] Moghadam, 2008, *The Globalization of Martyrdom*, p. 44.
[250] Karzai, Hekmat, 2007, Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan, p. 60.
[251] Pape, 2005, *Dying to Win*, p. 15.
[252] The account of the Taliban's casualties in the initial stages of war comes from a prominent former CIA officer, Henry A. Crumpton, who was responsible for leading the Afghan campaign in the immediate

and destroyed their infrastructure.[253] According to Shaul Shay (2002), "The Taliban forces

… usually did not number more than thirty thousand soldiers, but in preparation for

important battles recruitment was increased … [to] reach fifty thousand soldiers."[254] This

immediate blow to their ranks and capacities along with loss of external resources and

arms embargo put the Taliban in the difficult position. The subsequent military operations

exerted further pressure on the Taliban and their supplies. Brigadier Roger Lane, senior

commander of the British commandos, describes the impacts of military operations on

insurgents' supplies as follows:

> History has taught us that killing or capturing individual members of a terrorist group,
> whilst a bonus where it can be achieved, is not always the most effective means to deliver
> a strategic blow to that group's operational capability… Disrupting their planning,
> destroying their logistic supplies and denying them a safe haven is at least as important,
> often more so.[255]

Adding to that, Maj. Lewis Matson, Central Command spokesperson, said "There's no

question that they've [Taliban] been denied sanctuary… That's really the key element

here. They don't have the ability to assemble in mass.... It's fire an RPG (rocket-propelled

grenade) and run."[256]

Looking at these unwelcome developments and shifting battlefield dynamics in

favor of the adversary, Al-Qaeda proposed the use of suicide attacks. Ayman al-Zawahiri,

al-Qaeda's second in command, argued in favor of suicide attacks as "the most successful

way of inflicting damage against the opponent and the least costly to the Mujahedin in

terms of casualties."[257] Initially, Mullah Omar was reluctant, but the proposal had a great

aftermath of the 9/11. Available at http://www.contactmusic.com/celebrity-videos/cia-counter-terrorism-expert-henry-a-crumpton-discusses-fall-of-kandahar-in-2001-part-2_11893
[253] Karzai, Hekmat, 2007, Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan, p. 60.
[254] Shay, Shaul, 2002, *The Endless Jihad,* p. 75.
[255] CNN News. "UK Marines end Operation Snipe." May 13, 2002. Available at
http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/05/13/afghan.marines/index.html
[256] Fineman, Mark. "Two U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan." Los Angeles Times. Sept 1, 2003. Available
at http://articles.latimes.com/2003/sep/01/world/fg-afghan1
[257] Jones, Seth G., 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, p. 64.

appeal to his field commanders, especially Mullah Dadullah.[258] "By 2003, the Taliban

field commanders were clearly interested in *any* strategy or tactic that allowed them to

undermine" the U.S. led efforts in Afghanistan.[259] In early 2003 in an interview with

BBC, Mullah Dadullah said: "The ground became hot for the Russians here, and so … the

ground will also become hot for the Americans."[260]

The U.S. invasion of Iraq and the subsequent success of the Iraqi suicide attack

campaign in late 2003 and early 2004 seemed to have convinced the Taliban leadership

about the effectiveness of the new tactic against "seemingly invincible" enemy – the

United Sates.[261] As early as "2004, several camps were established just across the border"

in Pakistani tribal areas to train the Taliban fighters the new skill set transferred from

Iraq.[262] According to some experts, "there is evidence of cooperation between insurgents

in Iraq and Afghanistan… small number of Pakistani and Afghan militants received

military training in Iraq; Iraqi fighters met with Afghan and Pakistani extremists in

Pakistan," which translated into the use of "homemade bombs, suicide attacks, and other

tactics honed in Iraq" to the Afghan battlefield.[263] Definitely, Al-Qaeda was the main hub

for connecting Afghan/Pakistani insurgents to Iraqi militants.[264] Mohammad Daud,

Hamza Sangari, and Mullah Haq Yar were among those Taliban fighters "dispatched to

Iraq by Mullah Omar to learn the Iraqi insurgents' tactics."[265]

Meanwhile, Iraqi Jihadi videos dubbed in the Pashtu language started circulating in

---

[258] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," p. 28.
[259] Ibid., p. 30.
[260] Sedra, Mark. "The Forgotten War Shows No Sign of Abating." April 1, 2003. Available at http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_forgotten_war_shows_no_sign_of_abating
[261] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," pp. 28, 30.
[262] Karzai, Hekmat, 2007, Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan, pp. 64-65.
[263] Jones, Seth G., 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, p. 63.
[264] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," p. 31.
[265] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

Pakistan's federally administered tribal areas (FATA) as early as summer of 2004. These so-called 'kill DVDs' filled with videos of targeted suicide bombings against the Americans in Iraq were encouraging and promising for the Taliban operatives who had experienced their own devastation by the American aerial bombings.[266] Similarly there are reports of "three-man delegation … sent by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi… [to] met Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawahiri and Mullah Omar…. The delegation brought audio and video material justifying suicide attacks."[267]

However, for the Taliban it was not enough. They needed something not only to encourage and inspire, but also to justify the previously unknown and forbidden act of suicide among the locals. Therefore, the Taliban were interested in videos from the Afghan battlefield with local texture. To address the Taliban's need, Abu Yahya al Libi, an Al-Qaeda operative in the region, started making Iraqi-modeled Afghan videos. Some of the main videos were "Holocaust for the Americans in Afghanistan, Pyre for the Americans in Afghanistan, and The Wind of Paradise."[268]

In 2005, Mullah Dadullah started a campaign to "win hearts and minds in order to develop an organized strategy of suicide attacks for the 2006 offensive. He showed audio and video material from the Iraqi resistance which explained that suicide attacks were permitted and demonstrated how the Iraqis used them as their most effective weapon."[269] Ahmad Rashid argues that "Many of the initial suicide bombers were Pakistani and Afghan orphans or mentally unstable teenagers recruited from asylums, orphanages, and Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. Taliban leaders correctly predicted that their sacrifice

---

[266] Ibid., p. 31.
[267] Ibid., p. 33.
[268] Ibid., pp. 31-32.
[269] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

would create a wave of more capable and dedicated recruits."[270] As a result of Iraqi videos

justifying suicide attacks and initially employing 'mentally unstable teenagers' and

videotaping them "reading their wills before blowing themselves up,"[271] Mullah Dadullah

"managed to convince a first group of 450 recruits" for his 2006 offensive.[272]

    A UNAMA report on suicide attacks in Afghanistan argues that "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" for suicide attacks.[273] In

one his interviews about the Taliban's coordination and cooperation with the Iraqi

insurgents, Mullah Dadullah provided the following answers:

> Interviewer: Do you coordinate with them [Iraqi insurgents] in military operations in Afghanistan?
>
> Mullah Dadullah: Yes, when we need them, we ask for their help. For example, the bombings we carry out — we learned it from them... We learn other types of operations from them as well. We have "give and take" relations with the mujahideen of Iraq. We cooperate and help each other.
>
> Interviewer: Do you send people for training? For example, do they come here for training, or do you maintain contact through the Internet?
>
> Mullah Dadullah: We have training centers here in Afghanistan, and, as you know, they have their own centers there. If we discover anything new, they come here to learn it, and if they discover anything new, our friends go to learn it from them.[274]

This is how suicide attacks diffused from Iraq to Afghanistan. Brian Williams in his piece,

describes in detail the process of diffusion from Iraq to Afghanistan, which he labels the

"Iraq Effect."[275] To that end, I agree but also emphasize the importance of the other two

---

[270] Rashid, Ahmed. 2008. "Jihadi Suicide Bombers: The New Wave." *New York Review of Books.* Vol. 55, No 10: pp. 17-22.
[271] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," p. 32.
[272] Ibid., p. 34.
[273] UNAMA Report, 2007, Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan, p.27.
[274] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," p. 33.
[275] Williams, Brian Glyn, 2008, "Mullah Omar's Missiles," p. 27.

factors – arms embargo and military pressure – which together with diffusion at one point in time make it more likely that insurgents will resort to the use of suicide attacks. According to experts:

> … al Qaeda and the Taliban concluded that suicide bombing was more effective than other tactics in killing Afghan and coalition forces… Data show that when insurgents fight U.S. and coalition forces directly in Afghanistan, there is only a 5 percent probability of inflicting casualties. With suicide attacks, the chance of killing people and instilling fear increased several fold.[276]

Thus it seems that the presence of direct links to an external terrorist network in combination with arms embargo and military pressure made the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attacks in the 2000s in Afghanistan.

V.   CONCLUSION

Certainly no one has read the mind of Mullah Omar, the elusive leader of the Taliban movement, to postulate with 100 percent certainty what made him resort to the use of suicide attacks. This, however, should not discourage us from theorizing in search of objective reality. With such a spirit, the author initiated this paper to find out *why, contrary to their predecessors, did the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attacks in the 2000s in Afghanistan?* Although some noble direct and indirect (UNAMA Report 2007; Willams fieldwork 2008; Jones 2009) attempts have been made to understand and explain this cumbersome puzzle, none of the pieces is systematic and rigorous. Therefore, this paper is the first systematic assessment of suicide attacks in Afghanistan, and a country-specific contribution to existing literature on suicide bombings.

By drawing from diffusion and innovation literature, the author argued the presence of arms embargo, military pressure, and diffusion at one point in time made the Taliban resort to the use of suicide attacks. The proposition offered here also explains the dramatic

---

[276] Jones, Seth G., 2008, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, p. 65.

rise in suicide attacks between 2005 and 2006. Although arms embargo was in effect since 2002, and the Taliban were increasingly under military pressure, diffusion was not present until late 2004 to mid 2005. Once the diffusion took effect in mid to late 2005, the presence of all three factors at one point in time resulted in a dramatic increase of suicide attacks in 2006 in Afghanistan. This is in line with the general argument of this paper that suicide attacks are more likely when all three factors are present at one point in time.

However, it should be noted that data limitation was a big challenge in systematically assessing the impact of the three independent variables across time from 1978 to 2010. There are some time periods that there are no data, and other times where there are data available. Therefore, future researchers with access to quantitative data on the missing years can better assess the impacts of the three independent variables on the occurrence of suicide attacks throughout the period (1978-2010) in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, since this paper offers a new framework for explaining suicide attacks in the context of Afghanistan, future research can employ this framework in other case specific contexts or cross-country cases to see whether or not it explains the puzzle.

Since the findings of this paper suggest that the deadly combination of arms embargo, military pressure and diffusion makes it more likely that suicide attacks will occur, the author, in line with Michael Horowitz and Philip Potter (2013),[277] suggest that policy circles should focus their attention to the linkages between the insurgent groups rather than treating them as isolated. Therefore, the best time to stop the manifestation of suicide attacks is to target insurgent groups links to external terrorist network prior to the transfer of suicide attacks' know-how. Once the insurgents acquire the knowledge, the

---

[277] Horowitz, Michael C. and Philip B. K. Potter. 2013. "Allying to Kill: Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 00(0): pp. 1-27.

more they are pressured through arms embargo and/or military pressure, the more likely the insurgents would unfortunately employ suicide attacks to overcome the battlefield power asymmetry.

While it seems impossible to eradicate this phenomenon altogether, especially when the three factors— arms embargo, military pressure and diffusion—are present, attempts should be made to at least avoid the mistakes that increase the pool of volunteers for the insurgent groups. For the time being, that is the only thing I suppose we can do.

REFERENCES

Adam, Ruxandra. "NATO Forces Complete Operation Medusa in Afghanistan." September 18, 2006. Available at http://news.softpedia.com/news/NATO-Forces-Complete-Operation-Medusa-in-Afghanistan-35772.shtml

Atran, Scott. 2003. "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism." Science. Vol. 299, No. 5612: pp. 1534-1539. Available at http://www.sciencemag.org/content/299/5612/1534.full#ref-21

Banusiewicz, John D. "Lightning Resolve to Protect Afghan Election Process." *U.S. Department of Defense - American Forces Press Service.* July 14, 2004. Available at http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=25707

BBC News. "1972: Japanese kill 26 at Tel Aviv airport." *ON THIS DAY: 1950-2005.* Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/29/newsid_2542000/2542263.stm

BBC News. "US begins new Afghan operation." Dec 11, 2004. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4087647.stm

Belida, Alex. "3 Afghan Children Released from Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp." Voice of America News. Available at http://www.militaryinfo.com/news_story?textnewsid=800

Bergen, Peter and Swati Pandey. 2006. "The Madrasa Scapegoat," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 29, Issue 2: pp. 117–125

Berrebi, Claude. 2007. "Evidence about the Link Between Education, Poverty and Terrorism among Palestinians." *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy.* Vol. 13, Issue 1, Art. 2

Bird, Tim and Alex Marshall. 2011. *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way.* Yale University Press.

Bloom, Mia M. 2005. *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terror.* New York: Columbia University Press

Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan. 2001. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements.* RAND Corporation. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monograph_reports/2007/MR1405.pdf

CNN News. "UK Marines end Operation Snipe." May 13, 2002. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/asiapcf/central/05/13/afghan.marines/index.

html

Coll, Steve. 2004. *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of CIA, Afghanistan and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10 2001*. New York : Penguin Press

Crenshaw, Martha. 2007. "Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay." *Security Studies*. Vol. 16, No.1: pp.133-162

Cryptome.org. "Afghanistan Wartime Architecture 2005." 29 March 2010. Available at http://cryptome.org/info/af-war-arch-0500/af-war-arch-05-00.htm

Dale, Stephen Fredrick. 1988. "Religious Suicide in Islamic Asia: Anticolonial Terrorism in India, Indonesia and the Philippines." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. Vol. 32, No 1: pp. 37-59

Defense of the Realm.com. "The mincer of Sangin." August 14, 2009. Available at http://defenceoftherealm.blogspot.com/2009/08/mincer-of-sangin.html

Dolnik, Adam. 2009. *Understanding Terrorist Innovation: Technology, Tactics and Global Trends*. New York: Routledge.

Dzikansky, Mordecai, Gil Kleiman, and Robert Slater. 2012. *Terrorists Suicide Bombings: Attack Interdiction, Mitigation, and Response*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press

Feickert, Andrew. 2006. "U.S. and Coalition Military Operations in Afghanistan: Issues for Congress." *CRS Report for Congress*. Available at http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/70042.pdf

Feickert, Andrew. 2005a. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia." *CRS Report for Congress*. Available at http://www.fas.org/man/crs/RL32758.pdf

Feickert, Andrew. 2005b. "U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia." *CRS Report for Congress*. Available at http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA458286

Fineman, Mark. "Two U.S. Soldiers Killed in Afghanistan." Los Angeles Times. September 1, 2003. Available at http://articles.latimes.com/2003/sep/01/world/fg-afghan1

FoxNews.com. "Remains Recovered in Afghan Chopper Crash." June 30, 2005. Available at http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,161178,00.html

Gill, Paul. 2007. "A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Suicide Bombing." *International*

Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV). Vol. 1, No. 2: pp. 142–159

GobalSecurity.org. "International Security Assistance Force – ISAF 11." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef_orbat_isaf11.htm

GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Avalanche." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-avalanche.htm

GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Mountain Blizzard." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2004/03/mil-040313-
afps01.htm

GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Mountain Fury." Available
at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28060

GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Mountain Storm." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_storm.htm

GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Mountain Sweep." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_sweep.htm

GlobalSecurity.Org. "Operation Mountain Viper." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-mountain_viper.htm

GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Pickaxe-Handle." Available at
http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28066

GlobalSecurity.org. "Operation Volcano." Available at
http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28063

Globalsecurity.org "Operation Warrior Sweep." Available at
http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oef-warrior_sweep.htm

Goodenough, Patrick. "Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan, Pakistan Have Soared in
Decade Since 9/11." *CNS News*. September 7, 2011. Available at
http://cnsnews.com/news/article/suicide-bombings-afghanistan-pakistan-have-
soared-decade-911

Gupta, D., A. Mirari, M. Crenshaw, and C. McCauley. 2002. "Selfish Selflessness?" *The
Chronicle of Higher Education.* Vol. 48, Issue 32: B4

Haddad, S. 2004. "A comparative study of Lebanese and Palestine perceptions of suicide
bombing: the role of militant Islam and socioeconomic status." *International
Journal of Comparative Sociology*. Vol. 45: pp. 337-363

Hafez, Mohammed M. and Maria Rasmussen. 2012."Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of

Mass Effect, Phase II." *Workshop Report*. Naval Post Graduate School – Center on Contemporary Conflict. Available at http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=142894

Hafez, Mohammad M. 2006a. *Manufacturing Human Bombs: The making of Palestinian suicide bombers.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press

Hafez, Mohammed M. 2006b. "Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 29, Issue 2: pp. 165-185

Harris, Sam. 2004. *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co

Hassan, Riaz. 2011. *Suicide Bombings*. Routledge

Hassan, Riaz. 2010. *Life as a Weapon: The Global Rise of Suicide Bombings*. Routledge

Hassan, Riaz. 2009. "What Motivates the Suicide Bombers? Study of a comprehensive database gives a surprising answer." Available at http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/con tent/what-motivates-suicide-bombers-0

Hilali, A. Z. 2005. *US-Pakistan relationship: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co.

Hoffman, Bruce. 2003. "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism." *The Atlantic Monthly*. Vol. 291, Issue 5: pp. 1-10.

Horowitz, Michael C. and Philip B. K. Potter. 2013. "Allying to Kill: Terrorist Intergroup Cooperation and the Consequences for Lethality." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 00(0): pp. 1-27.

Horowitz, Michael C. 2010. *The Diffusion of Military Power: Causes and Consequences for International Politics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Horowitz, Michael. 2008. "The History and Future of Suicide Terrorism." Essay based on presentation at *Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)* on June 25, 2008. Available at http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200808.horowitz.suicideterrorism.html

Hutchinson, Brian. "Operation Falcon Summit aims to oust Taliban." Dec. 16, 2006. Available at http://afghanistan.nationalpost.com/operation-falcons-summit-aims-to-oust-taliban/

Israeli, Raphael. 2003. *Islamikaze: Manifestations of Islamic Martyrology*. London: Frank Cass.

Johnson, Kay. "Afghan police weak, NATO support grows: poll." The Associated Press. (Jan 31, 2012). Available at http://www.armytimes.com/news/2012/01/ap-afghan-police-weak-nato-support-grows-poll-013112/

Jones, Seth G. 2009. "In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan." New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Jones, Seth G. 2008. *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*. RAND Corporation. Available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG595.pdf

Kamrany, Nake M. and David T. Killian. 1992. "Effects of Afghanistan War on Soviet Society and Policy." *International Journal of Social Economics*. Vol. 19: pp. 129–51.

Karzai, Hekmat. 2007. Strengthening Security in Contemporary Afghanistan: Coping with the Taliban. In *Building a New Afghanistan,* ed. Robert Rotberg. Washington: Brookings Institution Press.

Katzman, Kenneth. 2013. "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy." CRS (Congressional Research Service) Report for Congress. Available at http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf

KOMO News "Operation Avalanche Wraps Up In Afghanistan." August 31, 2003. Available at http://www.komonews.com/news/archive/4113726.html

Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Maleckova. 2004. "Education, Poverty And Terrorism: Is There A Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Vol. 17, Issue. 4: pp. 119-144

Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Maleckova. 2002. "The Economics and the Education of Suicide Bombers." *New Republic* Issue 24: pp. 27-34

Lafraie, Najibullah. 2009. "Resurgence of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: How and why?" International Politics. Vol. 46, No 1: pp.102-113.

Lansford, Tom. "Counterinsurgency: A Strategy for the 21st Century." Available at http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1524182&currentSection=1523498&productid=34

Librarypoint.org. "Victory Point: Operations Red Wings and Whalers: The Marine Corps' Battle for Freedom in Afghanistan." Available at http://www.librarypoint.org/victory_point

Livingston, Ian S. and Michael O'Hanlon. 2012. *Afghanistan Index.* Available at

http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Programs/foreign%20policy/afghanistan%20ind
ex/index20120516.pdf

Maley, William. 2002. *The Afghanistan Wars*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Martinfrost.ws. "Taliban." Available at
http://www.martinfrost.ws/htmlfiles/june2006/taliban1.html

Mattingly, Rich. "Operation Mavericks Captures Suspected Terrorists." Apr 5, 2005.
Available at http://www.defendamerica.mil/articles/apr2005/a040505wm1.html

Milks, Keith A. "22nd MEU Afghanistan Recap: Operation." September 2, 2004.
Available at http://www.22ndmeu.marines.mil/News/ArticleView/tabid/196/
Article/2178/22nd-meu-afghanistan-recap-operation-thunder-road.aspx

Moghadam, Assaf. 2008. *The Globalization of Martyrdom: Al Qaeda, Salafi Jihad, and
the Diffusion of Suicide Attacks*. Baltimor: the Johns Hopkins University Press

Moghadam, Assaf. 2005. "The Roots of Suicide Terrorism: A Multi-Causal Approach."
Working draft Presented in Harrington Workshop on the Root Causes of Suicide
Terrorism. University of Texas at Austin. Available at
http://tamilnation.co/terrorism/sri_lanka/moghadam.pdf

Mraz, Steve. "Operation Pil targets Taliban in Kunar province." Oct 24, 2005. Available
at http://www.stripes.com/news/operation-pil-targets-taliban-in-kunar-province-
1.39955

"Operation Ghartse Gar." July 2007. Available at
http://www.royalanglianmuseum.org.uk/exhibit5_6.html

"Operation Rock Avalanche In Afghanistan." October 25, 2007. Available at
http://soldiersangelsgermany.blogspot.com/2007/10/operation-rock-avalanche-in-
afghanistan.html

"Operation Valiant Strike." Feb 26, 2003. Available at.
http://www.hk94.com/weblog/archives/75

Pape, Robert A. 2005. *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*. New
York: Random House.

PBS.org. "Interview: Richard Armitage." Available at
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/campaign/interviews/armitage.ht
ml

Partlow, Joshua. "Karzai wants U.S. to reduce military operations in Afghanistan."
Washington Post. Nov 14, 2010. Available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp

-dyn/content/article/2010/11/13/AR2010111304001.html

Pedahzur, Ami. 2005. *Suicide Terrorism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pedahzur, Ami, Arie Perliger, and Leonard Weinberg. 2003. "Altruism and Fatalism: The Characteristics of Palestinian Suicide Terrorists." *Deviant Behavior*. Vol. 24, Issue 4: pp. 405-23

Rashid, Ahmed. 2008. "Jihadi Suicide Bombers: The New Wave." *New York Review of Books.* Vol. 55, No 10: pp. 17-22.

Rasmussen, Maria J. and Mohammed M. Hafez. 2010."Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect: Preconditions, Causes, and Predictive Indicators." *Workshop Report*. Defense Threat Reduction Agency - US Department of Defense. Available at http://www.nps.edu/Academics/Centers/CCC/Research/2010%20019%20 Terrorist%20Innovations%20in%20WME.pdf

Reuter, Christoph. 2004. *My Life Is a Weapon: A Modern History of Suicide Bombing.* Princton University Press

Reuveny, Rafael and Aseem Prakash. 1995. "The Afghanistan war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union." *Review of International Studies*. Vol. 25: pp. 693–70

Richardson, Louise. 2006. *What Terrorist Want: Understanding the Enemy, Containing the Threat*. New York: Random House.

Roggio, Bill. "The Afghan Taliban's top leaders." *The Long Journal War*. February 23, 2010. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/02/the_ talibans_top_lea.php

Roggio, Bill. "Mullah Dadullah, Taliban top commander, killed in Helmand." May 13, 2007. Available at http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/05/mullah_ dadullah_tali.php

"Royal Marines - Afghanistan." Available at http://www.eliteukforces.info/royal-marines/operations/afghanistan.php

Scavetta, Rick. "Marines Return to Tora Bora for Operation Celtics." May 31, 2005. Available at http://www.defense.gov/News/NewsArticle.aspx?ID=31529

Sedra, Mark. "The Forgotten War Shows No Sign of Abating." *Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIP)*. April 1, 2003. Available at http://www.fpif.org/articles/the_forgotten_war _shows_no_sign_of_abating

Shay, Shaul. 2004. *The Shahids: Islam and Suicide Attacks*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers

Shay, Shaul. 2002. *The Endless Jihad: The Mujahidin, the Taliban and Bin Laden*. The International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism.

Sinno, Abdukder H. 2009. *Organization at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*. Cornell University Press.

Speckhard, Anne. 2008. "The Emergence of Female Suicide Terrorists," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 31, Issue 11: pp. 1023–1051

Speckhard, Anne and Khapta Akhmedova. 2008. "Black Widows and beyond: Understanding the motivations and life trajectories of Chechen female terrorists." In *Female Terrorism and Militancy: Agency, Utility, and Organization,* edited by Cindy D. Ness. New York: Routledge. Pp. 100–121

Stenersen, Anne. 2010. "The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan – organization, leadership and worldview." *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI)*. Available at http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/FFI_ TheTalibanInsurgencyInAfghanistan_OrganizationLeadershipWorldview.pdf

Task Force Trinity. "Operation SPURS (29 Jan – 4 Feb 05)." Jan 29, 2005. Available at http://www.taskforcetrinity.com/archives/976

The New York Times. "Troop Levels in Afghanistan Since 2001." October 1, 2009. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/10/01/world/ middleeast/afghanistan-policy.html

The Washington Times. "Taliban uses weapons made in China, Iran." June 5, 2007. Available at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2007/jun/05/20070605-121517-7394r/

Victor, Barbara. 2003. *Army of Roses: Inside the World of Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers*. Rodale: Distributed to the book trade by St. Martin's Press

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Report. 2007. "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)." Available at http://www.securitycouncil report.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Afgh %202007SuicideAttacks.pdf

UN.org. "ARMS EMBARGO: EXPLANATION OF TERMS." Available at http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/pdf/EOT%20Arms%20embargo_ENGLIS H.pdf

Williams, Brian Glyn. 2011. *Afghanistan Declassified: A Guide to America's Longest War*. PENN: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Williams, Brian Glyn. 2008. "Mullah Omar's Missiles: A Field Report on Suicide Bombers in Afghanistan." *Middle East Policy*. Vol. 15, No. 4: pp. 26-46.

Winkates, J. (2006). "Suicide terrorism: martyrdom for organizational objectives." *Journal of Third World Studies*. Vol. 23, No.1: pp.87-110

Xtimeline.com. "Operation Anaconda." Mar 2, 2002. Available at http://www.xtimeline.com/evt/view.aspx?id=28053

Yousafzai, Sami and Ron Moreau. 2007. "Suicide Offensive." *Newsweek*. Vol. 149, Issue 16: pp. 34-36.

Yousafzai, Sami and Ron Moreau. 2009. "The Taliban in their Own Words." *Newsweek*. Vol. 154, Issue 14: pp. 34-44.

Yousaf and Adkin, 2001, *Afghanistan: The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower,* pp. 50-51.