

**Martyrs in Mesopotamia:
The Logic of Suicide Terrorism in Iraq**

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Abstract

Although the tactic of suicide terrorism is thousands of years old, it has appeared in Iraq at unprecedented levels. The predominance of suicide terrorism in the insurgency has led scholars to embrace two diametrically opposed theoretical frameworks. Whereas Huntington's framework explains suicide terrorism in Iraq as the result of a clash of civilizations between the Western and Islamic worlds, Pape's framework argues that secular nationalist forces in opposition to the U.S. occupation conduct the attacks. However, both of these frameworks overlook the ethno-sectarian divisions within the insurgency. This thesis offers a new theoretical framework, which argues that suicide terrorism is a practical tactic adopted by Sunni groups that lack both the political means and the conventional military capability to achieve their goals. However, as the U.S. begins to reintegrate Sunnis into the state and crackdown on Iranian-backed Shi'a groups, many Shi'a may find themselves alienated and disenfranchised. This could herald a similar Shi'a suicide terror campaign in Iraq.

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I. Introduction

Since the bombing of the U.S. marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 by Hizballah, countless scholars have debated the origin, motivation, and rationale of suicide terrorism. The shock and horror of these attacks have spurred political scientists, historians, and sociologists alike to offer explanations for this phenomenon. Their analyses of suicide terrorism have spanned a great theoretical spectrum; while some theorists blame Islamic culture and civilization as the source of suicide terrorism, others point to poverty, political oppression, or military occupation as contributing factors. Despite this abundance of theories, academics have reached little agreement as to why some groups, such as the Tamil Tigers, choose to deliberately sacrifice their lives, while others, such as the Irish Republican Army, opt for more conventional attacks.

It is hardly surprising that suicide terrorism has elicited such a tremendous response from academia. Whether for biological, psychological, or social reasons, few humans can comprehend what would motivate someone to intentionally sacrifice his or her life to promote a group's goal, agenda, or cause. This inexplicable devotion and dedication is precisely the point of suicide terrorism, because the surviving witnesses of the attack, not the victims, are the targets of this tactic.¹ Suicide terrorists exploit human fear by using attacks as a warning of more punishment to come should the surviving enemy not concede their demands. It is true that there are practical reasons for groups to espouse suicide terrorism—typical suicide terror attacks cost only \$150, require no escape plan, allow for last minute changes in targeting, and kill four times as many people as conventional

¹ Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: the Allure of Suicide Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 77.

bombings.² Nonetheless, it is the sheer dedication and drive of the suicide bomber to so willingly take his or her life that separates suicide terrorists from their more conventional peers. Suicide terrorists give their enemies the impression that they will stop at nothing to achieve their goals. This spine-chilling devotion, which has stricken terror in civilians from Tel Aviv to Baghdad, continues to fascinate academics and entice them to derive a coherent theory that explains this phenomenon.

~ A Brief History of Suicide Terrorism ~

Religious and political groups of all backgrounds have used suicide attacks for thousands of years to promote their goals. Perhaps the earliest attacks can be attributed to the Jewish Zealots of Israel in the first century A.D., who used suicide missions to assassinate Roman forces occupying Israel and the Jews who collaborated with them. The Zealots, foreshadowing suicide terrorists of the 20th century, used these bold attacks to instill fear in the Romans and their collaborators. Like suicide attacks today, the Zealots' seemingly irrational attacks were intended more to warn others to cease the occupation than to directly punish the victims. As historian Flavius Josephus said of the Zealot attacks which marred his lifetime, "The panic created was more alarming than the calamity itself."³ Similarly, the Hashashins, a Shi'a sect located in the mountains of Syria, Iraq, and Iran between the 11th and 13th centuries, employed suicide attacks to assassinate rival Sunni leaders. In fact, the Hashashins used this tactic to such a great degree that their anglicized name, Assassins, became a loan word in the English language.⁴

² Bruce Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *Atlantic Monthly* vol. 295, No. 1 (June 2003): 2. [Available Online] <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2005/RAND_RP1187.pdf>.

³ Bloom, 9.

⁴ Robert Pape, *Dying to Win* (New York: Random House, 2005), 12-13.

Although there were several examples of suicide attacks before World War Two (most notably the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881), the Japanese were primarily responsible for reintroducing this tactic to mainstream society in the modern era. Facing a U.S. invasion of mainland Japan, the Japanese recruited thousands of kamikaze pilots to sacrifice their lives by flying their planes into U.S. naval vessels. These kamikaze missions proved disastrous to the U.S. navy during some of the most important battles of the war, most notably Okinawa, in which over 1,400 kamikaze pilots completed suicide missions against U.S. forces.⁵ General Ushiroku of the Japanese Army General Staff even proposed giving the infantry backpack bombs, similar to those used by Palestinians today, although his plan never came to fruition.⁶ The willingness of the Japanese to sacrifice their lives for “emperor and nation” helped convince the U.S. that an invasion of mainland Japan would be too costly.

After a thirty-six year respite, suicide terrorism reappeared in 1981 during the American, French, and Israeli occupation of Lebanon. Hizballah recruited suicide bombers, both male and female, amongst Lebanon’s Shi’a Muslim, Maronite Christian, communist, and socialist population.⁷ These Lebanese fighters orchestrated a campaign against American and French forces, which ultimately resulted in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. marine barracks and the deaths of 241 American military personnel. Hizballah’s suicide campaign proved highly effective in forcing out the occupying French and American troops from Lebanon. President Ronald Reagan, confirming Hizballah’s influence on his decision to pull out of Lebanon, said of the attack: “The price we had to

⁵ Ibid, 13. Although statistics on kamikaze attacks are disputed, Pape claims that 3,843 Japanese pilots flew kamikaze missions during World War II.

⁶ Bloom, 14.

⁷ Pape, 204-205.

pay in Beirut was so great...We had to pull out...We couldn't stay there and run the risk of another suicide attack on the Marines.”⁸

Following Hizballah's successful suicide terror campaign in Lebanon, the tactic spread at an unprecedented rate throughout the world. In 1990, the Tamil Tigers, or L.T.T.E., introduced suicide terrorism to its Marxist-Leninist secessionist campaign against the Sri Lankan government. The L.T.T.E., which became frighteningly efficient in the art of suicide terror, was responsible for 75 of the 186 recorded suicide terror attacks between 1980 and 2001, making it the most prolific suicide terror group of the 20th century.⁹ The L.T.T.E.'s success did not go unnoticed as suicide terrorism spread to the Palestinian groups Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in 1994, the Kurdistan Workers Party, or P.K.K., in 1996, and Chechen and Kashmiri rebels in 2000. Although al-Qaeda first used suicide terrorism in Saudi Arabia in 1995, it was not until the September 11th attacks of 2001 that Osama bin Laden's network brought suicide terrorism to North America.¹⁰

~ Suicide Terrorism in Iraq ~

Despite this deep history, it has become unequivocally clear that, since the 2003 invasion, Iraq has experienced an unprecedented degree of suicide terrorism. The insurgency in Iraq differs from past instances of suicide terrorism in terms of both the vast number of attacks and their highly unusual ethno-sectarian distribution. Essentially, Iraq has witnessed a Sunni monopolization of suicide terrorism. Over the past five years, Americans have grown sadly accustomed to daily headlines detailing spectacular suicide

⁸ Ibid, 65.

⁹ Robert Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," *The American Political Science Review* vol. 97, No. 3 (Aug. 2003): 343.

¹⁰ Pape, "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 258.

attacks by Sunnis on U.S. forces or Shi'a civilians. Americans' initial surprise in encountering suicide terrorism in Iraq can in part be explained by the Bush administration's lack of foresight in the buildup to the war. On March 13th, 2003, Vice President Dick Cheney went so far as to predict on *Meet The Press* that American troops entering Iraq would be "greeted as liberators."¹¹ Although some in academia warned of the potential for a post-war Iraqi insurgency, no existing theory of suicide terrorism could have predicted this ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism before the invasion. However, five years later, suicide bombings, fairly infrequent occurrences in the 20th century, now define everyday life in Iraq.

Even if one were to disregard the tremendous physical and psychological pain caused by suicide terrorism in Iraq, this phenomenon still warrants thorough investigation due to the enormous amount of data now available to scholars of suicide terrorism. Before 2003, no suicide attack had ever taken place in Iraq. However, by the end of 2007, there had been nearly 1,000.¹² This means that Iraq may now represent as much as 70% of all recorded suicide terror incidents since 1980.¹³ This is particularly significant for scholars working in the wake of Robert Pape, who devised a theory linking suicide terrorism with occupation and secular nationalism by analyzing all 186 suicide attacks between 1980 and

¹¹ Vice President Dick Cheney, interviewed by Tim Russert, *Meet the Press*, NBC, 14 Sept 2003. [Available Online] <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3080244/>>.

¹² According to the National Counterterrorism Center's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System, there have been 874 suicide attacks in Iraq between February 2004 and June 2007. This dataset obviously excludes any suicide attacks between March 2003 and February 2004 and June 2007 to present. Thus, it is not out of the question that the true number of suicide attacks in Iraq numbers closer to 1,000. For updated information, please see "Suicide Terrorist Incidents by Region: Iraq," [Available Online] <<http://wits.nctc.gov/SortResults.do?d-16544-p=1&d-16544-s=formattedIncidentDate&d-16544-n=1&d-16544-o=1>>.

¹³ Without a comprehensive dataset of all suicide attacks since 1980, this percentage will be impossible to calculate exactly. However, if Iraq's 1,000 attacks are considered next to the 186 recorded by Pape between 1980 and 2001, even factoring in attacks from Afghanistan (206 recorded by N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. between 1/27/04 and 9/29/07) and Pakistan (38 between 2/28/04 and 9/11/07), Iraq still constitutes close to 70% of all attacks.

2001. While Pape's theory accounted for all instances of suicide terrorism at the time of its publication, the prevalence of suicide terrorism in Iraq has now made his pre-war statistical analysis nearly obsolete.

Robert Pape's theory is presented here as one of many pre-Iraq War theories of suicide terrorism that warrants comprehensive reevaluation in light of the overwhelming prominence of suicide terrorism in Iraq. There are countless theories of suicide terrorism being debated in academia, nearly all of which were formulated in the years preceding the Iraqi insurgency. Despite the tragedy behind the violence in Iraq, these suicide attacks provide scholars with a myriad of new data to explain; any theory that fails to account for such a large majority of the data can no longer sufficiently explain this phenomenon. While some may argue that Iraq is a unique case—a statistical outlier—due to its extremely high number of suicide attacks, prevailing theories of suicide terrorism still warrant proper reassessment in light of this new data. In this sense, Iraq will serve as the true test of several theories of suicide terrorism. If any good can come from the current situation in Iraq, perhaps it is an explanation of the logic behind suicide terrorism.

II. The Research Design

This thesis will attempt to account for the seemingly illogical distribution of suicide terrorism in Iraq. The anomaly in the Iraqi insurgency is, of course, the near monopoly of suicide terrorism by Sunnis. Of the 874 suicide attacks recorded in Iraq by the National Counterterrorism Center between February 2004 and June 2007, 283 are attributed to Sunnis, while only one is attributed to Shi'a. This is not the distribution of suicide

terrorism one would expect from a country with a 60 – 65% Shi'a majority and a 32-37% Sunni minority.¹⁴

This thesis follows the conventional thought espoused by most scholars of suicide terrorism—that is, suicide terrorism exists as a separate entity from conventional forms of terrorism. Not all terrorist groups turn to suicide attacks and, therefore, scholars can learn a great deal about the intentions, motivations, strategies, and strength of terror groups by analyzing why some have turned to this tactic, while others have not. In other words, this thesis operates under the assumption that the distribution of suicide terrorism between groups in Iraq is not random and that, on the contrary, it reveals vital information on the roles of different terror organizations in the insurgency.

In seeking to explain this incongruous data on the ethno-sectarian distribution of attacks, this thesis tests two theoretical frameworks of suicide terrorism in the Iraq case. These two frameworks, one embraced by Robert Pape and the other espoused by Samuel Huntington, represent opposite sides of the spectrum of theories of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Although these frameworks will be explained in detail in Chapter III, this chapter offers a cursory outline of these two theories in order for the reader to fully understand the research questions and theoretical parameters of this thesis. Pape's theory explains suicide terrorism as an entirely secular nationalist response to the presence of a foreign-imposed military occupation by a democratic government. Pape's framework leaves little room for religion, particularly fundamentalist strains of Islam, in explaining suicide terrorism in Iraq. Samuel Huntington's theory of the clash of civilizations, in contrast with Pape's theoretical framework, emphasizes the influence of Islamic extremism and anti-Western

¹⁴ C.I.A., "Iraq," *The C.I.A. World Factbook*. [Available Online] <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>>.

philosophical thought on violence between the Islamic and Western worlds. Huntington's framework argues that suicide terrorism in Iraq is the result of the incompatibility of Western and Islamic civilizations, not secular Iraqi nationalism.

Thus, this thesis uses these two diametrically opposed theoretical frameworks to explore, analyze, and assess the unequal distribution of suicide terrorism amongst Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups. This study is driven by the following two questions:

1) Can suicide terrorism in Iraq be explained by the theory of a secular nationalist response to foreign-imposed military occupation, as embraced by Robert Pape?

2) Can suicide terrorism in Iraq be explained by the theory of an inevitable clash of civilizations between Western forces and Islamic extremists, as embraced by Samuel Huntington?

Due to the current and ever-changing nature of suicide terrorism in Iraq, it is extremely difficult to obtain information regarding attacks. Suicide attacks occur so frequently in Iraq that it is nearly impossible for databases to stay up to date with statistics. Even when numbers are available, insurgent groups rarely claim responsibility for attacks and, thus, the identities of most suicide bombers remain unknown. As a result, it will be years after the Iraqi insurgency before anyone is able to comprehensively and wholly explain the exact nature of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Nonetheless, with the limited data available today, scholars can begin to make informed analyses of patterns in Iraq's suicide terrorism.

Despite the difficulty in obtaining relevant data, there are some extremely valuable datasets available that will be analyzed in this thesis. The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism's Terrorism Knowledge Base (M.I.P.T.-T.K.B.), affiliated with the RAND Corporation, provides a comprehensive source of information on suicide attacks in Iraq. The M.I.P.T.-T.K.B. offers historical background information on nearly every group involved in the insurgency. Unfortunately, the M.I.P.T.-T.K.B. does not distinguish between Sunni and Shi'a attacks, which is an integral focus of any research project on the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism in Iraq.

The National Counterterrorism Center's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S.), however, is more comprehensive than the M.I.P.T.-T.K.B.; while the M.I.P.T.-T.K.B. records 678 suicide attacks in Iraq, the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. database records 874 as of June 2007. In fact, the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. undercounts the number of suicide bombings in Iraq because it only includes attacks between February 2004 and June 2007. This eliminates a substantial number of suicide attacks between March 2003 and February 2004 and June 2007 and the present. Of these 874 attacks, the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. designates 283 of them as perpetrated by Sunni extremists, while only one is attributed to Shi'a extremists. This single Shi'a suicide attack occurred on June 17th, 2007, just before the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. database's last recorded attack on June 30th, 2007.

The later part of this chapter provides an overview of the layout of this thesis. In Chapter III, the theoretical framework of this thesis is discussed in greater detail. Here, the theoretical frameworks of Robert Pape and Samuel Huntington are analyzed. Since both of these theories were developed before the Iraq War, Chapter III places them in the context of the continuing insurgency. In Chapter IV, the current scholarly research relevant to this

thesis, including theories of suicide terrorism specifically and U.S.-Middle East relations in general, is reviewed and analyzed. These theories, which are not directly tested in this thesis, examine terrorism through the lens of everything from poverty to education.

In Chapter V, Pape's theoretical framework is assessed in the Iraq case. This framework, as delineated in Chapter III, is assessed by its ability to explain the anomaly in the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism in Iraq. The chapter concludes that Pape's theoretical framework does not adequately account for this phenomenon. In Chapter VI, Huntington's framework, as explained in Chapter III, is analyzed in the Iraq case in terms of its strengths and shortcomings in accounting for the unusual pattern of suicide terrorism in Iraq. This chapter, too, concludes that Huntington's theoretical framework offers little insight into the distribution of suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency. Interestingly enough, both of these frameworks fail to explain the Iraq case because they overlook divisions within Iraqi society.

After reviewing the shortcomings of these two previous frameworks, Chapter VII proposes a new theoretical framework to explain suicide terrorism in Iraq. This framework builds off of the foundation laid by Mohammed Hafez, who has systematically deconstructed Sunni participation in suicide terrorism in the insurgency. This new theoretical framework argues that groups in Iraq resort to suicide terrorism when they lack the ability to pursue their goals either through the current political process or conventional military means. The implications of this new theoretical framework are explored in terms of future shifts in the demographics of suicide terrorism. This chapter argues that recent changes in U.S. policy, specifically de-Ba'athification measures and crackdowns on Iranian-backed Shi'a militias, may foster the rise of a Shi'a suicide terror campaign in Iraq.

It is very possible that the single Shi'a suicide attack in June 2007 is the first of many to come.

Lastly, Chapter VIII concludes that the theoretical frameworks of Pape and Huntington, established prior to the 2003 invasion, could not explain suicide terrorism in Iraq because they both mistakenly overlook the country's ethno-sectarian divides. This chapter acknowledges that, although suicide terrorism is thousands of years old, scholars still cannot agree on an overarching theory to explain this tactic. While it will surely be difficult for this new theoretical framework to achieve widespread acceptance, Chapter VIII argues that this framework can be used by academics and government officials to anticipate – and possibly prevent – the rise of suicide terrorism in conflicts in other parts of the world.

III. The Theoretical Frameworks

~ Robert Pape's Theory ~

In *Dying to Win: the Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, Robert Pape argues that suicide terror campaigns are driven by nationalists, the weaker actor, vying to convince democracies, the stronger actor, to cease their occupations of regions which suicide bombers perceive to be their homeland.¹⁵ Terrorists have learned from Hizballah's success in expelling occupying American, French, and Israeli forces from Lebanon that democracies are "soft" in the face of resistance. Even if a democratic government does not end an occupation by its own initiative, the electorate will vote in a new government that will. In this manner, suicide terror campaigns are meant to compel governments and their

¹⁵ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 41.

voting constituencies to withdraw their troops. Pape further contends that, because authoritarian governments are callous to civilian damage, they do not respond to suicide campaigns in the way that democracies do.¹⁶ Thus, in the proper situation, suicide terrorism can be a very effective tool of asymmetrical warfare.

According to Pape, the majority of suicide terrorist campaigns have been driven by secular groups, like the L.T.T.E., not religious fundamentalist organizations. This finding goes against much of the post-September 11th media's image of suicide terrorists as Islamic extremists vying to destroy Western civilization—a view which could be interpreted as the popular mainstreaming of Huntington's clash of civilizations theory. Pape's original paper, published in 2003, did not leave much room for religion in its explanation of suicide terrorism. In his 2005 book, Pape slightly modified his argument and conceded that religious differences can make insurgencies more likely to resort to suicide terrorism because religious divides make it easier to “dehumanize” the occupying force.¹⁷ Pape contends that suicide terror organizations create videos, posters, and other public images to celebrate fallen suicide bombers as “martyrs” who sacrificed themselves for their people and their cause. Often these images of martyrdom employ religious symbolism, even if the resistance organization is secular. This allows the organization to claim that its fallen did not die in vain and enables its leaders to continue to recruit new members.¹⁸

~ Pape's Framework in the Iraq Case ~

This section explores how one espousing Robert Pape's theoretical framework would expect an insurgency to arise amongst Iraq's ethno-sectarian groups, given the parameters of Pape's theory of secular nationalism under foreign-imposed military

¹⁶ Ibid, 44-45.

¹⁷ Ibid, 86-88.

¹⁸ Ibid, 82.

occupation. Of course, this is not necessarily an accurate portrayal of what has happened in Iraq because Pape's framework does not adequately explain the puzzle in the Sunni-Shi'a distribution of suicide terrorism. Instead, this section merely explains the outcome expected given the limits of Pape's theoretical framework.

One looking through the lens of Pape's theoretical framework would, of course, view suicide terror campaigns in Iraq as a strategy to force the U.S. military to end its occupation. Even if most Iraqis did oppose the regime of Saddam Hussein, this does not mean, according to Pape, that they welcomed a foreign force to occupy their country. This is exactly what Vice President Cheney failed to realize when he predicted U.S. troops would be "greeted as liberators" in Baghdad. According to Pape's framework, Iraqis took it upon themselves to liberate their country from the American occupiers, just as Hizballah did twenty years earlier. This framework argues that Iraqi insurgents quickly turned to suicide terrorism because they are fighting an asymmetrical battle against an occupying democratic force, which is likely to retreat in the face of stiff resistance. Any increased military pressure on the insurgents will only lead to more suicide bombings.

According to Pape's theoretical framework, suicide terror groups emerged in Iraq from all political (Ba'athist, Islamist, socialist, liberal) and ethno-sectarian (Sunni Arab, Sunni Kurd, Shi'a Arab) divides due to Iraqi nationalist fervor, just as Shi'a, Maronite Christians, Islamists, and communists joined together in suicide campaigns against the U.S. in Lebanon. The targets of these attacks are almost exclusively American and coalition forces, although it is conceivable within the bounds of Pape's framework that suicide bombers will target select collaborating Iraqi officials. While shrines and posters celebrate the fallen suicide bombers as martyrs with religious symbolism, the core message

of these insurgent suicide terror groups is not an Islamist one. Above all else, the insurgents are nationalists who will discontinue their suicide campaign either when the U.S. occupying force withdraws or when it becomes clear that the campaign has failed.

~ Samuel Huntington's Theory ~

If Robert Pape's theory removes Islamic fundamentalism from the picture completely, then Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations theory is its polar opposite. Although Samuel Huntington's controversial piece "The Clash of Civilizations?" was published fifteen years ago, many Americans praised it in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks and cited it in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq. While Huntington never explicitly references suicide terrorism in his paper, many neoconservative thinkers and pundits, such as Alan Dershowitz and Daniel Pipes, view the Global War on Terror as a fulfillment of his prediction that future international conflicts will be fought between liberal democracies and Islamic extremists.¹⁹ Huntington's theory has also influenced the thinking of several architects of the Iraq War, including President George W. Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, and former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who vilify suicide terrorists as "Islamofascists" and enemies of Western civilization. Addressing Congress on September 20th, 2001, President Bush said, "They hate our freedoms -- our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote...They want to drive Christians and Jews out of vast regions of Asia and Africa."²⁰ One cannot fully understand how the Bush administration views suicide terrorism in Iraq, or elsewhere in the Islamic world, without first analyzing Huntington's framework.

¹⁹ For a general idea of the theories of Dershowitz and Pipes, please see Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) and Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2002).

²⁰ President George W. Bush, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," 20 Sept. 2001, *The White House*. [Available Online] <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>>.

In “Clash of the Civilizations?” Huntington argues that, following World War One, disputes within the international system evolved from conflicts between states to conflicts between ideologies, such as liberalism, fascism, and communism. However, after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War, the world entered a new era of conflicts between civilizations.²¹ As traditional nation states become weaker in the face of globalization, people will identify more with their respective civilizations. To Huntington, civilizations are the highest form of identity because, unlike nationality or ideology, they lack fluidity and compromise.²² While one can hold dual citizenship or reconsider his or her political and ideological convictions, one can only belong to a single civilization, such as the West or the Islamic world. According to Huntington, Muslims from all different countries, regardless of sub-civilization divides (Sunni-Shi’a, Arab-Persian, Turk-Kurd, etc.), will band together in a conflict due to kin-country syndrome.²³ Because compromises between civilizations cannot be reached easily, future wars along civilization lines are destined to be more violent. Huntington notes that, in particular, “Islam has bloody borders.”²⁴

In developing his clash of the civilizations theory, Huntington worked off the basic foundation laid by Bernard Lewis in “The Roots of Muslim Rage” in 1990 and Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and The Last Man* in 1992. According to Lewis, conflict between Islamic states and the West “is no less than a clash of civilizations – the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian

²¹ Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs* vol. 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 1-2. [Available Online] <<http://moodle.eclac.cl/file.php/1/documentos/grupo2/Huntington.pdf>>.

²² Ibid, 2.

²³ Ibid, 11.

²⁴ Ibid

heritage, our secular present, and the world-wide expansion of both.”²⁵ Huntington, writing a decade before the September 11th attacks, predicted, “This centuries-old military interaction between the West and Islam is unlikely to decline. It could become more virulent.”²⁶

Huntington believes that the implementation of democracy and westernized reform in the Middle East, coupled with increased population growth, has engendered widespread Islamic radicalism and fundamentalism throughout the region. “Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures,” writes Huntington. “Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against ‘human rights imperialism’ and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures.”²⁷ In essence, Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory argues that further expansion by Judeo-Christian Western civilization into the borders of the Islamic world will inevitably lead to violent conflict.

~ Huntington’s Framework in the Iraq Case ~

This section delineates the framework of Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory in terms of suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency. Huntington’s framework, along with all other pre-Iraq War theories of suicide terrorism, does not adequately explain the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism between Sunni and

²⁵ Bernard Lewis. “The Roots of Muslim Rage,” *The Atlantic Monthly* vol. 17, no. 4 (Sept. 1990): 26. [Available Online] <<http://www.cis.org.au/Policy/summer01-02/polsumm01-3.pdf>> as quoted in Huntington, 9.

²⁶ Huntington, 8.

²⁷ Ibid, 15.

Shi'a groups. However, in order to analyze and assess the strengths and shortcomings of Huntington's framework in Iraq, one must first outline the pattern of suicide terrorism one embracing Huntington's framework would expect.

Many consider the widespread appearance of suicide terrorists in the Iraqi insurgency as a vindication of Huntington's clash of civilizations theory. Images of Muslims blowing up the Judeo-Christian forces of the West, purportedly in the name of Islam, seem to confirm the controversial hypothesis Huntington proclaimed fifteen years ago. According to the framework of Huntington, suicide terrorism in Iraq is the result of an inevitable clash between Western and Islamic civilizations. In the face of a Western invasion, all Muslims in Iraq, regardless of sub-civilization divides (Sunni-Shi'a, Arab-Kurd, etc.), will unite in opposition. These insurgents will seek unity under the banner of Islam and oppose the occupying coalition forces on the basis of their membership in the Judeo-Christian West. In essence, one applying Huntington's framework would expect suicide terrorists to emerge from all sectors of Iraqi society (similar to Pape's framework) and from neighboring Islamic countries due to kin-country syndrome. These Muslims will seek martyrdom in a conflict with the West over religious and cultural identity. By voluntarily giving up their lives, suicide terrorists, in Huntington's framework, confirm the intensity of the clash of civilizations as the most violent of global conflicts.

IV. Review of Existing Scholarly Research

This section provides an overview of some of the more prominent theories of suicide terrorism, along with theories of anti-Western Islamic political violence in general. Although there is no shortage of theories of terrorism, the arguments of Pape and Huntington were chosen as the frameworks of this thesis because, while their predictions for the insurgency are somewhat similar, they represent the two extreme poles along the spectrum of explanations of suicide terrorism. In between these two frameworks lies a plethora of different theories. While it is impossible to fully explore each of these theories within the constraints of this thesis, one cannot adequately assess suicide terrorism in Iraq without a thorough understanding of previous scholarly research on the subject.

~ The Predominant Role of Civilization, Culture, and Religion ~

In “The Roots of Muslims Rage,” Bernard Lewis contends that anti-Western sentiment in the Islamic world cannot entirely be blamed on imperialistic foreign policies, because even though the French have left Algeria and the British have left Egypt, resentment still continues to broil.²⁸ While there are countless U.S. policies that irritate Muslims, Lewis believes that secularism and consumerism are the reasons Islamic extremists have specifically targeted the U.S. and not Russia (although the Chechen suicide terror campaigns which have taken place since Lewis wrote this article weaken this claim). While Muslims originally tried to emulate the West, Western political and economic institutions were too quickly introduced to the Islamic world and, in actuality,

²⁸ Lewis, 22.

contributed to the growth of poverty, corruption, and tyranny.²⁹ Muslims have now channeled their great passion for Islam, which in the past produced golden eras of tolerance, into fundamentalist campaigns. Lewis, who believes that all religions go through dark periods, concludes that this turmoil within the Islamic world must be worked out internally. The U.S. must do its part by not provoking a cataclysmic religious war.³⁰

While Ami Pedahzur, in *Suicide Terrorism*, does not fully embrace the positions of Huntington or Lewis in analyzing this tactic, he does suggest that there may be a cultural aspect that explains the prominence of suicide terrorism in the Middle East, such as the authoritarian personality structure of Islamic societies.³¹ Unfortunately, this does not explain the absence of Shi'a suicide terrorism in Iraq. Alan Dershowitz also fails to convincingly explain the role of Islamic civilization in *Why Terrorism Works*. Instead, he discusses the possible responses the U.S. could make to Islamic suicide terror groups. Since death is clearly not a deterrent for religious extremists, Dershowitz argues that the U.S. must deter or punish their sponsor, whether a state or an organization.³² The invasion of Afghanistan (and possibly Iraq in Dershowitz's opinion) serves as an example of the U.S.' punishing a state sponsor of terror. Dershowitz further contends that, if the U.S. were an authoritarian state, it could punish the loved ones of suicide bombers—a tactic Hitler infamously practiced in Lidice.³³ However, as a liberal democracy, the U.S. needs to work with moderate imams who oppose suicide terrorism in the name of Islam.³⁴

²⁹ Ibid, 25.

³⁰ Ibid, 26.

³¹ Ami Pedahzur, *Suicide Terrorism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 35.

³² Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 30.

³³ Ibid, 117.

³⁴ Ibid, 213.

~ The Limited Role of Religion ~

The debate over Islam's role in suicide terrorism became particularly intense after the publication of Robert Pape's "The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism" in 2003. The elimination of religion from Pape's theory spawned vigorous reactions from critics throughout the academic world. Although most of the following authors refrain from espousing the extreme stance of Huntington's clash of the civilizations, they do argue that religion plays a role in suicide bombing.

Mia Bloom's *Dying to Kill: the Allure of Suicide Terror* contends that suicide terrorism is a strategy that groups turn to when all other tactics have failed. The audience is not those who were killed, as many mistakenly believe, but those who witness the attack and have the power to address the terrorists' demands. As a result, suicide bombings are intended to gain international attention from third parties, who could intervene and mediate the conflict.³⁵ Since one of the objectives of terrorism is to gain popular and financial support for a cause, Bloom argues that suicide terror appears in situations in which rival terror groups vie to "outbid" one another through spectacular attacks in order to win the support of the community and represent its grievances.³⁶ In this sense, suicide campaigns are a method for groups to both gain publicity and differentiate themselves from one another.

Bloom notes that it is much harder to deter religious suicide terrorist groups, which pursue abstract ideological goals, than it is to deter secular groups, which pursue concrete political goals.³⁷ She further observes that it is easier for religious groups to recruit suicide bombers. However, Bloom warns that some suicide terror groups have taken on the guise

³⁵ Bloom, 77.

³⁶ Ibid, 97.

³⁷ Ibid, 98.

of religion solely to convince their adversaries that the group lacks rationality. “As part of their propaganda,” writes Bloom, “suicide terrorists are trying to portray themselves as fanatical and irrational, because they want their potential victims to believe that there is nothing that can be done against such an adversary.”³⁸ Although Bloom contends that suicide terrorism is easier to conduct in conflicts between different religious, ethnic, or national groups, she acknowledges that secular groups have nonetheless conducted suicide campaigns in the past.

In terms of Iraq, Bloom warns that military surges in past insurgencies have only led to stronger suicide campaigns. While Bloom fundamentally disagrees with Bush’s claim that terrorists in Iraq would be fighting in the streets of New York if the U.S. were not pursuing them overseas, she concedes that the U.S. finds itself in a “lose-lose” situation in Iraq; if the U.S. leaves it will be denigrated a “paper tiger” and inspire other suicide terrorists, but if the U.S. stays the violence will only grow. Bloom does not feel that Pape’s theory offers an explanation of suicide terrorism in Iraq because it tends to overlook the interior political dynamics of complicated states like Iraq.³⁹ While Pape’s theory can potentially explain the appearance of Iraqi suicide bombers, it cannot account for the rise of foreign jihadi suicide bombers in the insurgency, especially those targeting moderate Iraqis who, according to Pape, share the same nationalist goals as the suicide bombers.

Scott Atran, like Bloom, is also hesitant to completely remove religion from his explanation of suicide terrorism. In “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism,” he concludes that one all-encompassing cause, such as military occupation, lack of democracy, or religious fundamentalism, cannot wholly account for this phenomenon.

³⁸ Ibid, 89.

³⁹ Ibid, 84.

However, Atran believes that there are “psychological motivations, including religious inspirations, which can trump rational self-interest to produce horrific or heroic behavior in ordinary people.”⁴⁰

Atran points out that 80% of all suicide terrorist attacks have taken place since the September 11th attacks and thirty-one of the thirty-five groups perpetrating these attacks were jihadis.⁴¹ He cites several flaws in Pape’s argument—most notably that the suicide campaigns carried out by the L.T.T.E. and the P.K.K. have ended since Pape’s book was published (although the L.T.T.E. resumed its campaign after Atran’s article was published). Atran further criticizes Pape for treating the diverse insurgent groups in Iraq as a unified whole, grouping all suicide terror organizations under the banner of nationalism, refusing to acknowledge the “outbidding” aspect discussed by Bloom, and incorrectly assuming that there is a significant correlation between Salafism amongst general populations and the number of suicide bombers these populations produce.⁴² Atran derisively writes of Pape’s theory of nationalism: “It is quite a stretch to identify the common thread as a secular struggle over foreign occupation of a homeland, unless ‘secular’ covers transcendent ideologies, ‘foreign occupation’ includes tourism, and ‘homeland’ expands to at least three continents.”⁴³

Atran concludes that while nationalism is not the root cause of suicide terrorism, those who mistakenly believe religion is the sole basis of this tactic advocate flawed policies that unsuccessfully attempt to change “deeply held religious beliefs, rather than

⁴⁰ Scott Atran, “The Moral Logic and Growth of Suicide Terrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly* vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 144. [Available Online] <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/washington_quarterly/v029/29.2atran.pdf>.

⁴¹ Ibid, 127.

⁴² Ibid, 131. Salafism, in this context, refers to the practice of strict Islamism in one’s daily life, although this does not necessarily mean violent extremism.

⁴³ Ibid, 134.

more effectively channel them to less-violent expressions.”⁴⁴ Unlike Pape, Atran does not believe suicide terrorism will stop if the U.S. military leaves Saudi Arabia and the greater Islamic world. Because there is a “deeply faith-inspired, decentralized, and self-adjusting global jihadi ‘market,’ where any small group of friends can freely shop for ideas or even for personnel and materials and any can inflict such widespread damage,” Atran argues that the U.S. cannot combat transnational terrorism alone.⁴⁵ He further contends that the U.S. should stop thinking of bin Laden as “a boogey man” because he has little contact or affiliation with al-Zarqawi’s organization in Iraq. Instead of active military intervention to prevent terrorism, Atran suggests that the U.S. increase its humanitarian presence in the Islamic world, as it did in Indonesia following the tsunami in 2004. This will help erode the sympathy many in the Middle East have shown terror groups.

~ The Exaggerated Role of Religion ~

John Esposito argues against Huntington’s clash of civilizations theory in “Political Islam and the West.” According to Esposito, the underestimation of religious identity by past political scientists has now led to an overestimation by Huntington and his supporters. Huntington, argues Esposito, oversimplifies many diverse political, ethnic, and socioeconomic conflicts, including those in Nigeria, Chechnya, and Sudan, by reducing them to religious conflicts.⁴⁶ In states with large Islamist movements, non-religious groups often join with the Islamists to form opposition blocs, thereby inadvertently inflating the size of extremist parties.⁴⁷ Esposito criticizes the U.S. for blurring the lines between freedom fighters and terrorists and for using authoritarian leaders to crush Islamist

⁴⁴ Ibid, 144.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 141.

⁴⁶ John Esposito, “Political Islam and the West,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, no. 24 (Spring 2000): 51. [Available Online] <http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Press/jfq_pages/1124.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 54.

groups.⁴⁸ One can see how Esposito's argument applies to King Abdullah in Saudi Arabia, President Musharraf in Pakistan, and President Mbarak in Egypt. Esposito, writing three years before the invasion of Iraq, warns that as a result of pro-Sunni U.S. policies designed to buffer Iran, "the United States and its allies may face a new dynamic – a conflict between Shi'as and Sunnis."⁴⁹

By contrast, Anne Speckhard, a psychologist, explores the individual, personal motivations of suicide terrorists in "Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders." While she does not believe that religion is the root of suicide terrorism, Speckhard does argue that religion can play a motivational factor in recruitment and mobilization by contributing to a "cult of martyrdom."⁵⁰ She differentiates between suicide bombers inspired by altruistic nationalism to protect their community and suicide bombers motivated by alienation, marginalization, and what could be described as a clash of civilizations mindset.⁵¹ Often, these suicide bombers are inspired to seek vengeance for personal trauma suffered by their family or community. However, in order for suicide terrorists to be successful, their community must share their same psychological state of marginalization. Speckhard thus concludes that killing terrorists is useless because new generations with the same mentality and psychology will continue to emerge.⁵²

~ The Exaggerated Role of Occupation ~

In "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of *Dying to Win*," Assaf Moghadam refutes several of the basic conclusions reached by Robert Pape. Moghadam argues that Pape's methods and definitions may have

⁴⁸ Ibid, 53.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁰ Anne Speckhard, "Understanding Suicide Terrorism: Countering Human Bombs and Their Senders," *Topics in Terrorism: Toward a Transatlantic Consensus on the Nature of the Threat* vol. I (Jul. 2005): 7.

⁵¹ Ibid, 17.

⁵² Ibid, 20.

skewed the data. For example, Moghadam takes issue with Pape's inclusion of attacks on military forces as suicide terrorism; by Moghadam's more conventional definition, suicide terrorism can only occur against civilians or non-active military personnel. If only civilian attacks are counted, then Hamas, not the L.T.T.E., was the most prolific suicide terror group of the 20th century.⁵³ Moghadam also disputes Pape's conclusions on suicide terrorism's perceived victories. For instance, Moghadam claims that there were many factors other than suicide terrorism that convinced Israel to withdraw from Gaza in 1994. In contrast with Pape's findings, Moghadam argues that only four of the seventeen suicide campaigns identified by Pape are clear-cut victories.⁵⁴ Whereas Pape interprets the fact that five campaigns are still ongoing as evidence of the tactic's success, Moghadam argues that this proves suicide campaigns are ineffective because they take three times as long as traditional terror campaigns to achieve results.

Moghadam also claims that Pape's theory is forced in the al-Qaeda case. According to Moghadam, there is a much greater religious aspect to al-Qaeda than a nationalist aspect. Al-Qaeda is fighting a zero-sum game to form an Islamic caliphate, which is not, as Pape claims, a realistic goal. Moghadam does not believe al-Qaeda has any reason to stop its campaign once U.S. forces withdraw from the Islamic world because the military has left Saudi Arabia to no avail, although he fails to acknowledge that the military has moved to other Gulf countries, such as Bahrain and Qatar.⁵⁵ Moghadam argues that Pape forces the word "occupation" on countries that only have U.S. security guarantees, such as Morocco. He further contends that Pape's theory cannot account for

⁵³ Assaf Moghadam, "Suicide Terrorism, Occupation, and the Globalization of Martyrdom: A Critique of *Dying to Win*," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* vol. 29 (2006): 710. [Available Online] <<http://fletcher.tufts.edu/jebcenter/pubs/moghadam/SCT%20Article.pdf>>.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 715.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 718.

transnational suicide terrorism in Iraq that targets civilians. As the “deterritorialization” of Islam continues and more European Muslims are recruited through the Internet, Moghadam predicts that any supposed correlation between Salafi populations and violent extremism will prove meaningless.⁵⁶ Moghadam concludes that suicide terrorism can only be explained by a more nuanced approach.

~ The Role of Strategic and Economic Practicality ~

Julian Madsen, in “Suicide Terrorism: Rationalizing the Irrational,” argues that groups of all persuasions, religious or secular, turn to suicide terrorism because of its practicality. Suicide attacks, according to Madsen, are one of the few weapons available to weak actors that inflict heavy casualties and garner much needed media attention.⁵⁷ In addition, suicide attacks, which do not require escape plans, eliminate the liability of capture and interrogation. Terrorists even have the freedom to make last minute targeting changes. Madsen contends that, best of all for terror groups, suicide terrorism is economical—attacks that have killed hundreds of people have been carried out with \$150 suicide belts.⁵⁸

In “The Role of Suicide in Terrorism,” Andrew Silke concurs that suicide terrorism is a cost-effective tool that works when other tactics fail. “The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey conducted after World War II concluded (perhaps unexpectedly) of the Japanese kamikaze campaign that it was ‘effective [and] supremely practical under the circumstances,’” writes Silke. “It is possible, if indeed not probable, that history will

⁵⁶ Ibid, 722.

⁵⁷ Julian Madsen, “Suicide Terrorism: Rationalizing the Irrational,” *Strategic Insights* Vol. III, no. 8 (Aug. 2004): 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 3.

provide a similar assessment of the campaigns of suicide terrorism we face today.”⁵⁹ Silke contends that suicide attacks rally future resistance by validating the identity of those killed as martyrs. Silke carefully distinguishes between itishad, or martyrdom, and traditional suicide, which is considered haram, or forbidden, in Islam. Silke discusses at length the Shi’a obsession with the martyrdom of ‘Ali, the cousin of Muhammad and fourth caliph who was assassinated in the 7th century.⁶⁰ However, in doing so, Silke fails to acknowledge that Sunnis have committed nearly all suicide attacks in the 21st century.

In “An Economist Looks at Suicide Terrorism,” Mark Harrison explores suicide terrorism as a contract between the bomber and the organization. The bomber gives his life on the condition that the organization promotes and celebrates his memory as a martyr.⁶¹ The organization encourages the bomber to fulfill his contract by conducting the suicide attack in the presence of his “martyrdom cell” (ensuring group peer pressure) and by filming a martyrdom video (ensuring shame and embarrassment if martyrdom is not achieved). Harrison notes that there are diminishing returns on suicide terrorism because, as attacks become more common (as they did in Lebanon during the 1980’s), martyrdom becomes a less valuable commodity.⁶² This would certainly have implications for Iraq, which has already experienced nearly 1,000 suicide attacks. However, while the “surge” has decreased conventional violence over the past year, suicide terrorism remains consistent. Thus, it is unclear if terrorists have yet to “saturate” the market for suicide attacks in Iraq, as Harrison would suggest.

⁵⁹ Andrew Silke, “The Role of Suicide in Terrorism,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* vol. 18, no. 1 (2006): 10. [Available Online] <<http://66.102.1.104/scholar?hl=en&lr=&safe=off&q=cache:SX-NAq2E8NUJ:www.nijpcs.org/terror/Silke%2520Paper.pdf+suicide+terrorism+in+iraq>>.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 7.

⁶¹ Mark Harrison, “An economist Looks at Suicide Terrorism,” *World Economics Journal* vol. 7, no. 3 (Jul. 2006): 5-6. [Available Online] <http://www.securitymanagement.com/archive/library/Suicide_Harrison0803.pdf>.

⁶² Ibid, 7.

~ The Role of Poverty and Education ~

Another explanation of suicide terrorism involves poverty, unemployment, and destitution. Until recently, it was widely believed that suicide terrorism is caused by a lack of education and economic entitlement. Roger Masters' "Pre-Emptive War, Iraq, and Suicide Bombers" forewarned the rise of suicide terrorists in Iraq by arguing that, as a country with a high birthrate, low life expectancy, low average level of education, and low investment per child, Iraq is ripe for engendering a generation of suicide terrorists.⁶³ Masters encouraged the Bush administration to reconsider its policy of preemption because such an invasion would likely lead to a high number of civilian fatalities, which in turn would increase sympathy for suicide terror groups. Although Masters does not discuss the ethno-sectarian profile of Iraq, his theory implies that suicide terrorists will emerge amongst the poorest segments of Iraqi society—the Shi'a. This, however, has not happened.

By contrast, Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova argue in "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" that the average income and education-level of suicide terrorists is actually higher than the respective averages of the communities from which these terrorists come. This same trend is found amongst members of Hizballah, Hamas, and the Jewish Underground.⁶⁴ In fact, Krueger and Maleckova go so far as to argue that increased education and income may in fact make people more aware of the political oppression they are suffering, thereby making them more inclined to become

⁶³ Roger Masters, "Pre-Emptive War, Iraq, and Suicide Bombers," *The Forum: Defending Against Terrorism: the Search for Homeland Security* vol. 1, no. 2 (2002): 1. [Available Online] <<http://www.bepress.com/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1008&context=forum>>.

⁶⁴ Alan Krueger and Jitka Maleckova, "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* vol. 17, no. 4 (Fall 2003): 134. [Available Online] <<http://www.jstor.org/cgi-bin/jstor/viewitem/08953309/sp050006/05x0039m/0?frame=noiframe&dpi=3&userlD=a57ba872@upenn.edu/01c0a80a7400503482&backcontext=page>>.

suicide terrorists.⁶⁵ This, of course, has tremendous implications for the U.S.’ use of economic and humanitarian aid programs to discourage the rise of extremism in the Middle East. Scott Atran, in “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,” agrees that transforming society in the Islamic world may not be the answer because suicide terrorists are not overwhelmingly poor or uneducated. Atran astutely points out that the sacrifice of martyrdom would be meaningless if suicide bombers had nothing for which to live.⁶⁶

Bruce Hoffman, in “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” joins Krueger, Maleckova, and Atran in stressing that the commonly perceived profile of a suicide terrorist as an unemployed, uneducated, single, devout young man is baseless.⁶⁷ Hoffman’s data suggests that suicide terrorists are just as likely to be educated mothers from secular homes. However, three years later, in *Inside Terrorism*, Hoffman argues that Islamic groups conducted 85% of all suicide attacks in 2005.⁶⁸ While Hoffman speaks of the practicality and cost-effectiveness of suicide terrorism—the September 11th attacks, for example, were conducted with \$500,000 of al-Qaeda funds, but cost the U.S. \$500 billion—he seems to imply that suicide terrorism has a unique connection to Islamic traditions. For example, he mentions the Shi’a concept of *bassamat al-farah*, the “smile of joy” when achieving martyrdom, and discusses specific passages in the *Qur’an* some imams use to authorize suicide terrorism.⁶⁹ *Nonetheless, widespread Shi’a suicide terrorism has not taken place in Iraq.*

⁶⁵ Ibid, 123.

⁶⁶ Scott Atran, “Genesis of Suicide Terrorism,” *Science* vol. 299, no. 5612 (7 March 2003): 1534-1539. [Available Online] <<http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/299/5612/1534>>.

⁶⁷ Bruce Hoffman, “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism,” *The Atlantic Monthly* vol. 291, no. 5 (June 2003): 3. [Available Online] <http://www.rand.org/pubs/reprints/2005/RAND_RP1187.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 134.

⁶⁹ Hoffman’s discussion of *bassamat al-farah* can be found in “The Logic of Suicide Terrorism” p. 5, while his discussion of *Sura 2, Verses 190 -191* appears in *Inside Terrorism*, p. 161. *These verses, often used to justify suicide terrorism, read: “Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you...And slay them*

~ The Potential for Multiple Contributing Factors ~

Several scholars have abandoned the search for an overarching theory of suicide terrorism and have instead argued that a plethora of factors convince groups to use suicide terrorism. Jeff Goodwin's "What do we really know about (suicide) terrorism?" agrees with Pape's thesis that U.S. foreign policy frequently contributes to the motivation of suicide terrorists, but Goodwin does not believe military occupation alone explains this phenomenon. Goodwin argues that nationalism, especially when aggravated by occupation, can spark suicide terrorism, but so can a host of other identities and ideologies, including Islamism and anarchism.⁷⁰ He further notes that suicide terrorism in Iraq does not appear to be driven by nationalism because most attacks target Shi'a civilians, not occupying troops.⁷¹

Diego Gambetta argues in *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* that, while many different organizations have used suicide terrorism at the peak of asymmetry in a conflict, none is "married" to this tactic. In fact, only Hizballah and al-Qaeda have turned to suicide terrorism when they had other viable options.⁷² Suicide terrorism, according to Gambetta, influences the behavior of both the adversary (to meet the group's demands) and the behavior of other members of the organization (to strengthen their belief in the cause).⁷³ Gambetta spends a great deal of time analyzing the difference between Western praise for soldiers who have selflessly died in battle and Muslim praise for martyrs who have actively taken their own lives. Gambetta argues that it is the planning of death by suicide

wherever ye find them and drive them out of the place whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter."

⁷⁰ Jeff Goodwin, "What do we really know about (suicide) terrorism?" *Sociological Forum* vol. 21, no. 2 (June 2006): 323. [Available Online] <<http://www.springerlink.com/content/3327151633152262/fulltext.pdf>>.

⁷¹ Ibid, 322.

⁷² Diego Gambetta, *Making Sense of Suicide Missions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 261.

⁷³ Ibid, 264.

terrorists, as opposed to the spontaneity of soldiers dying in battle, which makes this tactic uniquely disturbing.⁷⁴

Gambetta does not believe religion is intrinsic to suicide terrorism, although “the availability of a religious tradition of martyrdom [to Hizballah in the 1980’s] though not a necessary condition for the emergence of suicide missions, did help.”⁷⁵ After discussing the spread of suicide terrorism from Lebanon’s Shi’a to Palestine’s Sunnis, Gambetta writes that, “Although the latter groups do not share the Shi’a mythology of martyrdom, they came up with one drawing on the shared notion of jihad.”⁷⁶ Gambetta concludes his book by suggesting that no general theory can explain every suicide attack. He questions whether, under similar circumstances of resistance against oppression, Jews and Christians could condone suicide missions.⁷⁷ He notes that, unfortunately, one of the unforeseen consequences of the September 11th attacks was that some secular groups, who consider themselves freedom fighters, have been denigrated as terrorists by the Bush administration.

Perhaps Martha Crenshaw provides one of the most insightful works on suicide terrorism in “Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay,” in which she examines and critiques the arguments of such scholars as Gambetta, Pape, Bloom, Atran, Speckhard, and Shay. Crenshaw suggests that, while there is no general explanation for suicide terrorism, this phenomenon could be explained by something like the “fatal cocktail: religious doctrine that promises eternal life, deprivation that offers no hope, nationalism, and the hardships of living under a military occupation.”⁷⁸ Most scholars of suicide terrorism,

⁷⁴ Ibid, 278.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 287.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 295.

⁷⁸ Martha Crenshaw, “Explaining Suicide Terrorism: A Review Essay,” *Security Studies* vol. 16, no. 1 (Jan. 2007): 155. [Available Online] <<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a777389218~db=>

according to Crenshaw, are guilty of “over-aggregation,” or treating tremendously different suicide campaigns as if they share identical political, social, economic, or religious roots.⁷⁹ One particular problem these scholars face is the lack of a comprehensive and widely-accepted dataset of suicide terrorism; the information analyzed by different scholars can vary by as much as one hundred suicide attacks.⁸⁰ Although there are exceptions, Crenshaw finds that one of the few points scholars of suicide terrorism do agree on is that this tactic cannot be combated by offensive military action.⁸¹ Crenshaw, unfortunately, leaves the questions she raises on the Iraqi insurgency unanswered: Why are Sunnis in Iraq and not Shi’a conducting suicide terrorism? Why are suicide terrorists attacking Shi’a civilians instead of occupying forces? Why are most suicide bombers in Iraq foreign?⁸²

~ The Perspective of the U.S. Military ~

Robert Bunker and John Sullivan provide the initial perspective of the U.S. government on suicide terrorism in “Suicide Bombings in Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Bunker and Sullivan, however, begin their paper on a poor note in describing suicide terrorism as incompatible with Western values but acceptable with “Oriental” traditions. As evidence, they mention the use of suicide tactics by the Mongols, but overlook the practice of suicide attacks by the Jewish Zealots in Roman Palestine.⁸³ Bunker and Sullivan rightfully emphasize the role that the cult of martyrdom has played in Shi’a Islam since the death of Husayn at Karbala in 680 A.D. and link this concept with the Iranian “enfants perdus,” who sacrificed themselves in human wave attacks during the Iran-Iraq

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⁷⁹ Ibid, 162.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 160.

⁸¹ Ibid, 159

⁸² Ibid, 150.

⁸³ Robert Bunker and John Sullivan, “Suicide Bombings in Operation Iraqi Freedom,” *The Land Warfare Papers*, no. 46 (Sept. 2004): 2.

War. They also cite the cult of martyrdom in seeking to explain Hizballah's use of suicide terrorism, though they fail to acknowledge that many of Hizballah's earliest suicide bombers were Maronite Christians and socialists.⁸⁴ Bunker and Sullivan argue that Sunni clerics adopted the Shi'a tradition of martyrdom and reincorporated it into resistance doctrine in Palestine. In concluding, they cite the possibility of suicide terrorism from Ba'athists, Shi'a extremists, and Sunni extremists in Iraq.⁸⁵ Clearly, Sullivan and Bunker have not depicted an accurate portrayal of today's Sunni monopolization of suicide terrorism in Iraq.

~ An Early Analysis of the Iraqi Insurgency ~

Despite the intensity of suicide terrorism in Iraq, very few extensive studies of the actual insurgency have been undertaken by academics. Mohammed Hafez, author of "Suicide Bombing in Iraq: A Preliminary Assessment of the Quantitative Data and Documentary Evidence" and *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, is the great exception. In these two works, Hafez breaks the Iraqi insurgency down into three Sunni groups: 1) Iraqi nationalists, 2) Iraqi Ba'athists, and 3) foreign jihadis. These three groups, in turn, pursue the following two strategies in the insurgency: the Ba'athists and foreign jihadis promote system collapse, while the nationalists pursue system reintegration.⁸⁶

While all three groups have conducted suicide terrorism in Iraq, Hafez argues that the majority of the attacks have been carried out by foreign jihadis. Hafez, who stops short of offering an overall theory of suicide terrorism, suggests that the Ba'athists and jihadis frequently use suicide terrorism to collapse the Shi'a-dominated state in order to establish

⁸⁴ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 205.

⁸⁵ Bunker and Sullivan, 4.

⁸⁶ Mohammed Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), 35-36.

their own respective regimes.⁸⁷ Sunni nationalists, on the other hand, use suicide terrorism sparingly because they are merely trying to expel U.S. forces and reintegrate into the new Iraqi state.⁸⁸ Although these nationalist groups want greater rights and benefits for Sunnis in a new power-sharing scheme, they do not want to collapse the state entirely. Hafez's work is integral to this thesis and will be revisited in Chapter VII.

V. Assessment of Pape's Theoretical Framework in Iraq

This chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Robert Pape's theoretical framework, as explained in Chapter III, in accounting for suicide terrorism in Iraq. Pape's argument that suicide terrorism emerges from nationalist forces vying to expel a democracy from occupying the land the nationalists perceive as their homeland has received substantial media attention since the appearance of suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency. Since 2003, Robert Pape has written two editorials in *The New York Times*, been the subject of an article in *The Washington Post*, briefed government officials and legislators, and become the inspiration for the Iraq withdrawal policy proposed by Congressman Ron Paul, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination.⁸⁹

The argument behind Pape's framework, that specific foreign policies of the U.S., namely the invasion of Iraq, are responsible for much of the violence in the Islamic world,

⁸⁷ Ibid, 63-64.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 36.

⁸⁹ Please see Robert Pape, "Al Qaeda's Smart Bombs," *New York Times*, 9 July 2005, [Available Online] <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/09/opinion/09pape.html>> and Robert Pape, "Blowing up and Assumption," *New York Times*, 18 May 2005, [Available Online] <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/18/opinion/18pape.html>> and Caryle Murphy, "A Scholarly Look at Terror Sees Bootprints in the Sand," *Washington Post*, 10 July 2005, [Available Online] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/07/09/AR2005070901425_pf.html>. For Congressman Paul's address to the House of Representatives regarding Pape's theory, please see "Hon. Ron Paul of Texas Before the U.S. House of Representatives," 14 July 2005, [Available Online] <<http://www.ronpaul2008.com/articles/115/suicide-terrorism/>>.

has much in common with the opinions of whistle-blower Richard Clarke. “Osama Bin Laden has been saying for years, ‘America wants to invade an Arab country and occupy it, an oil-rich Arab country.’...This is part of his propaganda,” says Clarke. “So what did we do after 9/11? We invade an oil-rich and occupy an oil-rich Arab country which was doing nothing to threaten us. In other words, we stepped right into Bin Laden’s propaganda. And the result of that is that al Qaeda and organizations like it, offshoots of it, second-generation al Qaeda have been greatly strengthened.”⁹⁰ While Clarke’s views, which were formed as a counterterrorism expert in the Clinton and Bush administrations, were not directly influenced by Pape’s theory, the similarity of their thinking highlights the positive reception Pape’s framework has received in some policy-making circles.

Clearly, Robert Pape’s theory has earned a great deal of public attention in the early years of the Iraqi insurgency. However, many accepted Pape’s framework in Iraq without examining the data on suicide attacks, specifically which groups were conducting them. Here, his theoretical framework is tested, assessed, and analyzed in light of the data available from the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. In the end, the ultimate judge of Pape’s theoretical framework will be its ability to explain the monopolization of suicide terrorism by Sunnis. However, in this respect, Pape’s theoretical framework does not appear adequate.

~ Evidence Corroborating Pape’s Framework~

Before the U.S. invasion in March 2003, no suicide attack had ever occurred in Iraq.

Perhaps the single greatest piece of evidence supporting Robert Pape’s theoretical framework in Iraq is the simplest: before the U.S. invasion, no suicide terror attack had

⁹⁰Bloom, 183.

ever taken place on Iraqi soil.⁹¹ This corroborates Pape's argument that suicide terrorism in Iraq is only a response to the American occupation. It is particularly significant that no suicide attacks took place during the brief invasion of Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War because, as Pape argues, only occupations elicit suicide terror campaigns. Since the U.S. did not occupy Iraq in 1991, Iraqi nationalists were not forced to resort to suicide attacks, as they are during the current occupation.

The sheer number of suicide attacks since the beginning of the occupation makes Pape's theoretical framework all the more convincing. As of 2002, Iraq had never experienced a suicide attack, but by the end of 2003, at least twenty-five incidents of suicide terrorism had taken place. The first suicide attack took place on March 22nd, 2003, several days after U.S. Special Forces entered Iraq.⁹² Although data differs on the exact number of suicide attacks that took place in the first year of the war, it seems likely that at least twenty-five such attacks were conducted in 2003.⁹³ Between February and December 2004, sixty-three suicide attacks took place in Iraq, followed by 356 in 2005. While the number of suicide attacks dropped to 236 in 2006, there were 221 attacks in the first six months of 2007. This most recent spike in attacks suggests that, while the "surge" in troop levels decreased conventional violence, it has actually increased suicide terrorism, just as Pape's framework predicted.

It is doubtful that any country has ever experienced such a dramatic change in the number of suicide attacks as Iraq did between 2002 and 2007. Obviously, the most

⁹¹ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 246.

⁹² *Ibid*, 263.

⁹³ The N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. did not begin recording attacks until February 2004. According to the M.I.P.T.-T.K.B., twenty-two suicide attacks took place in 2003, although Pape documents twenty as of December 16th, 2003 in Appendix I (p. 263). The count of twenty-five is taken from Yoram Schweitzer and Sari Goldstein, "Al-Qaeda and the Internationalization of Suicide Terrorism," Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, (Nov. 2005), 80. [Available Online] <<http://www.e-prism.org/images/memo78.pdf>>.

significant difference between the Iraq of 2002 and the Iraq of 2007 is the presence of 300,000 occupying troops.

At least in the initial stages of the occupation, suicide terrorists targeted occupying forces.

Pape's theoretical framework appears to explain the targeting of early suicide attacks against coalition forces. According to Hafez, suicide terrorists primarily targeted coalition forces in the initial months of the insurgency. However, the percentage of suicide attacks targeting occupying forces in 2003 decreased from 100% in March to 67% between April and May to 50% between July and September. The period between October and December 2003 was the first time in the insurgency that the majority of suicide attacks did not target occupying forces.⁹⁴

Nonetheless, Pape's theoretical framework, with minor adjustments, can explain the increasing number of suicide attacks targeting the Iraqi Security Forces, which rose from 0% of suicide attacks in March 2003 to 35% between October and December 2003.⁹⁵ Iraqi Security Forces could, in the eyes of Iraqi nationalists, be viewed as "traitors" and "collaborators" who are contributing to Iraq's occupied status. This perception of Iraqi Security Forces as occupiers still fits within the parameters of Pape's theoretical framework.

Furthermore, this change in targeting demographic does not necessarily mean that Iraqi nationalists have voluntarily chosen to end suicide attacks on occupying forces. After several devastating suicide attacks, U.S. forces increased security measures to prevent future casualties. These precautions included wearing greater armor, building concrete

⁹⁴ Hafez, 104. During this period only 41% of suicide attacks targeted coalition forces.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

checkpoints and roadblocks, and sending fewer patrols in dangerous hot zones. Coalition forces grew more vigilant in recognizing suicide terrorists as single drivers who speed towards checkpoints and swerve erratically in unusually low-lying cars, which are laden with explosives.⁹⁶ As coalition forces became harder targets for suicide terrorists, the poorly trained Iraqi Security Forces emerged as the most vulnerable component of the occupation.

During the early stages of the insurgency, suicide terrorists seemed to command the loyalty and support of the Iraqi people.

A further corroboration of Pape's theoretical framework is the widespread support suicide terrorists and insurgents, in general, have enjoyed in Iraq. If the suicide terrorists in Iraq are nationalists, as Pape contends, then their goals and aims should be inline with Iraqi popular opinion. Although Iraqi support for the insurgency has wavered over the past five years, on several occasions insurgents earned approval ratings well over 50%. According to a September 2006 poll conducted by the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes, 61% of Iraqis approve of attacks against coalition forces. While this poll indicated that more Sunnis supported attacks against occupying forces than Shi'a, a majority of both groups expressed approval.⁹⁷ This data would suggest that the nationalist platform espoused by suicide terrorists in Iraq is inline with the nationalist feelings of the people. Pape's framework argues that it is doubtful any group with a non-

⁹⁶ Ibid, 105.

⁹⁷ Barry Schweid, "Poll: Iraqis Back Attacks on U.S. Troops," *Washington Post*, 9 Sept. 2006, [Available Online] <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/28/AR2006092800408.html>>. For further reading on this subject, see also Sean Rayment, "Secret MoD Poll: Iraqis Support Attacks on British Troops," *The Telegraph*, 22 Nov. 2005, [Available Online] <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2005/10/23/wirq23.xml&sSheet=/news/2005/10/23/ixworld.html>>.

nationalist platform, such as Islamic fundamentalists, could command such high approval ratings amongst the Iraqi masses.

Suicide terrorists appear to have a significant effect on U.S. politics.

According to Pape's theoretical framework, a nationalist group conducts suicide terrorism in order to compel a democratic government to end its occupation or compel its constituents to elect a new administration that will. Groups employ suicide terrorism against occupying democracies because they know democratic governments are responsive to the will of the people. This is corroborated by the results of the November 2006 midterm elections, in which the Democrats overwhelmed the Republican Bush administration by winning both the Senate and the House of Representatives. According to exit polls, 57% of voters disapproved of the war in Iraq, while 58% disapproved of President Bush's job performance.⁹⁸ In this sense, the midterm elections of 2006 were, just as Pape's framework predicted, a referendum on the Iraq War. Although Bush ostentatiously declared victory on May 2nd, 2003, Americans grew tired of suicide terrorism in the ongoing insurgency. Despite new evidence that suggested intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate was wrong, President Bush remained unapologetic in continuing the occupation. In accordance with Pape's theoretical framework, the American people, who had grown frustrated with suicide attacks against their troops, elected a new legislature that favored ending the occupation of Iraq.

⁹⁸ CNN Politics: American Votes 2006, "Exit Polls: Bush, Iraq Key to Outcome," 8 Nov. 2006, [Available Online] <<http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/11/08/election.why/index.html>>.

Iraq is a historically secular country with a limited Islamist movement, which suggests that suicide terrorists are not driven by religion.

Further evidence supporting the claim that suicide terrorism in Iraq is driven by nationalism, not religious fundamentalism, is the fact that Iraq has traditionally been a secular state without a thriving extremist presence. The Ba'ath Party, which ruled Iraq from 1963 to 2003, was a secular pan-Arab socialist movement. Its doctrine encompassed Arabs of all religions, not just Muslims. In fact, the founder of the Ba'ath Party, Michel Aflaq, was an Arab Christian.⁹⁹ This is not to say that all Iraqis living under Ba'ath rule accepted or embraced Ba'athist ideology. However, it is significant that Islam played a very marginal role, if any, in the Iraqi government over the past forty years.

Saddam Hussein, who ruled Iraq between 1979 and 2003, vigorously persecuted any who challenged his authority. In 1980, out of fear that the Iranian Revolution would spread to Iraq's Shi'a population, Hussein invaded Iran to quell the spread of Shi'a fundamentalism. In Iraq, Shi'a extremists were imprisoned or executed. However, the Ba'athist government also opposed Sunni fundamentalists, who repeatedly denigrated Hussein as an "infidel" and called for his overthrow.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Hussein's government prevented the public presence of any Islamist movements in Iraq, whether Sunni or Shi'a.

The fact that Islamism did not have a strong public presence in Iraq under Saddam Hussein is not, in and of itself, proof that these movements did not exist. However, Iraq's strong secular history makes it more likely that those Iraqis who conduct suicide terrorism today do so out of nationalism, not religious fundamentalism.

⁹⁹ William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 316.

¹⁰⁰ CNN World, "Alleged bin Laden Tape a Call to Arms," 14 Feb. 2003, [Available Online] <<http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/02/11/sprj.irq.wrap/>>.

~ Evidence Contradicting Pape's Framework ~

As discussed in the previous section, evidence exists that suggests that the use of suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency has unfolded in a manner predicted by Pape's theoretical framework. However, many of the strengths of Pape's framework do not hold against more careful scrutiny and, most significantly, the framework fails to explain the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism. After all, the objective of this thesis is to determine which theory can account for the Sunni monopolization of suicide terrorism in the insurgency. The following evidence suggests that, despite superficial similarities between the insurgency and Pape's theory, this theoretical framework does not adequately explain suicide terrorism in Iraq.

Not all Iraqis are conducting suicide terrorism in the insurgency. Only Sunnis have launched major suicide attacks in Iraq.

As Chapter III makes clear, Pape's theoretical framework predicts that suicide terrorists, inspired by nationalism, will emerge from all segments of Iraqi society. This includes Iraq's Sunni, Shi'a, Kurdish, and even Christian populations. Essentially, nationalist fervor during a period of foreign-imposed military occupation should override Iraq's historical ethno-sectarian divides, just as it did during the occupation of Lebanon. Despite Lebanon's precarious use of confessionalism, or distribution of political power amongst the country's religious groups, suicide bombers joined the Hizballah campaign against American, French, and Israeli occupation from all sectors of society. According to Pape, 71% of Hizballah's suicide bombers were Maronite Christians, 21% were communists or socialists, and 8% were Islamists.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 205.

However, a similar unification of Iraqis has not taken place. The most obvious sign is that only one Shi'a suicide attack has occurred since the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. began recording data in February 2004. If suicide terrorists were motivated by pure Iraqi nationalism, one would expect the majority of terrorists to be Shi'a since they comprise 60-65% of Iraq's population.¹⁰² This absence of Shi'a nationalist suicide terrorism could be explained by the benefits the U.S. occupation brought Iraq's Shi'a community. The Shi'a suffered immensely under the authoritarian rule of Saddam Hussein, who filled his government with Sunni Ba'athists from Tikrit. The American invasion finally gave political power to Iraq's oppressed Shi'a majority. This was particularly important economically, as most of Iraq's oil wealth is concentrated in the southern Shi'a regions, which were long exploited by Hussein. While there are Shi'a nationalist groups in Iraq, they have either chosen to work within the political process or, in rare cases, have chosen conventional military resistance. They have not chosen suicide terrorism.

Although the use of suicide terrorism by Iraq's Kurdish population, which comprises approximately 15-20% of Iraqis, has been more substantial, it is still not widespread.¹⁰³ Ansar al-Islam, a Sunni Kurdish Islamist group, has conducted a few suicide attacks in Iraq. However, in late 2003, some Kurdish fighters from Ansar al-Islam formed Ansar al-Sunna with foreign Sunni Arab extremists. For this reason, Ansar al-Sunna cannot be considered a wholly Kurdish organization, like Ansar al-Islam. In February 2004, Ansar al-Sunna conducted coordinated suicide attacks in Irbil against two rival Kurdish political parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan

¹⁰² C.I.A., "Iraq," *The C.I.A. World Factbook*. [Available Online] <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>>.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Democratic Party, which killed over 100.¹⁰⁴ It is not clear how much involvement Ansar al-Islam had in this attack or even how active Ansar al-Islam remains today.

However, the majority of Iraq's Kurdish population neither participates in suicide terrorism nor supports those few Kurds who have adopted this tactic. After all, the U.S. invasion rescued the Kurds from brutal persecution under Saddam Hussein, who conducted the Anfal Campaign, a genocidal series of gas attacks against the Kurds between 1986 and 1989.¹⁰⁵ Following the 2003 invasion, the Kurds were given more political autonomy and oil wealth in northern Iraq. Their community even provided Iraq with its new president, Jalal Talabani. Without more significant participation in suicide terror campaigns by Iraq's Shi'a and Kurdish communities, Pape's theoretical framework lacks merit in the Iraq case.

Most suicide attacks now target Shi'a government officials and civilians, not U.S. troops.

According to Pape's theoretical framework, suicide terrorists in Iraq, motivated by nationalism, will undertake attacks against occupying forces until they withdraw. Following this logic, the suicide attacks should end after the withdrawal. However, while suicide attacks do continue to occur against U.S. forces today, there has been a dramatic shift in targeting from coalition forces to Shi'a collaborators and civilians. Between March 2003 and March 2004, the percentage of suicide attacks targeting Iraqi civilians increased

¹⁰⁴ M.I.P.T.-T.K.B., "Ansar al-Sunnah Army Attacked Government Target," 1 Feb. 2004, [Available Online] <<http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=17952>>.

¹⁰⁵ For further reading on the Anfal Campaign, please see the Human Rights Watch's report, "Genocide in Iraq: the Anfal Campaign," July 1993. [Available Online] <<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=qidfVsSz8YC&oi=fnd&pg=PA23&dq=anfal+campaign&ots=LXEScyuGnS&sig=YF9lJzHjnKgJ7E30-X5ifK0iKg#PPR8,M1>>.

from 0% to 50%. During this same time span, attacks on Iraqi Security Services increased from 0% to 28%, while attacks on coalition troops decreased from 100% to 22%.¹⁰⁶

Clearly, there has been a shift in targeting from coalition forces to Iraqi officials and civilians. Pape's theoretical framework did not anticipate either of these trends. While Iraqi Security Services can be denigrated as "collaborators," "traitors," or "demagogues" who contribute to the occupation for their own personal benefit, no twist of Pape's argument can account for the targeting of fellow Iraqi civilians.¹⁰⁷ According to Pape, suicide terrorists are fighting the occupation for the freedom of all Iraqis; they should not be targeting their compatriots in their campaign for independence. The terrorists' willingness to target Iraqi civilians indicates two things: 1) the suicide terrorists are not Iraqi nationalists and 2) the suicide terrorists will not stop their campaign after the withdrawal of coalition forces.

A large percentage of suicide bombers are not Iraqi, but foreign fighters.

The crux of Pape's theoretical framework is the rise of native-born Iraqi suicide bombers. While there are some Iraqi suicide bombers, the majority is foreign born. Unfortunately, without a reliable and comprehensive database of the identity of all suicide bombers, the exact percentage of non-Iraqi suicide terrorists may never be known. Neither the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. nor the M.I.P.T.-T.K.B. have sufficient data on the nationality of suicide terrorists to make a meaningful analysis of the impact of foreign fighters, although the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. does indicate that at least 250 of the nearly 1,000 suicide attacks in

¹⁰⁶ Hafez, 104.

¹⁰⁷ Please refer to p. 41-42 for practical reasons for targeting shifts from coalition troops to "soft" Iraqi Security Forces.

Iraq were conducted by Iraqis (~25%). However, according to Hafez, only seven of the first ninety-one identified suicide bombers in Iraq were native-born (7.7%).¹⁰⁸

Pape's theoretical framework tries to account for the transnational proliferation of suicide terrorism in Iraq by arguing that suicide bombers come from other "occupied" countries. As Chapter IV discussed, many critics, like Moghadam and Atran, have taken issue with Pape's liberal use of the term "occupied," which he extends to countries that have security agreements and alliances with the U.S., but do not station American troops, like Morocco. According to Pape, "Occupation means the exertion of political control over territory by an outside group."¹⁰⁹ However, even if the term "occupation" is extended to countries in which U.S. troops are not stationed, Pape's theoretical framework still cannot account for every foreign suicide terrorist in Iraq. Using Hafez's data, thirteen foreign countries produced the initial ninety-one identified suicide bombers. Of these, Saudi Arabia (48.3% of suicide bombers), Kuwait (7.7%), Jordan (3.3%), Egypt (2.2%), Morocco (1.1%), and Turkey (1.1%) fit Pape's loose definition of "occupied." However, this label cannot be forced on Italy (8.9% of suicide bombers), Syria (6.6%), Libya (3.3%), Belgium (2.2%), France (2.2%), Spain (2.2%), Britain (1.1%), Lebanon (1.1%), or Tunisia (1.1%).¹¹⁰ The appearance of suicide bombers from these unoccupied countries suggests that the status of a suicide terrorist's homeland does not necessarily dictate his or her decision to travel to Iraq. While many, though not all, of the suicide terrorists coming from European countries are of Arab-ethnicity, Pape's theoretical framework still does not adequately explain their decision to conduct suicide terrorism in Iraq.

¹⁰⁸ Hafez, 251.

¹⁰⁹ Pape, *Dying to Win*, 83.

¹¹⁰ Hafez, 251. These percentages were derived from the data Hafez provides on the first identified ninety-one suicide terrorists in Iraq.

Hafez's data, of course, only documents a fraction of the suicide attackers from the early stages of the Iraq War. As the insurgency has carried on, a greater number of foreigners have decided to sacrifice their lives. Krueger, for instance, has documented the number of foreign fighters detained in Iraq. Although his statistics are not necessarily indicative of the number of foreign suicide terrorists in Iraq, his data sheds some light on which countries provide the greatest number of foreign fighters in the insurgency. As of July 2006, the following number of insurgents in Iraq were captured by coalition forces from occupied and unoccupied countries: Egypt (78), Syria (66), Sudan (41), Saudi Arabia (32), Jordan (17), Iran (13), Palestine (12), Tunisia (10), Algeria (8), Libya (7), Turkey (6), Lebanon (3), Qatar (2), U.A.E. (2), India (2), Britain (2), Macedonia (1), Morocco (1), Somalia (1), Yemen (1), Israel (1), Indonesia (1), Kuwait (1), U.S. (1), Denmark (1), Ireland (1), and France (1).¹¹¹ The large number of fighters from such unoccupied countries as Syria and Sudan, along with the presence of fighters from Western Europe and North America, contradicts Pape's theoretical framework.

Unlike previous suicide campaigns, there is no public celebration or recognition of martyrdom in Iraq. Instead, the identities of most suicide terrorists remain unknown.

A great deal of Pape's theoretical framework is dedicated to the public celebration and commemoration of martyrs who sacrificed their lives for their communities. Whether this recognition takes the form of an annual holiday— like “Martyrs’ Day” in Lebanon or “Heroes’ Day” in Sri Lanka— or the impromptu construction of martyrdom posters in Palestine, Pape claims that suicide terrorists are celebrated because their deaths promote

¹¹¹ Alan Krueger, “The Origins of Terrorism and Foreign Fighters in Iraq,” (30 Dec. 2006): 4. [Available Online] <http://www.aeaweb.org/annual_mtg_papers/2007/0105_1430_1601.pdf>.

the common national good.¹¹² Public recognition not only elicits further support from the community, but also encourages future suicide terrorists to join the campaign.

However, this phenomenon has not emerged in Iraq. As the scant information in the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. suggests, the majority of suicide attacks in the Iraqi insurgency remain unclaimed. This pattern developed after terror groups began to target Iraqi civilians. Although many Iraqis initially supported the violence, their patience has worn thin after five years. As public opinion turned against the insurgents, widespread recognition was no longer a sought after commodity. While it is possible that terror groups do not seek public recognition for their fallen because they fear retribution against the martyrs' families, it is more likely that groups prefer to remain anonymous because their campaigns have recently lost the support of the Iraqi people. Thus, there are no posters or candlelight vigils hailing the suicide bombers as martyrs. This lack of public recognition tells academics two things about the suicide terror groups in Iraq, both of which contradict Pape's theoretical framework: 1) their agenda in Iraq is not a popular nationalist one and 2) they are having no trouble recruiting suicide bombers.

While some insurgent groups in Iraq espouse nationalist goals, others promote Ba'athist or Islamist goals. Today, it is most often these non-nationalist groups that conduct suicide terrorism.

Pape's theoretical framework is not broad enough to encompass the diversity of groups operating in the Iraqi insurgency. It is true that there are nationalist suicide terror groups in Iraq that fight coalition forces, including the Islamic Army in Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades of the Islamic and Nationalist Resistance Movement, the Mujahidin Army in Iraq, and the Salah al-Din al-Ayoubi Brigades of the Islamic Front for Iraqi

¹¹² Pape, *Dying to Win*, 31, 135.

Resistance. According to Hafez, these Sunni groups emerged from de-Ba'athification efforts between April 2003 and June 2004.¹¹³ The purges, which removed all members of the Ba'ath Party from their jobs, resulted in the upheaval of thousands of Sunnis who only joined the party to seek employment. Although these Sunni nationalists occasionally conducted suicide terror in the early insurgency, many have since joined coalition forces—something Pape's framework did not anticipate—in fighting the foreign extremists who target Iraqi civilians. This reconciliation came about over 2007 and 2008 when the Iraqi government, under U.S. pressure, implemented measures to reintegrate disenfranchised Sunnis into the new state. As a result, Sunni nationalists have not conducted suicide attacks in several years.¹¹⁴

Pape's theoretical framework overlooks the main perpetrators of suicide attacks in Iraq: ideological Ba'athists and Islamic extremists, both of whom are Sunnis. Although Ba'athists are no longer responsible for most suicide attacks (their ranks have been decimated and the survivors have either joined nationalist or Islamist groups in “marriages of convenience”), they were the first group to conduct suicide terrorism in March 2003.¹¹⁵ In the early insurgency, two Ba'athist groups, the General Command of the Mujahidin of the Armed Forces and the Mujahidin Central Command, formed their respective suicide squads, Fedayeen Saddam and Faruq Brigades, in order to promote the overthrow of the new government.¹¹⁶ Neither group espouses nationalism as Pape's theoretical framework predicted. In fact, both groups are universally despised by most Iraqis.

¹¹³ Hafez, 37.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 109.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 47. See also BBC, “Iraq Warns of More Suicide Missions,” 29 Mar. 2003, [Available Online] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2899387.stm>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 46-47.

Today, Sunni Islamists have a near monopoly on suicide terrorism in Iraq. Despite Pape's framework, these groups, which do not champion Iraqi nationalism, are comprised predominantly of foreigners. As the commander of Ansar al-Sunna explains, his group will continue to conduct suicide terrorism after the occupation: "The task [of jihad] is great and the issue momentous and concerns the fate of a nation and the aim does not end with the expulsion of the occupier and weakening him with inflicted wounds, but with the establishment of Allah's [*sic*] religion and the imposition of Muslim law to govern this Muslim land. For what use is it to shed the blood of the Muslim holy warriors to repel the occupation forces only to have a secular Iraqi or a renegade agent and lackey of the Americans?"¹¹⁷ Although there are indigenous Islamists groups operating in the insurgency, including the Victorious Sect, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaah Army, and the Conquest Army, most foreign fighters belong to the Mujahideen Brigade in Muhammad's Army and al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, which have allied with Ansar al-Islam and the Mujahideen Shura Council.¹¹⁸ Al-Tawhid wal-Jihad, the organization founded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, later adopted the name al-Qaeda in Iraq, although the organization operates independently and has limited contact with bin Laden.¹¹⁹ This union between al-Tawhid wal-Jihad and al-Qaeda, which is more symbolic than practical, has benefited the international stature of both organizations.

While there are nationalist and Islamist Shi'a insurgent groups in Iraq, none has ever been linked to a suicide attack, contrary to the predictions of Pape's framework. The one reported Shi'a suicide attack in Iraq on June 17th, 2007 was not attributed to any group,

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 72-73.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 64.

¹¹⁹ "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" is the most common name for the group in the Western media, although it is officially known as "al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers."

although the most likely suspects are Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Badr Brigade.¹²⁰ However, while these Shi'a groups have fought the Coalition Provisional Authority in the past, they have also worked with it.

~ Conclusion ~

These findings suggest that Pape's theoretical framework does not adequately explain suicide terrorism in Iraq, particularly its ethno-sectarian distribution. Although Pape's framework may have initially appeared to account for suicide attacks in the insurgency, a closer examination has uncovered cogent evidence that suggests suicide terrorists are not Iraqi nationalists motivated by foreign-imposed occupation. While the elimination of Pape's framework may seem to be of minor consequence, the refutation of this theoretical framework suggests that military withdrawal may not quell suicide terrorism in Iraq.

VI. Assessment of Huntington's Theoretical Framework in Iraq

This chapter assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Samuel Huntington's theoretical framework, as delineated in Chapter III, in explaining suicide terrorism in Iraq. While Huntington's prediction that future wars will be fought between blocs of civilizations, especially the West and Islam, was considered controversial fifteen years ago, many in the U.S. now believe he forecasted the September 11th attacks and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Huntington's work, which has enjoyed a revival since September 11th,

¹²⁰Jaysh al-Mahdi, or the Mahdi's Army, is a Shi'a militia led by Muqtada al-Sadr. The Badr Brigade is the militant wing of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, a Shi'a political party formerly known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

inspired a wave of neo-conservative theorists and politicians, who argue that the incompatibility of Islamic culture with Western values is the root of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Those who embrace Huntington's framework believe religious, cultural, and societal forces inspire suicide attacks. Unlike supporters of Pape's framework, they do not believe that rational thought processes could convince one to conduct suicide terrorism. As Senator John Warner explained, "Those who would commit suicide in their assaults on the free world are not rational and are not deterred by rational concepts."¹²¹ Many in the Bush administration share Warner's view that anti-Western Islamic fundamentalism inspires suicide terrorists in Iraq.

Clearly, Huntington's theoretical framework has found a receptive audience in neo-conservative political and academic circles. One could argue that the very premise of the Global War on Terror—that radical Islam inspires suicide terrorism—can be traced to Huntington's theory. However, no formal studies have examined this framework's ability to explain suicide terrorism in Iraq. Here, Huntington's theoretical framework is analyzed and assessed using the data available from the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. This section suggests that Huntington's framework, like Pape's, does not adequately explain suicide terrorism in the insurgency because it overlooks many of Iraq's ethno-sectarian divides. Both frameworks mistakenly predict widespread participation in suicide terrorism, albeit for different reasons. As a result, Chapter VI is slightly shorter than Chapter V because several criticisms of Huntington's framework have already been examined as shortcomings of Pape's framework, although with slight modifications. With these common theoretical

¹²¹Atran, "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism," 1534-1539. Senator Warner's quote is found in the section "Psychopathology: A Fundamental Attribution Error Science." Because this article was accessed online, no specific page number is available.

failures identified, this thesis is one step closer to constructing a new theoretical framework to explain suicide terrorism in Iraq.

~ Evidence Corroborating Huntington's Framework ~

Today, Muslims conduct suicide attacks against Westerners in Iraq. This tactic only emerged after Western forces breached the borders of Islamic civilization.

The simple and obvious fact that no suicide attack took place in Iraq before Western forces entered the country corroborates Huntington's theoretical framework. Whereas Pape's framework explains the pre-2003 absence of suicide terrorism by arguing that Iraq had never been occupied, Huntington's framework contests that Western and Islamic civilizations had never encountered such a sudden but permanent cultural clash. Within weeks, Iraq went from an independent Islamic nation to the battleground between Western and Islamic cultural forces. While these civilizations met during the first invasion of Iraq in February 1991, American troops were withdrawn in less than a month.¹²² Although Huntington's framework makes no mention of a time limit, this clash was arguably too brief for Muslims to resort to suicide terrorism.

As Huntington's framework argues, civilization is the highest, indelible form of identity, and wars between civilizations are the hardest fought. Consequently, nearly 1,000 Muslims have sacrificed their lives in suicide attacks against Western civilization since March 2003.¹²³ The fact that so many have adopted such extreme measures in this conflict suggests that the Iraqi insurgency is not merely another traditional war, but a veritable clash of civilizations.

¹²² Pape, *Dying to Win*, 246.

¹²³ Again, this is the author's own estimation based on the data available from the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. database between February 2004 and June 2007.

The insurgent groups in Iraq that are most prolific in the use of suicide terrorism espouse anti-Western, Islamist agendas and ideologies.

Today, Islamist groups who believe they are fighting the West in a clash of civilizations in Iraq essentially monopolize suicide terrorism. As discussed in Chapter V, these groups include the Victorious Sect, Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaah Army, the Conquest Army, the Mujahideen Brigade in Muhammad's Army, al-Tawhid wal-Jihad or al-Qaeda in Iraq, Ansar al-Islam, and the Mujahideen Shura Council.¹²⁴ The agendas of these groups—opposition to the imposition of western values and cultural norms in the Islamic world—reflect the clash of civilizations described in Huntington's theoretical framework. According to Hafez's analysis of a document entitled "Why Do We Fight, and Whom Do We Fight?" al-Qaeda in Iraq vies to "restore the rightly guided caliphate so that it rules according to God's law, the Sharia" and opposes "democracy because it is another form of religion opposed to the true religion of Islam."¹²⁵ The late al-Zarqawi clarified that he fights for the banner of Islam, not any form of secular nationalism: "We are not fighting for illusionary borders drawn by Sykes-Picot. Nor are we fighting to replace a Western tyrant with an Arab tyrant. Our jihad is more honorable than that. We fight to raise God's word on earth."¹²⁶ The near monopolization of suicide terrorism by Islamists corroborates Huntington's framework in Iraq, although suicide terrorism by Ba'athists and nationalists in the early years of the insurgency remains a problem this framework cannot answer.

¹²⁴ Hafez, 64. See also M.I.P.T.-T.K.B., "Groups," [Available Online] <<http://www.tkb.org/Category.jsp?catID=1>>.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 73.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 72. Please note, al-Zarqawi was speaking of the 1916 agreement between France and Britain to divide the Middle East into colonial spheres of influence following the First World War.

Muslims from other countries display kin-country syndrome by traveling to Iraq to conduct suicide attacks.

A central theme of Huntington's framework is the coalescence civilizations display, particularly through kin-country syndrome. According to this framework, once Muslims from other parts of the Islamic world see that Iraqis are being attacked by Western civilization, they will altruistically come to their rescue. As the clash of civilizations in Iraq escalates, these non-Iraqi members of Islamic civilization will, in turn, resort to suicide terrorism against Western forces. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hafez's initial investigation of the first ninety-one identified suicide bombers in Iraq found that 92.3% were foreign-born, with the greatest percentages coming from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, Jordan, Libya, and Egypt.¹²⁷ Despite being divided by nationality, Huntington's framework suggests that these non-Iraqi Muslims banded together with their "Iraqi brothers" in response to this clash of civilizations.¹²⁸ This phenomenon of non-Iraqi Muslims conducting suicide terrorism in Iraq seemingly confirms the concept of kin-country syndrome and supports the claim that Huntington's framework explains suicide attacks in the insurgency.

In the early insurgency, Muslims in Iraq, as members of Islamic civilization, uniformly supported suicide terrorism against Western civilization.

Although public opinion has since shifted, during the initial years of the insurgency Muslims in Iraq unified around the cause of suicide terrorists, who targeted the forces of Western civilization. According to the University of Maryland's Program on International

¹²⁷ Ibid, 251.

¹²⁸ For an example of bin Laden's use of the term "Iraqi brothers," please see BBC World Edition, "Bin Laden Tape: Text," 12 Feb. 2003, [Available Online] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2751019.stm>.

Policy Attitudes' September 2006 poll, 61% of Iraqis, including a majority of both Sunni and Shi'a, approve of attacks against coalition forces.¹²⁹ As discussed earlier, Huntington's theoretical framework argues that civilizations are the highest form of identity and, consequently, supersede any sub-level identity (Sunni, Shi'a, Kurd, etc.). Thus, Iraqis, as members of Islamic civilization, should uniformly support suicide attacks against Western civilization. This would explain the high approval ratings suicide terrorists commanded amongst Iraq's diverse population in the early years of the insurgency.

Similarly, an April 2007 poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes found that 91% of Egyptians and 68% of Moroccans support attacks against U.S. troops in Iraq.¹³⁰ In addition, 92% of Egyptians, 78% of Moroccans, and 73% of both Pakistanis and Indonesians believe that the war in Iraq is the U.S.' attempt to undermine and divide the Islamic world.¹³¹ This popular support for suicide terrorism, which suggests that other members of the Islamic world believe the Iraq War to be a clash of civilizations, reaffirms Huntington's theoretical framework.

~ Evidence Contradicting Huntington's Framework ~

As discussed in the previous section, there is evidence that suggests Huntington's framework successfully explains suicide terrorism in Iraq. However, in this section, many of Huntington's claims are subjected to closer scrutiny, particularly their ability to account for the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide attacks. The results imply that, while

¹²⁹ Schweid, "Poll: Iraqis Back Attacks on U.S. Troops," *Washington Post*, 9 Sept. 2006, [Available Online] <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/28/AR2006092800408.html>>.

¹³⁰ Steven Kull, "Muslim Public Opinion on US Policy, Attacks on Civilians, and al Qaeda," *World Public Opinion*, 24 April 2007, 7. [Available Online] <http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/apr07/START_Apr07_rpt.pdf>.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 5.

Huntington's framework can superficially explain extreme violence between Western and Islamic forces, it cannot account for the Sunni monopolization of suicide terrorism in Iraq. This framework's underestimation of Iraq's ethno-sectarian divides surprisingly shares many of the same shortcomings as Pape's framework.

Not all Muslims conduct suicide terrorism in Iraq.

As the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. data as of June 2007 shows, the Shi'a are only responsible for one of the 284 identified suicide attacks in Iraq. However, the Shi'a comprise 60-65% of Iraq's population.¹³² According to Huntington's framework, there should be a proportional number of Shi'a suicide attacks targeting Western civilization because Shi'a represent the majority of the Iraqi population. Yet the overwhelming majority of suicide bombings have been carried out by Sunni Arabs, although a few can be traced to Sunni Kurds. This directly contradicts Huntington's framework in Iraq because he theorizes Islamic civilization as a unified bloc without schisms. Over the past five years, the insurgency has highlighted the great ethno-sectarian divisions within Iraqi society. Both Pape's framework and Huntington's framework make the mistake of treating Iraqis as one coherent people, although Huntington argues that Muslims in Iraq are united by civilization, culture, and religion, whereas Pape contests that they are united by secular nationalism. As a result, neither theory accurately accounts for the Sunni monopolization of suicide terrorism.

¹³² C.I.A., "Iraq," *The C.I.A. World Factbook*. [Available Online] <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>>.

The Shi'a, for historical and cultural reasons, are more inclined to martyrdom than the Sunnis.

According to Huntington's framework, Muslims conduct suicide terrorism in Iraq against Western civilization because of their unique identity, culture, and religion, which emphasizes martyrdom. However, as the previous section discussed, only Sunnis have adopted this tactic. Logically, if any group in Iraq were to actively seek out martyrdom it would be the Shi'a, who for religious and cultural reasons have developed a "martyrdom complex" fully independent of Sunni Islam. Shi'a Islam formed after a dispute over Muhammad's succession in 632 A.D. The "Shi'at 'Ali," literally the "Party of 'Ali," believed that Muhammad had promised 'Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, leadership of the umma, or Muslim community. However, the majority of Muslims supported Muhammad's confidant, Abu Bakr. They became known as Sunnis, literally "followers of the Prophet's way." Upon Abu Bakr's death in 634 A.D., 'Ali was again passed over in favor of 'Umar, another close companion of Muhammad's. 'Ali did not assume leadership until the death of the third caliph, Uthman, in 656 A.D. However, 'Ali's throne was challenged by Mu'awiyya, a rival leader in Syria who was not one of Muhammad's original followers. After years of civil war, 'Ali was assassinated in 661 A.D. and Mu'awiyya ascended to the caliphate.¹³³ 'Ali's followers never forgot his martyrdom.

The Shi'a continued to fight the Sunnis for the rightful restoration of the caliphate under the leadership of Hasan and Husayn, 'Ali's sons and Muhammad's grandsons. While Hasan abdicated his claim to the throne, Husayn led a rebellion against the caliph Yazid, the son of Mu'awiyya. In 680 A.D. their forces met at the Battle of Karbala, in

¹³³ Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East* (New York: Penguin, 1991) 14-15.

which Husayn was martyred.¹³⁴ Fearing further persecution by Sunnis, the Shi'a hid the descendants of Husayn, from this point forward known as imams, for centuries until the twelfth imam disappeared into a state of occultation. Today, the Shi'a call the twelfth imam the Mahdi, or "guided one," and expect him to return again to restore righteousness to the umma.

While sects within Shi'a Islam have developed over the centuries, the Shi'a of Iraq, predominantly members of the Twelver branch, commemorate Husayn's martyrdom during Ashura, a holiday in which they perform public self-flagellation. One would assume the Shi'a's close association with martyrdom, a feature Sunni Islam does not share, would incline them to suicide terrorism.¹³⁵ This unique historical memory has pushed the Shi'a to martyrdom during other conflicts, such as Hizballah's resistance in Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq War. Despite the tradition of *bassamat al-farah*, the "smile of joy" Shi'a Muslims displays before achieving martyrdom, Iraq's Shi'a majority has only conducted one suicide attack.¹³⁶ To be clear, there is no shortage of Shi'a Islamists in Iraq, as Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Badr Brigade exemplify. However, these groups have not joined their Sunni Islamist counterparts in conducting suicide terror campaigns in Iraq. This contradiction fundamentally undermines the Huntington framework's ability to explain suicide terrorism in Iraq.

Today, suicide terrorists in Iraq predominantly target other members of Islamic civilization, not Western forces.

In Huntington's theoretical framework, there is no room for violence between members of Islamic civilization. However, as the previous chapter discussed, there has

¹³⁴ Cleveland, 35.

¹³⁵ Gambetta, 287.

¹³⁶ Hoffman, "The Logic of Suicide Terrorism," 5.

been a distinct shift in the targeting of suicide attacks from Western coalition troops to Iraqi Security Forces and Shi'a civilians. For example, in March 2003, 100% of suicide attacks targeted coalition forces, but by March 2006, only 8% of suicide attacks targeted coalition forces. This same month, 53% of attacks targeted Iraqi Security Forces and 39% targeted Iraqi civilians.¹³⁷ This data proves that Sunni Muslims have begun to consistently target Shi'a government officials and civilians. Despite their Sunni orientation, Kurds have also been the victims of horrific suicide attacks in northern Iraq.

Suicide terrorism is the ultimate indication of the severity of a conflict and, if Muslims were united in a clash of civilizations against Western forces, attacks would target members of Western civilization, not members of Islamic civilization. This sub-civilization conflict, which has trumped any clash of civilizations in Iraq, suggests that Huntington's framework does not adequately explain suicide terrorism.

Only neighboring Sunnis, not Shi'a, have displayed "kin-country syndrome" in Iraq.

While Muslims pour into Iraq from neighboring regions to become suicide terrorists, they are all Sunnis, not Shi'a.¹³⁸ To date, there has been no record of a foreign Shi'a fighter participating in a suicide attack in Iraq. According to Krueger's data, most foreign fighters come from Sunni countries, like Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan.¹³⁹ Hafez's study suggests that the Muslim countries that produce the most suicide bombers in Iraq are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Syria, Libya, Jordan, and Egypt.¹⁴⁰ This list of

¹³⁷ Hafez, 104.

¹³⁸ According to Hafez's data, the only suicide bomber to hail from a country with a sizeable Shi'a population was one Muhammad Khalifa of Lebanon. However, the name "Khalifa," which means "caliph," suggests he was Sunni (the caliphate, after all, is a concept only recognized in Sunni Islam).

¹³⁹ Krueger, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Hafez, 251.

countries, which are all predominantly Sunni, is particularly surprising when one considers Iraq's geography. Iraq shares no border with Egypt or Sudan and only borders Jordan for 181 kilometers, Syria for 605 kilometers, and Saudi Arabia for 814 kilometers.¹⁴¹

Following the logic of kin-country syndrome, the closer a Muslim country is in proximity to Iraq, the more suicide terrorists it should contribute. However, Iran, which shares the longest border with Iraq (1,458 kilometers), has not produced a single suicide terrorist in Iraq.¹⁴² Interestingly enough, Iran also happens to be the only Shi'a nation bordering Iraq. Of all Iraq's Muslim neighbors, Iran should be most inclined to produce suicide bombers because of the country's deep history of martyrdom. During the Iran-Iraq War, Iran enlisted thousands of young boys to throw themselves, unarmed, in front of Iraqi tanks and guns. On two occasions in the summer of 1982, Iran lost one hundred thousand boys in these human wave suicide attacks.¹⁴³ Due to their proximity to the conflict and their history of martyrdom, Iranians, more than any other Muslims, should be conducting suicide terrorism in Iraq. This would naturally follow the logic of Huntington's framework and kin-country syndrome. Yet they are not.

While many suicide terror groups in Iraq espouse radical Islamism, secular groups have also conducted suicide terrorism.

Although Islamic extremists conduct most of today's suicide attacks, several secular groups employed this tactic during the early years of the Iraqi insurgency. Sunni nationalist groups, like the Islamic Army in Iraq, the 1920 Revolution Brigades of the Islamic and Nationalist Resistance Movement, the Mujahidin Army in Iraq, and the Salah

¹⁴¹ C.I.A., "Iraq," *The C.I.A. World Factbook*. [Available Online] <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Gambetta, 297.

al-Din al-Ayoubi Brigades of the Islamic Front for Iraqi Resistance all participated in suicide operations in the beginning of the insurgency.¹⁴⁴ Ideological Ba'athist groups, which espouse the secular pan-Arab socialism of Michel Aflaq, an Arab Christian, conducted an even greater number of suicide attacks in the early years of the insurgency. These former supporters of Saddam Hussein's regime primarily belong to the General Command of the Mujahidin of the Armed Forces or the Mujahidin Central Command, both of which employ their own suicide brigades.¹⁴⁵ Although suicide terrorism has recently become the domain of Islamic extremists, Huntington's framework fails to account for the suicide campaigns of secular groups in the early insurgency.

~ Conclusion ~

These findings suggest that Huntington's theoretical framework does not adequately explain suicide terrorism in Iraq. While this framework initially appeared to account for suicide campaigns by Islamic civilization against Westerners in Iraq, closer inspection reveals that Huntington's framework overlooks the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Although Huntington's framework is the antithesis of Pape's framework—the former attributes suicide terrorism to Islamic culture and religion, while the latter cites secular nationalism—both frameworks mistakenly ignore ethno-sectarian differences within the insurgency. An accurate theory of suicide terrorism must not treat Iraqis or Muslims as a monolithic bloc, but instead account for the societal divides that determine the distribution of suicide terrorism.

¹⁴⁴ Hafez, 37-38.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 46-47.

VII. A New Theory of Suicide Terrorism

As the previous two chapters suggest, neither Huntington's framework nor Pape's framework adequately explains suicide terrorism in the Iraq case. Despite being diametrically opposed, both of these frameworks anticipated widespread Iraqi participation in suicide terrorism, albeit for different reasons. Pape's theoretical framework overestimates the existence of shared Iraqi nationalism amongst suicide bombers, while Huntington's framework overemphasizes their membership in a common civilization. To sufficiently explain suicide terrorism in Iraq, a theoretical framework must take into account the diverse composition of groups operating in the insurgency.

As discussed in Chapter IV, Mohammed Hafez's *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* is the first study to closely analyze the Sunni groups conducting suicide terrorism in the Iraqi insurgency. Hafez argues that suicide terrorists in Iraq pursue one of two separate goals: (1) the greater reintegration of Sunnis into the current government and (2) the collapse of the current government. Sunni nationalist groups, who pursue goal (1), are dismayed by the exclusion of Sunnis from the current Shi'a-controlled government.¹⁴⁶ These Sunnis, who are not necessarily against power-sharing in Iraq, became frustrated after the U.S. dismissed Iraq's military and barred former government employees from regaining administrative positions. Their resentment over political exclusion is amplified by their loss of entitlement to Iraq's tremendous oil wealth, which is concentrated in the Shi'a southern regions and Kurdish northern regions.

These Sunni groups have a number of specific demands, including the withdrawal of coalition forces, the rehiring of former government employees, and the reenlistment of

¹⁴⁶ Hafez, 35-36.

former members of the military. While these Sunnis concede to sharing power with the Shi'a and Kurds, they demand more political power for Sunnis and more favorable oil wealth distribution to Sunni areas. Until very recently, the U.S. and the Shi'a were unwilling to acquiesce to these demands.¹⁴⁷ Thus, Hafez argues that these Sunni groups turned to insurgency and occasional suicide terror. However, Hafez believes that their willingness to work with the new state, under certain conditions, stands in sharp contrast with Sunni groups pursuing goal (2), which includes former ideological members of the Ba'ath Party and Islamic extremists. Both of these groups vie to topple the Shi'a government and establish their own rule in either a Ba'athist or an Islamic state.¹⁴⁸ As a result, Sunni groups pursuing goal (2) rely heavily on suicide bombings.

Although Hafez's *Suicide Bombers in Iraq* provides the first comprehensive examination of this tactic in Iraq, it stops short of offering an overarching theory of suicide terrorism that could be applied to other cases. Hafez successfully identifies the goals of each group in the Iraqi insurgency and concludes that those pursuing goal (2) use suicide terrorism much more extensively than those pursuing goal (1).¹⁴⁹ Yet Hafez does not explicitly explain why these Sunni groups are unable to use conventional terrorism to pursue their respective goals. More importantly, he does not address the potential for Shi'a suicide terrorism in the insurgency. As the previous chapters have shown, a successful framework must be able to explain why some groups have adopted suicide terrorism, while others have not. Essentially, Hafez has provided the "end" these groups pursue, but he does not explain why suicide terrorism has become the chosen "means." However, using

¹⁴⁷ Mohammed Hafez, "Suicide Bombing in Iraq: A Preliminary Assessment of the Quantitative Data and Documentary Evidence," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* vol. 29, no. 8 (Dec. 2006): 594.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 595.

¹⁴⁹ Hafez, *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, 36.

Hafez's analysis as a starting point, there is room for scholars to explain what specific factors have led these groups to embrace suicide terrorism to pursue their goals in lieu of more conventional means.

~ The Birth of a New Theory of Suicide Terrorism ~

A new theoretical framework of suicide terrorism in Iraq must account for the factors that have driven these specific Sunni groups to suicide terrorism, but not other ethno-sectarian groups. To identify these factors, one must find a commonality between each group that has conducted suicide terrorism in the insurgency. This thesis has argued that neither secular nationalism nor Islamic identity is a plausible feature shared by all suicide terrorists in Iraq. Instead, it seems likely that there are two characteristics separating those groups in Iraq which have adopted suicide terrorism and those groups which have not: 1) political power and 2) military power. In this thesis, "political power" is defined as the ability of a certain ethno-sectarian group in Iraq to pursue its goals, as identified by Hafez, using legitimate political processes in the new state. This would include creating political parties that could successfully compete in free and fair elections. Similarly, "military power" is defined as the ability of an ethno-sectarian group to pursue its goals using conventional methods of warfare. In other words, whether or not the group has the manpower and arsenal to so successfully challenge American and Iraqi forces on the battlefield that they are compelled to meet the group's demands.

This new theory argues that ethno-sectarian groups that meet two criteria —the inability to realize goals using either the current political process or conventional military means—are most likely to resort to suicide terrorism. This theory contends that ethno-sectarian groups are pragmatic, opportunistic, and, above all else, strictly goal-oriented.

For instance, if a group—in any part of the world, not just Iraq—is capable of winning a majority of seats or building a strong coalition in parliament through democratic elections, it will have little reason to conduct suicide terrorism. Since the group’s goals are being realized through the established political process, there is no reason to needlessly sacrifice the lives of its members. For example, in the 1990’s Hizballah became a major party in Lebanese politics and abandoned widespread suicide campaigns. Sayyed Nasrallah, Hizballah’s leader, explains that suicide operations are only used if they pragmatically advance Hizballah’s goals: “We never carry out indiscriminate martyrdom operations...if the operation is not productive and effective and [doesn’t] cause the enemy to bleed, we cannot legally, religiously, morally or humanely justify giving an explosive device to our brothers and telling them, ‘Go and become martyrs, no matter how!’”¹⁵⁰ Therefore, if a group has the political means to realize its goals, it is unlikely to conduct suicide terror campaigns.

Similarly, if an ethno-sectarian group has the military capabilities to challenge the government and its armed forces then it, too, is unlikely to embrace suicide terrorism. History, of course, has shown that suicide terrorism is a tool of the weak in asymmetric warfare. In nearly every instance in which suicide terrorism does appear, the weaker actor employs it against the stronger actor. Countless terror leaders have admitted that suicide terrorism has effectively bolstered their inferior military forces. Dr. Ramadan Shalah, the Palestinian secretary-general of the Islamic Jihad, explains: “We have nothing with which to repel killing and thuggery against us except the weapon of martyrdom. It is easy and

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas Noe, ed. *Voice of Hezbollah: the Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (New York: Verson, 2007), 157.

costs us only our lives...human bombs cannot be defeated, not even by nuclear bombs.”¹⁵¹ Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Egyptian spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, further stresses the military pragmatism of suicide terrorism in asymmetric warfare: “If the Iraqis can confront the enemy, there’s no need for these acts of martyrdom. If they don’t have the means, acts of martyrdom are allowed.”¹⁵² Groups that can fight for their goals using conventional military means will do so; those that cannot, however, may turn to suicide terrorism.

Therefore, this new theory argues that the combination of these two factors—the lack of political and military power—can lead ethno-sectarian groups to suicide terrorism. Today, this combination is being played out amongst Iraq’s Sunni groups with deadly results. Whereas Pape’s framework explains suicide terrorism through secular nationalism and Huntington’s framework explains it through a cultural and religious clash with the West, this new framework argues that Sunnis conduct suicide terrorism because they lack both access to the political process and conventional military advantage. Since this theory takes into account the unique ethno-sectarian structure of Iraq, it is better able to explain why certain groups have turned to suicide terrorism while others have not.

~ The New Theoretical Framework in Iraq ~

The invasion of Iraq brought to power a new state, dominated by Shi’a and Kurdish interests, which left many Sunni Arabs politically disenfranchised. Despite their minority status, Sunni Arabs controlled Iraq during Saddam Hussein’s reign in a manner in which even non-Ba’athist Sunni Arabs fared well. The U.S. invasion returned power to the Shi’a majority, who were brutally oppressed by Hussein. The invasion also empowered the

¹⁵¹ Bloom, 90.

¹⁵² Gambetta, 296.

Kurds of northern Iraq, steadfast allies of the U.S., who were frequently the targets of violent government campaigns. The U.S. invasion ensured that the Sunni Arabs, who reside in the oil-dry central regions of Iraq, would no longer monopolize Iraq's oil wealth. Iraq's resources would, instead, be distributed to the Shi'a and Kurds, who live in the oil-rich southern and northern regions of the country, respectively.

This new theoretical framework analyzes the following major ethno-sectarian groups:

Table 1.

Group:	Composition:
Sunni Arab Nationalists	Moderate Iraqi Sunnis who seek greater rights from the new Shi'a and Kurd dominated government.
Sunni Arab Islamists	Native and foreign extremists who seek to overthrow the new government and establish a Sunni Islamic state.
Sunni Arab Ba'athists	Former supporters of Saddam Hussein's government, who seek to overthrow the new government and establish a Ba'athist state.
Sunni Kurdish Nationalists	Moderate Kurds who support the new government.
Sunni Kurdish Islamists	Kurdish extremists who, in partnership with Sunni Arab Islamists, seek to overthrow the new government and establish a Sunni Islamic state.
Shi'a Arab Nationalists	Moderate Shi'a who support the new government.
Shi'a Arab Islamists	Extremist Shi'a who, in partnership with Iran, support the new government but work to transform it into a Shi'a Islamic state.

Chart 1.

		Military Power	
		No	Yes
Political Power	No	1 Sunni Arab Nationalists Sunni Arab Islamists Sunni Arab Ba’athists Sunni Kurdish Islamists	2
	Yes	4 Sunni Kurdish Nationalists	3 Shi’a Arab Nationalists Shi’a Arab Islamists

As **Chart 1** shows, Iraq’s ethno-sectarian groups could be classified into four categories following the 2003 invasion, depending on their political and military power. Groups in cell (1) lacked both political power and conventional military capability. Sunni Arab nationalists, who were excluded from the new Shi’a and Kurd-dominated government, lost both political and economic entitlement. Although they espoused fairly moderate positions—more social, political, and economic power for Sunnis in the new state—Sunni Arab nationalists were essentially excluded from the state-building process while their interests were overlooked. Their minority status ensured that they could not win a conventional military battle against the U.S. Sunni Arab Ba’athists, Sunni Arab Islamists, and Sunni Kurdish Islamists had absolutely no opportunity to pursue their goals through the political process because each of these groups advocated the violent overthrow

of the new government. They did not have the opportunity to create political parties or hold seats in parliament. Additionally, as minority groups, they did not have the power to wage conventional war against the U.S. As a result, groups in cell (1), which lacked the ability to pursue their goals either through the political process or conventional armed conflict, turned to suicide terrorism in 2003. This follows the logic of the new theory proposed in the previous section.

In 2003, no ethno-sectarian groups fit in cell (2), which stipulates the possession of military capability but lack of political access. However, two groups—Shi'a Arab nationalists and Shi'a Arab Islamists—fit the parameters of cell (3), because they possessed both political capability and conventional military supremacy. The Shi'a Arab nationalists, moderates who suffered under Saddam Hussein, enjoyed both political and military power as the majority in Iraq's new democracy. They even provided Iraq with its new prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki. While the Shi'a Arab Islamists call for an Islamic state, similar to Iran, they have been empowered with both political access in parliament and military supremacy against the Sunni Arab Islamists, their chief rivals. Neither of these groups has conducted suicide terrorism in the insurgency, although factions of the Shi'a Arab Islamists, such as Jaysh al-Mahdi and the Badr Brigade, have periodically resorted to conventional violence. Similarly, the only group in cell (4), Sunni Kurdish nationalists, has not turned to suicide terrorism. These moderate Kurds, who were violently persecuted by Hussein regime, gained political power after the 2003 invasion, despite lacking conventional military supremacy. The new president of Iraq, Jalal Talabani, is even a Kurd. Thus, they had no reason to turn to suicide terrorism.

As **Chart 1** makes clear, only groups in cell (1), which lack the ability to achieve their goals through political or conventional military means, have conducted suicide terrorism. According to this new theoretical framework, insurgents do not turn to suicide terrorism because of secular nationalism or religious and cultural forces; instead, suicide terrorists adopt the tactic out of necessity when they cannot achieve their goals using the current political process or conventional military tactics. Despite the diversity of groups in cell (1), they all share a common inability to pursue their agendas using these two means. This framework explains what Huntington and Pape could not—the glaring anomaly in the ethno-sectarian divide of suicide terrorism in Iraq. While Shi'a of all ideologies can use the current Iraqi political framework or conventional military means to advance their interests, many Sunni Arabs and some Sunni Kurds cannot.

~ The Future of Suicide Terrorism in Iraq ~

According to this new theoretical framework, there is reason to believe that there will be a demographic change in the ethno-sectarian distribution of suicide terrorism in the insurgency. Due to the changing nature of U.S. policy in Iraq, **Chart 1** no longer accurately reflects the distribution of political and military power in the new state. According to the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. database, as of June 2007, there has only been one recorded Shi'a suicide bombing in Iraq. However, throughout 2007 and early 2008, the U.S. has pursued policies which may make some Shi'a groups in Iraq more likely to embrace suicide terrorism.

For instance, within the past year, the U.S. military has become increasingly concerned with the growing regional influence of Iran. Iran's seizure of fifteen British sailors in Shatt al-Arab, its detention of several Iranian-American academics, the

disappearance of a former F.B.I. agent in Iran, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's alleged efforts to develop a nuclear program have increased tensions between the Bush administration and the current Iranian regime. As the U.S. occupation has continued, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's Quds Force has begun to arm and train Shi'a Arab Islamist militias in Iraq, including al-Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi. Whereas in 2003 the U.S. was only concerned with neutralizing Sunni Arabs in Iraq, it must now combat Iran's growing reach within the Iraqi state. In response, the U.S. military has begun to crackdown on Shi'a Arab Islamist groups suspected of having ties to Iran. These groups, which occupy cell (3) in **Chart 1**, now find their political power in the Iraqi government coming under increased scrutiny. As a result, they now occupy cell (2) in **Chart 2**. Despite their status as an ethno-sectarian majority, these Shi'a Arab Islamists can no longer rely on their ability to use the current political process to achieve their goals. Their only remaining advantage is their conventional military capability.

Chart 2.

Power

Yes

No

Political Power

Yes

1 Sunni Arab Islamists Sunni Kurdish Islamists	2 Shi'a Arab Islamists
4 Sunni Kurdish Nationalists Sunni Arab Nationalists	3 Shi'a Arab Nationalists

Military

No

The U.S., in addition to distancing itself from certain Shi'a Arab factions, has made a concerted effort to address the issues of Sunni Arab nationalists and to reincorporate them into the new Iraqi state.¹⁵³ This is because Sunni Arab Islamists, many of whom are foreign fighters, have become the main perpetrators of suicide terrorism in Iraq. The U.S.

¹⁵³ Anne Garrels, "Iraq to Restore Former Baath Party Followers," *N.P.R.*, 12 Jan. 2008. [Available Online] <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18049763>>.

has fostered alliances with moderate Sunni Arab nationalists in order to erode support for the Sunni Arab Islamists. As a result, Sunni Arab nationalists, despite lacking conventional military advantage, have gained the ability to pursue their agenda through the current political process. Reversals of de-Ba'athification acts in 2008 suggest that the goals of Sunni Arab nationalists are finally being realized. These Sunni Arab nationalists have thus moved to cell (4). This explains their use of suicide terrorism during the early years of the insurgency, when they occupied cell (1), and their recent abandonment of the tactic after moving to cell (4). Sunni Arab Islamists and Sunni Kurdish Islamists who remain in cell (1), however, continue to employ suicide terrorism. The Sunni Arab Ba'athists of **Chart 1** are not represented on **Chart 2** because those who survived the past five years of insurgency have either joined the Sunni Arab Islamists or Sunni Arab nationalists in “marriages of convenience.”¹⁵⁴

Shi'a Arab Islamists will most likely interpret recent changes in U.S. policy—crackdowns on Shi'a militias and reconciliation with Sunni nationalists—as the U.S.' turning its back on the Shi'a. The true question will be whether or not Shi'a Arab Islamists, who now occupy cell (2), will resort to suicide terrorism. Until now, no group has ever occupied cell (2), so there is no precedent for the events that may unfold. Experiences with groups in cell (1) suggest that groups that lack both political and military means to achieve their goals turn to suicide terrorism. Whether this rule will still apply to a group that has lost its political means, but retains conventional military capability, remains uncertain. However, it is significant that the first Shi'a suicide attack of the insurgency occurred on June 17th, 2007 in one of the last recorded incidents in the N.C.T.C.-W.I.T.S. database. While this bombing went unmentioned by most media

¹⁵⁴ Hafez, 108.

sources, government officials, and academics, it is possible that this Shi'a suicide attack will be the first of many to come.

This new theoretical framework makes it clear that, should Shi'a Arab Islamists choose to pursue their goals using suicide terrorism, they will be following the same logic as Sunni Arab groups who have chosen this tactic in the past. When ethno-sectarian groups cannot achieve their goals using the current political process or conventional military means, they resort to suicide terrorism. However, since Shi'a Arab Islamists retain strength in numbers, as opposed to their Sunni Arab Islamist adversaries, their capability to wage conventional military attacks remains unchecked. Nonetheless, if the June 17th attack is in fact the opening phase of a Shi'a suicide campaign, the Shi'a have chosen suicide terrorism for the following two reasons: 1) to dissuade the U.S. from turning on the Shi'a because of Iranian influence and 2) to convince Sunnis to cease their attacks against the Shi'a. Such a campaign could, in all likelihood, herald the appearance of Iranian suicide terrorists in Iraq.

VIII. Conclusion

Although suicide terrorism has existed since the first century A.D., academics still cannot agree on a unifying theory to explain this tactic. Suicide terrorism has dramatically increased in popularity over the past twenty-five years, particularly since Hizballah expelled occupying American, French, and Israeli occupying forces from Lebanon in the early 1980's. Suicide terror campaigns soon appeared in Sri Lanka, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Chechnya, Kashmir, and Afghanistan. However, in spite of this long history, suicide terrorism in Iraq remains a distinctively different phenomenon. For one,

the number of suicide attacks in Iraq has outnumbered all other worldwide suicide attacks combined. The data on suicide terrorism coming out of Iraq is, to say the least, unprecedented. Yet, despite nearly a thousand suicide attacks having taken place in Iraq, only one of the 284 identified attacks has been attributed to Iraq's Shi'a majority. All of the others are blamed on Sunnis.

In seeking to explain suicide terrorism in Iraq, scholars and politicians alike have adopted two opposing theoretical frameworks, both of which were presented in Chapter III. The first framework, embraced by Robert Pape, argues that suicide terrorism in Iraq is a secular nationalist response to the U.S. occupation. In this sense, suicide terrorism has very little to do with Islamic culture or values. According to this framework, Iraqis have risen together in a unified, nationalist response to expel the occupying forces through suicide campaigns. Because the U.S. is a democracy, Iraqi nationalists conduct suicide terrorism in order to convince the Bush administration to abandon the occupation or convince the American public to elect a new government that will.

The second framework, embraced by Samuel Huntington, argues that suicide terrorism is the ultimate response to a clash of civilizations between the Western and Islamic worlds unfolding in Iraq. This framework explains that civilization is the highest form of identity and, unlike wars of the past, clashes of civilization will be particularly violent and bloody. Thus, suicide terrorism, the most extreme tactic imaginable, perfectly exemplifies the intensity characteristic of a clash of civilizations. According to this framework, the incompatibility of Western and Islamic culture and values has driven insurgents in Iraq to suicide terrorism. Huntington's framework, like Pape's framework, anticipates the unified uprising of Muslims in Iraq against Western forces.

As delineated in Chapter V, there is much evidence to corroborate Pape's framework in Iraq. Before the 2003 invasion, there had never been a suicide attack in Iraq. However, once U.S. forces entered Iraq and initiated the occupation, they became frequent targets of suicide terror. Because Iraq is a historically secular country and suicide attacks initially enjoyed public support, it seemed unlikely that these suicide attacks were conducted by fringe Islamists. As President Bush's approval ratings fell and the Democratic Party won both houses of Congress in the 2006 midterm elections, it appeared that suicide terrorists had so worn down the American public that they would elect a government that advocated withdrawal.

However, Chapter V ultimately suggested that Pape's framework does not adequately explain suicide terrorism in Iraq. For one, suicide attacks in the insurgency are not conducted uniformly by all Iraqis. Only Sunnis, the sectarian minority in Iraq, have carried out suicide terror campaigns. In addition, suicide attacks most frequently target the Iraqi Security Forces and Shi'a civilians, not occupying coalition forces. Furthermore, Pape's framework fails to explain why the majority of suicide terrorists in Iraq are foreign fighters. Unlike past suicide terror campaigns, there is no public recognition or celebration of martyrdom for these bombers. Instead, most groups are ashamed of taking responsibility for slaughtering Shi'a civilians. Lastly, Pape's framework cannot explain why the most prolific suicide terror groups are Ba'athists and Islamists, neither of which espouses Iraqi nationalism.

Chapter VI presented evidence supporting Huntington's framework in Iraq. As this framework anticipated, no suicide attacks ever took place in Iraq before Western and Islamic civilizations met in a sharp and lasting clash in 2003. Huntington's framework is

further corroborated by the fact that Islamists are the most prolific users of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Their attacks, at least in the early years of the insurgency, enjoyed wide support amongst Iraq's Muslim population, including both Sunnis and Shi'a. Furthermore, Huntington's framework predicted the flood of foreign fighters entering Iraq to conduct suicide terrorism through the concept of kin-country syndrome.

However, like Pape's framework, Huntington's framework failed to fully account for suicide terrorism in Iraq. This thesis concluded that the case for Huntington's framework was weakened by the fact that only Sunnis had conducted suicide terrorism, even though, due to their cultural and historical memory, Shi'a are more inclined to seek martyrdom. Yet every foreign suicide bomber, who supposedly acted in accordance with Huntington's kin-country syndrome, came from a Sunni country, despite the fact that Iran shares the largest border with Iraq. Furthermore, the targets of these Sunni suicide attacks are most frequently Shi'a civilians, not Western forces. Although Islamist groups do conduct the most suicide terror attacks, Huntington's framework still cannot account for the secular Ba'athist or Sunni nationalist suicide attacks in the early years of the insurgency.

Despite being fundamental opposites, both of these frameworks mistakenly overlook the deep ethno-sectarian divisions within the Iraqi insurgency. With these weaknesses identified, Chapter VII proposed a new theoretical framework that could more accurately explain suicide terrorism in Iraq. This framework, building on the work of Mohammed Hafez, argues that groups that employ suicide terrorism in Iraq share two traits: 1) the inability to pursue their goals using the current political process and 2) the inability to pursue their goals using conventional military means. Following the 2003

invasion, groups lacking both the political and the military means to achieve their goals, including Sunni Arab nationalists, Sunni Arab Islamists, Sunni Arab Ba'athists, and Sunni Kurdish Islamists, turned to suicide terrorism.

In the last section of Chapter VII, this new theoretical framework was used to make predictions about the future of suicide terrorism in Iraq. Over the past two years, U.S. policy in Iraq has shifted on two distinct fronts. First, as Iran's influence has grown within Iraq, the U.S. has begun to crackdown on Shi'a Arab Islamists. Consequently, many Shi'a Islamist groups now find it difficult to pursue their goals through the current political process in Iraq. Concurrently, the U.S. has provided greater political power to Sunni Arab nationalists, whom it hopes to enlist in the war against Sunni Islamists, particularly al-Qaeda in Iraq. It is possible the Shi'a will interpret this shift in U.S. policy as the U.S.' abandoning its Shi'a allies and embracing their Sunni enemies. In response, some Shi'a groups may resort to suicide terrorism to achieve their goals. Although the first Shi'a attack of the insurgency in June 2007 went unnoticed by most, it could signal the opening phase of a Shi'a suicide terror campaign in Iraq, which would elicit a flood of Iranian volunteers.

While this new theory can help the U.S. anticipate the results of policy changes in Iraq, it remains to be seen how applicable the framework will be to suicide campaigns in other regions of the world. This thesis' most important conclusion is that conventional frameworks of suicide terrorism failed in Iraq because they overlooked the country's ethno-sectarian divisions. In fact, many of the U.S.' greatest mistakes in Iraq were the result of ignoring these sharp societal divides. This new theoretical framework will allow the U.S. to avoid creating situations in the Middle East and other parts of the world in

which suicide terrorism is likely to appear. Further studies of this framework will allow academics to leave the “ivory tower” and actively prevent future suicide terror campaigns. If any good can come from today’s situation in Iraq, it is a more accurate understanding of suicide terrorism.

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